



Marketing Strategy Development Based on Service-Dominant Logic Theory by Vargo and Lusch: Empirical Evidence from the Tourism Industry in Bali, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry represents one of the most dynamic and competitive service sectors globally, demanding sophisticated marketing frameworks that go beyond traditional product-centric approaches. This study investigates the development and application of marketing strategies grounded in Vargo and Lusch's Service-Dominant (S-D) Logic theory within the context of the tourism industry in Bali, Indonesia. The S-D Logic paradigm, which repositions value creation as a co-production process between service providers and customers, offers a compelling theoretical lens for understanding how tourism enterprises can sustain competitive advantages in volatile market environments. Using a mixed-method approach combining structured interviews, questionnaires distributed to 215 tourism business operators, and content analysis of strategic documents, this research identifies critical foundational premises of S-D Logic — specifically operant resources, value co-creation, and service ecosystems — as central pillars of effective tourism marketing strategy. Findings indicate that tourism businesses that systematically embed S-D Logic principles into their marketing practices demonstrate significantly higher levels of customer engagement, repeat visitation, and brand loyalty compared to those adhering to conventional goods-dominant approaches. The study further reveals that digital platforms serve as key enablers of co-creation activities, and that relational marketing practices aligned with S-D Logic principles substantially improve service quality perceptions. The paper contributes to the emerging literature by providing a structured, empirically validated framework for tourism marketing strategy development informed by S-D Logic, with practical implications for policymakers, destination management organizations, and tourism enterprise managers.

Keywords: Service-Dominant Logic, tourism marketing, value co-creation, Bali, marketing strategy, service ecosystems, operant resources



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INTRODUCTION

“The shift from a goods-dominant (G-D) logic, where goods are the primary unit of exchange, to a service-dominant (S-D) logic, in which service is the fundamental basis of exchange, represents one of the most significant conceptual transitions in contemporary marketing thought.” This declaration, articulated by Vargo and Lusch (2004) in their seminal Journal of Marketing article, irrevocably altered the trajectory of marketing theory and practice, inviting scholars and practitioners alike to reconsider how value is conceived, created, and exchanged. Nowhere is this reconceptualization more relevant than in the tourism industry, a sector inherently defined by intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability — the very characteristics that make traditional goods-centric marketing frameworks inadequate.

The global tourism industry has undergone unprecedented transformations in the 21st century. The proliferation of digital technologies, the democratization of travel information, and the emergence of sharing economy platforms have fundamentally disrupted long-established marketing paradigms. Consumers no longer function as passive recipients of standardized tourism packages; they actively participate in defining, shaping, and co-creating their travel experiences. This behavioral evolution renders conventional marketing strategies — premised on product differentiation, price competition, and broadcast advertising — increasingly inadequate in capturing and retaining the modern tourist.

Bali, Indonesia, recognized as one of Southeast Asia's premier tourism destinations, provides an especially illuminating context for this inquiry. Consistently ranked among the world's most visited destinations, Bali's tourism ecosystem encompasses a diverse array of actors including accommodation providers, tour operators, cultural institutions, transportation services, and local communities. Despite its enduring appeal, Bali's tourism sector faces mounting challenges: intensifying regional competition from emerging destinations such as Lombok, Labuan Bajo, and international competitors; increasing tourist expectations regarding authentic, personalized experiences; and post-pandemic market disruptions that necessitate strategic repositioning. These pressures collectively demand a more sophisticated theoretical and practical marketing orientation.

Service-Dominant Logic, as articulated by Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008, 2016), posits that service — defined as the application of specialized competencies through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity — is the fundamental basis of all economic exchange. This theoretical framework is organized around a set of foundational premises (FPs), later consolidated into axioms, which collectively assert that value is always co-created by multiple actors, that operant resources (knowledge, skills, and competencies) are the primary drivers of competitive advantage, and that all social and economic actors are resource integrators embedded within service ecosystems. For the tourism industry, these premises carry profound strategic implications.

Despite the theoretical richness of S-D Logic and its demonstrated applicability across various service sectors, its systematic operationalization within tourism marketing strategy frameworks remains underdeveloped in the literature. While several scholars have explored S-D Logic's relevance to tourism (e.g., Shaw et al., 2011; Rihova et al., 2015; Prebensen et al., 2014), there exists a notable paucity of empirically grounded, comprehensive frameworks that translate S-D Logic principles into actionable marketing strategy development processes for tourism enterprises, particularly within the Indonesian and Southeast Asian contexts.

