From Destination Attractiveness to Tourist Experience: The Mediating Role of Creative Value from the Perspective of Creative Ventures in San Pedro Sula

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Resumen– ***El turismo creativo ofrece una vía para la creación de valor diferenciado en ciudades latinoamericanas intermedias. Este estudio examinó, desde la perspectiva de emprendedores creativos de San Pedro Sula, Honduras, si el valor creativo media la relación entre la atracción del destino y la experiencia turística asociada con sus emprendimientos. Se empleó un diseño no experimental, transversal, correlacional-predictivo. Se administró un instrumento tipo Likert de cinco puntos a 92 propietarios o fundadores de emprendimientos creativos activos, reclutados mediante muestreo por conveniencia. El modelo de ecuaciones estructurales se estimó con máxima verosimilitud robusta en jamovi 2.7, utilizando el módulo SEMLj. El modelo de medida mostró cargas factoriales y confiabilidad adecuadas. El ajuste estructural general fue mixto (CFI = 0.953; TLI = 0.929; RMSEA = 0.089, IC 90% [0.047, 0.128]; SRMR = 0.049). La atracción del destino se asoció positivamente con el valor creativo (β = 0.753, p < 0.001), y el valor creativo se asoció positivamente con la experiencia turística (β = 0.595, p = 0.008). La ruta directa entre la atracción del destino y la experiencia turística no fue estadísticamente significativa al incluir el valor creativo (β = 0.349, p = 0.107). Este patrón es consistente con un mecanismo indirecto, aunque la ausencia de un intervalo de confianza formalmente reportado para el efecto indirecto impide una afirmación definitiva de mediación. Los hallazgos indican que el valor creativo podría conectar la atracción del destino con las experiencias que los emprendedores perciben que sus iniciativas generan.***

Palabras clave-- ***turismo creativo, atracción del destino, valor creativo, experiencia turística, modelado de ecuaciones estructurales.***

Abstract– ***Creative tourism provides an avenue for differentiated value creation in intermediate Latin American cities. This study examined, from the perspective of creative entrepreneurs in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, whether creative value mediates the relationship between destination attractiveness and the tourist experience associated with their ventures. A nonexperimental, cross-sectional, correlational-predictive design was used. A five-point Likert instrument was administered to 92 owners or founders of active creative ventures recruited through convenience sampling. Structural equation modeling was estimated with robust maximum likelihood in jamovi 2.7 using the SEMLj module. The measurement model showed adequate factor loadings and reliability. Overall structural fit was mixed (CFI = 0.953; TLI = 0.929; RMSEA = 0.089, 90% CI [0.047, 0.128]; SRMR = 0.049). Destination attractiveness was positively associated with creative value (β = 0.753, p < 0.001), and creative value was positively associated with tourist experience (β = 0.595, p = 0.008). The direct path from destination attractiveness to tourist experience was not statistically significant after creative value was included (β = 0.349, p = 0.107). This pattern is consistent with an indirect mechanism, although the absence of a formally reported indirect-effect confidence interval prevents a definitive mediation claim. The findings indicate that creative value may connect destination attractiveness with the experiences that entrepreneurs perceive their ventures to generate.***

Keywords-- ***creative tourism, destination attractiveness, creative value, tourist experience, structural equation modeling.***

I. INTRODUCTION

Creative tourism has emerged as a strategic means by which urban destinations and local ventures can differentiate themselves from conventional tourism offerings. Its emphasis on active visitor participation, cultural co-production, and connections with local identity enables destinations to create value beyond the passive consumption of attractions. In intermediate Latin American cities such as San Pedro Sula, creative ventures represent an emerging source of economic and cultural development. Their ability to attract and satisfy visitors may depend not only on destination attributes but also on how those attributes are translated into meaningful experiences.

Destination attractiveness is a multidimensional construct encompassing cultural and heritage resources, the tourism ecosystem, events, entertainment, and related services [1]. Environmental appeal tends to improve tourists' evaluations, whereas economic conditions and fee structures may reduce them, demonstrating that attractiveness combines environmental, economic, and service-related stimuli [2]. Nevertheless, attractiveness alone does not necessarily ensure a memorable experience. Research has shown that authenticity and destination image may influence revisit intentions through memorable tourism experiences rather than through a direct pathway [3]. Embodied participation—especially bodily and cognitive engagement—also contributes to the formation of memorable experiences in cultural and creative tourism [4].

Creative value may provide the link between initial attractiveness and meaningful experience. Cultural accessibility and experience quality are associated with satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived value in creative tourism [5]. Perceived value in local-knowledge tourism includes functional, emotional, social, cognitive, and self-actualization dimensions [6], while social and creative value broaden conventional economic understandings of what satisfies creative tourists [7]. Creative tourism experiences can strengthen perceived authenticity [8], and immersive narratives, multisensory environments, and interactive technologies can stimulate emotional activation and value co-

creation [9]. The integration of local knowledge and culture is likewise critical to the sustainable development of creative tourism [10].