This study addresses this gap by pursuing three interrelated objectives: first, to examine how S-D Logic foundational premises manifest within the marketing practices of tourism businesses in Bali; second, to identify the mechanisms through which value co-creation processes contribute to competitive differentiation in the tourism market; and third, to develop an empirically validated marketing strategy framework grounded in S-D Logic principles that can guide tourism enterprises in designing more effective, customer-centric marketing approaches. By doing so, this research bridges the theoretical-practical divide that has hindered the broader adoption of S-D Logic within tourism marketing strategy formulation.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The Literature Review section provides a comprehensive theoretical grounding in S-D Logic and its intersections with tourism marketing. The Methods section details the research design, data collection procedures, and analytical approaches employed. The Results section presents the empirical findings organized around the study's core research questions. The Discussion section interprets these findings in relation to existing theory and practice, and the Conclusion section summarizes the key contributions and identifies directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service-Dominant Logic: Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical architecture of Service-Dominant Logic was formally introduced by Vargo and Lusch (2004) in their landmark article "Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing," published in the

Journal of Marketing. Building upon and synthesizing insights from relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994), resource-advantage theory (Hunt & Morgan, 1995), competence-based competition (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990), and the Nordic School of service research, Vargo and Lusch proposed a paradigmatic reorientation centered on eight original foundational premises. These premises have since been refined and expanded to eleven foundational premises organized around five core axioms (Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

The five axioms of S-D Logic constitute its theoretical core: (1) Service is the fundamental basis of exchange; (2) Value is always co-created by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary; (3) All social and economic actors are resource integrators; (4) Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary; and (5) Value co-creation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Critically, S-D Logic distinguishes between operand resources — static resources upon which an operation is performed, such as natural materials or standardized goods — and operant resources — dynamic resources that can act on other resources, including knowledge, skills, and organizational competencies. The S-D Logic framework asserts that operant resources, not operand resources, are the primary source of competitive advantage.

The concept of the service ecosystem, introduced by Vargo and Lusch (2011) and elaborated in subsequent works, extends the dyadic supplier-customer relationship to encompass a broader network of actors — including institutions, norms, practices, and social structures — that collectively participate in value co-creation. This ecosystem perspective has proven particularly generative in tourism research, where multiple interdependent actors including tourists, local communities, businesses, governments, and non-governmental organizations collectively constitute the destination experience. Frow et al. (2014) and Akaka et al. (2013) have further enriched this framework by exploring how institutional arrangements within service ecosystems shape co-creation processes and outcomes.

S-D Logic and Tourism Marketing

The application of S-D Logic to tourism has generated a rich body of scholarship. Shaw et al. (2011) were among the first to systematically explore how co-creation operates within tourism contexts, emphasizing the role of tourists as active co-producers of their own experiences and arguing that tourism enterprises must develop organizational capabilities for facilitating meaningful customer involvement. Prebensen et al. (2014) advanced this line of inquiry by investigating the antecedents and outcomes of tourist co-creation, demonstrating that tourists who engage more deeply in co-creation activities report higher levels of perceived value and satisfaction.

Rihova et al. (2015) contributed a sociological dimension to S-D Logic in tourism by distinguishing between customer-to-customer (C2C) value co-creation, where tourists co-create value with other tourists, and the more extensively studied business-to-customer (B2C) dimension. Their research revealed that social interactions among tourists constitute a significant and underappreciated source of tourism value, with implications for how destinations design and facilitate tourist interactions. Campos et al. (2018) further explored the relationship between tourist co-creation, experience memorability, and behavioral intentions, providing empirical support for the value-in-use thesis central to S-D Logic.

In the Indonesian context, research on S-D Logic applications in tourism remains relatively nascent. Suartina et al. (2021) examined co-creation practices among cultural tourism enterprises in Bali, finding that businesses explicitly oriented toward collaborative value creation demonstrated superior customer retention and positive word-of-mouth outcomes. However, these studies have largely been exploratory and have not produced systematic marketing strategy frameworks. The present study aims to address this lacuna by developing a comprehensive, evidence-based framework for S-D Logic-informed tourism marketing strategy.

Marketing Strategy in the Tourism Industry

Marketing strategy in the tourism sector has traditionally been conceptualized within the 4Ps framework (product, price, place, promotion) and its various extensions, including the 7Ps model (Booms & Bitner, 1981), which added people, process, and physical evidence to accommodate the distinctive characteristics of service marketing. While these frameworks have provided useful operational guidance, critics have argued that they perpetuate a goods-dominant logic by treating customers primarily as target markets rather than as active value co-creators (Grönroos, 2011; Lusch & Vargo, 2014).

Destination marketing, a subdiscipline of tourism marketing concerned with the strategic promotion and positioning of geographic tourism destinations, has also been challenged by the limitations of conventional marketing frameworks. Pike and Page (2014) observed that destination marketing organizations (DMOs) have increasingly recognized the inadequacy of traditional push-marketing approaches in an era of peer-to-peer communication, user-generated content, and digital platform-mediated travel decision-making. S-D Logic offers a theoretically coherent and empirically productive alternative framework for reconceptualizing destination marketing strategy around value co-creation, relational engagement, and ecosystem orchestration.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative interview findings to develop a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of S-D Logic operationalization in Bali's tourism marketing practices. The use of mixed methods was deemed particularly appropriate given the study's dual goals of measuring the prevalence and outcomes of S-D Logic-aligned marketing practices (quantitative strand) and understanding the mechanisms, processes, and contextual factors that shape these practices (qualitative strand).

Study Site and Sampling

The study was conducted in Bali, Indonesia, selected for its significance as Indonesia's premier international tourism destination and the diversity of its tourism business ecosystem. The research population comprised tourism business operators registered with the Bali Tourism Agency (Dinas Pariwisata Bali), encompassing accommodation providers (hotels, villas, and homestays), tour and travel operators, cultural and recreational attractions, food and beverage establishments, and transportation services.

A stratified random sampling procedure was employed to ensure proportional representation across business categories and geographic sub-districts (kabupaten). The final quantitative sample comprised 215 tourism business operators, a size deemed adequate for structural equation modeling and multivariate analysis based on the rule-of-thumb of at least 10 observations per estimated parameter (Hair et al., 2019). The qualitative sample comprised 28 purposively selected informants, including senior managers, marketing directors, and entrepreneurs representing diverse segments of the tourism ecosystem, selected to achieve theoretical saturation.

Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire developed in three phases: initial item generation based on a systematic literature review of S-D Logic measurement instruments (Karpen et al., 2012; Keränen et al., 2017), expert panel validation involving five marketing academics and three senior tourism practitioners, and pilot testing with 30 respondents to assess reliability and face validity. The final questionnaire comprised five multi-item scales measuring: (1) operant resource orientation (7 items), (2) value co-creation practices (8 items), (3) service ecosystem engagement (6 items), (4) relational marketing orientation (7 items), and (5) marketing performance outcomes (6 items). All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews averaging 65 minutes in duration, conducted in either Bahasa Indonesia or English according to respondent preference, and audio-recorded with informed consent.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 and AMOS 24. Descriptive statistics and frequency analyses characterized sample profiles and variable distributions. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) assessed the dimensionality, reliability, and validity of measurement scales. Structural equation modeling (SEM) tested hypothesized relationships between S-D Logic constructs and marketing performance outcomes. Qualitative interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase protocol, supported by NVivo 12 software for coding and theme management. Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during the interpretation phase using a complementarity strategy to provide a more complete and nuanced understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics and Measurement Model

Of the 215 survey respondents, 61.4% operated in the accommodation sector, 18.6% in tour and travel operations, 12.1% in food and beverage, and 7.9% in cultural and recreational attractions. Business size varied considerably: 44.2% were micro-enterprises (1-4 employees), 33.5% small enterprises (5-19 employees), and 22.3% medium to large enterprises (20+ employees). Respondents had an average of 11.3 years of business experience (SD = 7.8), and 67.4% reported having adopted digital marketing platforms within the preceding three years.

Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the satisfactory fit of the five-factor measurement model ($\chi^2/df = 2.41$, CFI = 0.953, TLI = 0.947, RMSEA = 0.061, SRMR = 0.054). All factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60 (range: 0.63–0.89), and composite reliability coefficients ranged from 0.81 to 0.91, exceeding the 0.70 benchmark (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.54 to 0.72, confirming convergent validity. Discriminant validity was established by demonstrating that the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with all other constructs.

S-D Logic Adoption Levels and Marketing Practices

Descriptive analysis revealed considerable variation in S-D Logic adoption levels across the sample. Value co-creation practices received the highest mean score (M = 4.89, SD = 1.12), followed by relational marketing orientation (M = 4.76, SD = 1.18), operant resource orientation (M = 4.52, SD = 1.31), and service ecosystem engagement (M = 4.21, SD = 1.29). These patterns indicate that while many tourism businesses have intuitively adopted some elements of S-D Logic, particularly co-creation practices facilitated through digital channels, systematic ecosystem engagement and operant resource development remain underdeveloped.

Qualitative findings elaborated these patterns. Several informants described value co-creation practices that closely aligned with S-D Logic principles without explicitly invoking the theoretical framework. For instance, a villa management director described how their enterprise had systematically restructured its service delivery model around guest co-design: "We no longer think of our guests as customers who purchase a room; we think of them as partners in creating a Bali experience. Our staff are trained to listen carefully, to understand what each guest is seeking, and to involve them in shaping what the stay becomes." This statement reflects the S-D Logic tenet of value-in-use co-creation, where the experience is not predetermined by the provider but emerges from the interaction between the enterprise's operant resources and the tourist's own resource integration processes.

Structural Equation Modeling Results

The structural equation model explained 63.7% of the variance in marketing performance outcomes. Operant resource orientation ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$), value co-creation practices ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$), service ecosystem engagement ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$), and relational marketing orientation ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$) each demonstrated significant positive effects on marketing performance. Value co-creation practices emerged as the strongest predictor, consistent with the central axiom of S-D Logic that value

co-creation is the primary mechanism through which service providers generate competitive advantage and customer value. The positive effect of service ecosystem engagement, though smaller in magnitude, was theoretically significant in confirming that tourism enterprises embedded in richly collaborative stakeholder networks achieve superior marketing outcomes.

Moderation analysis revealed that digital platform adoption significantly strengthened the relationship between value co-creation practices and marketing performance (β interaction = 0.18, $p < 0.05$), indicating that digital technologies serve as important enablers of co-creation at scale. This finding aligns with emerging literature on digital service platforms and S-D Logic (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015), suggesting that tourism enterprises that strategically leverage digital capabilities for facilitating co-creation activities achieve compounding performance benefits.

Qualitative Themes: Barriers and Enablers of S-D Logic Adoption

Thematic analysis of interview data generated four primary themes. First, knowledge and capability gaps: many informants, particularly from micro and small enterprises, expressed limited awareness of formal marketing theories and relied primarily on intuition and experiential knowledge. While several practices described were aligned with S-D Logic principles, the absence of structured knowledge limited their systematic application. Second, digital infrastructure and platform capability emerged as a critical enabler, with digitally sophisticated enterprises far more likely to deploy mechanisms for real-time customer engagement, feedback integration, and co-creation facilitation. Third, community and ecosystem relationships were identified as central to competitive differentiation, particularly among enterprises that had cultivated strong ties with local artisans, cultural practitioners, and community organizations. Fourth, customer expectation evolution was widely recognized as a driver of S-D Logic-aligned practices, with informants observing that increasingly experienced international tourists actively sought participation in authentic, interactive experiences rather than standardized packages.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide robust empirical support for the relevance and applicability of Vargo and Lusch's Service-Dominant Logic as a theoretical foundation for tourism marketing strategy development. The significant positive relationships observed between all four S-D Logic constructs and marketing performance outcomes confirm that tourism enterprises oriented toward service as the fundamental basis of exchange, value co-creation, operant resource development, and ecosystem engagement outperform those adhering to more transactional, goods-dominant marketing orientations.

The finding that value co-creation practices constitute the strongest predictor of marketing performance deserves particular attention. This result resonates with the theoretical centrality of co-creation in S-D Logic and extends prior empirical work by Prebensen et al. (2014) and Campos et al. (2018) by demonstrating that co-creation orientation at the organizational level, rather than merely at the individual transaction level, is systematically associated with superior marketing outcomes. It suggests that tourism enterprises need to go beyond ad hoc co-creation episodes and develop institutionalized organizational capabilities for co-creation — what Karpen et al. (2012) termed “service-dominant orientation” — as a strategic capability embedded throughout their marketing and service delivery systems.

The moderating role of digital platform adoption in amplifying the co-creation–performance relationship is theoretically significant. Lusch and Nambisan (2015) proposed that digital platforms function as “liquefiers” of resources, making knowledge and competencies more accessible and malleable within service ecosystems. The present findings support this proposition in the tourism context: digital platforms that enable tourists to interact with enterprises before, during, and after their visits — through customization interfaces, feedback mechanisms, social media co-creation, and user-generated content platforms — substantially enhance the value co-creation process and its performance outcomes. This has important strategic implications for digital marketing investment

decisions, suggesting that investments in co-creation-enabling digital infrastructure yield greater returns than equivalent investments in one-directional digital advertising.

The qualitative findings' identification of knowledge and capability gaps as a primary barrier to S-D Logic adoption among smaller tourism enterprises points to an important policy implication. Destination management organizations and industry associations such as PHRI (Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association) and ASITA (Association of Indonesian Tours and Travel Agencies) are strategically positioned to facilitate S-D Logic knowledge dissemination through training programs, capacity building workshops, and industry mentoring initiatives. The development of practical S-D Logic implementation toolkits, translated into accessible business language and illustrated with contextually relevant Balinese tourism examples, could substantially accelerate adoption among the micro and small enterprise segment that constitutes the majority of Bali's tourism business landscape.

The role of community and ecosystem relationships as a competitive differentiator deserves extended discussion in the context of Bali's distinctive cultural-tourism nexus. Bali's competitive advantage as a tourism destination is fundamentally rooted in its rich cultural heritage, maintained through elaborate systems of community organization (*banjar*, *desa adat*), ritual practice, and artistic production. S-D Logic's service ecosystem perspective, with its emphasis on the role of institutions, norms, and collective practices in structuring value co-creation, provides a uniquely apt framework for understanding how Bali's cultural institutions function as strategic resources for tourism enterprises. Enterprises that invest in authentic, mutually beneficial relationships with local cultural communities, treating community members as co-creators rather than as performers or commodities, not only access distinctive operant resources but also build the social capital and cultural legitimacy that underpin sustainable tourism development.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; while structural equation modeling provides evidence consistent with the hypothesized directional relationships, longitudinal research would be needed to confirm causal ordering. Second, the study's focus on Bali limits the immediate generalizability of findings to other Indonesian tourism destinations or to tourism contexts in other countries, though the theoretical framework itself has broader applicability. Third, self-report survey data are subject to social desirability and common method biases, though the use of Harman's single-factor test and the integration of qualitative data sources provide some mitigation of these concerns.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the development and application of marketing strategies grounded in Vargo and Lusch's Service-Dominant Logic within the tourism industry in Bali, Indonesia. Through a convergent mixed-methods design integrating survey data from 215 tourism business operators and in-depth interviews with 28 key informants, the research has demonstrated that S-D Logic foundational premises — specifically operant resource orientation, value co-creation practices, service ecosystem engagement, and relational marketing orientation — are significantly and positively associated with marketing performance outcomes in the tourism sector.

The study makes several contributions to the literature. Theoretically, it extends the empirical validation of S-D Logic to the Indonesian tourism context, demonstrating its cross-cultural applicability and its particular relevance to culturally embedded tourism ecosystems like Bali's. It also contributes to the growing body of evidence on the digital mediation of co-creation processes, confirming that digital platform capabilities function as significant amplifiers of the co-creation–performance relationship. Methodologically, the study develops and validates a multi-item measurement instrument for S-D Logic constructs in tourism marketing contexts, providing a replicable tool for future research.

Practically, the study offers a validated S-D Logic-informed marketing strategy framework organized around four strategic dimensions: developing and deploying operant resources (organizational knowledge, skills, and technology); designing and institutionalizing value co-creation practices; cultivating and orchestrating service ecosystem relationships; and embedding relational marketing

orientations throughout customer touchpoints. For tourism enterprise managers, this framework provides actionable guidance for strategic marketing development. For policymakers and destination management organizations, it highlights the enabling role of industry capacity building, digital infrastructure investment, and community partnership programs in supporting S-D Logic adoption across the tourism sector.

Future research should explore the longitudinal dynamics of S-D Logic adoption and its performance effects, examine the applicability of the framework across diverse Indonesian tourism destinations, and investigate the specific mechanisms through which digital platforms mediate co-creation processes in tourism contexts. Research that engages tourists themselves as respondents, rather than focusing exclusively on the enterprise perspective, would also enrich understanding of how the two sides of the co-creation process interact and align. As the tourism industry continues to evolve in response to digital disruption, demographic change, and sustainability imperatives, Service-Dominant Logic offers an enduring and generative theoretical foundation for the next generation of tourism marketing scholarship and practice.

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