Tourist experience is itself multidetermined. Tourism resources and smart-technology interactivity contribute to memorable experiences [11]. In urban settings, architecture, cultural heritage, nightlife, and atmosphere are prominent experiential resources [12]. Situated involvement during the experience may be more influential for memorability than prior interest or effort [13]. Meta-analytic evidence further indicates that tourist experience and engagement transmit the effects of experiential antecedents to satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioral intentions [14]. These findings support an indirect model in which creative value connects destination attractiveness with tourist experience.

This distinction is especially relevant in creative tourism because the visitor is not merely a recipient of a finished service. Creative offerings frequently require interaction with local practices, narratives, knowledge, or production processes. The experiential outcome therefore depends on whether recognizable destination attributes become opportunities for participation and learning. A culturally attractive setting can provide the initial stimulus, but the venture must organize that stimulus into an activity through which visitors perceive personal, emotional, cognitive, or social value. Under this logic, creative value is not interchangeable with attractiveness: it represents the experiential meaning produced when destination resources are activated through an entrepreneurial offering.

The proposed sequence also has implications for entrepreneurship research. Creative ventures typically combine commercial objectives with symbolic and cultural resources. Their competitiveness may consequently depend less on scale and more on their ability to recombine local identity, specialized knowledge, and interaction into differentiated experiences. This makes the venture an intermediary between destination-level resources and visitor-level outcomes. Studying entrepreneurs' perceptions is useful because owners and founders make the design decisions through which those resources are selected, narrated, and delivered. At the same time, their assessments cannot substitute for tourists' evaluations, a distinction incorporated throughout the interpretation of this study.

Although previous studies have examined these constructs separately and in heritage, ecotourism, festival, and rural settings, limited evidence simultaneously addresses destination attractiveness, creative value, and tourist experience from the perspective of creative entrepreneurs in intermediate Latin American cities. Accordingly, this study examines the mediating role of creative value in the relationship between destination attractiveness and the tourist experience associated with creative ventures in San Pedro Sula.

The following hypotheses were evaluated: **H1:** Destination attractiveness is positively associated with creative value as perceived by entrepreneurs. **H2:** Creative value is positively associated with the tourist experience that entrepreneurs perceive their initiatives can generate. **H3:** Destination attractiveness has a positive indirect effect on tourist experience through creative value.

II. Methods

A. Study Design and Setting

A nonexperimental, cross-sectional, correlational-predictive design was adopted. Data were collected once and analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM), allowing the simultaneous examination of relationships among latent variables. The design identifies structural associations but does not establish causality. The study involved creative entrepreneurs in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, operating in advertising and creative marketing, design, handicrafts and cultural products, visual arts, clothing and footwear, jewelry, personal care, and performing arts. Data were collected from February to May 2026 through Google Forms.

B. Participants and Sampling

Eligible participants were owners or founders of active creative ventures. Convenience sampling was conducted through the Chamber of Commerce and the research team's contact networks. The initial database contained 105 records. Thirteen records were excluded because the same Likert response was selected for at least 80% of substantive items, and duplicated items were removed during data screening. The final analytical sample comprised 92 participants. Sample size reflected the entrepreneurs accessible during the collection period; no a priori power analysis was performed.

The sampling strategy was selected because no complete and accessible sampling frame of active creative ventures was available for the study period. Participation covered several creative-industry categories rather than a single activity, allowing the analysis to represent a heterogeneous entrepreneurial setting. Nevertheless, convenience recruitment may favor ventures that are more visible, institutionally connected, digitally accessible, or willing to participate in academic research. The sample should therefore be interpreted as an analytical group within the local creative ecosystem rather than as a statistically representative estimate of all creative ventures in the city.

C. Constructs and Measurement

Three latent constructs were specified: destination attractiveness as the exogenous predictor, creative value as the proposed mediator, and tourist experience as the outcome. All constructs were assessed from the entrepreneurs' perspective as perceptions of their ventures' capacity to generate attractiveness, creative value, and tourist experiences; they were not direct measurements obtained from tourists. Sociodemographic variables were used only to describe the sample. The research team developed a five-point Likert instrument ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Destination attractiveness was measured by P15–P17, creative value by P18–P20, and tourist experience by P21–P23.

Destination attractiveness captured the perceived presence of visual, cultural, and contextual elements capable of drawing visitor interest. Creative value represented the extent to which the offering was perceived to enable originality, expression,

learning, and engagement with creative processes. Tourist experience reflected entrepreneurs' assessment of the involvement and experiential quality their initiatives could facilitate. The three-item specification for each construct produced a parsimonious measurement model suitable for simultaneous estimation, while also requiring careful evaluation of convergent and discriminant properties because conceptually adjacent constructs can produce inflated structural relationships.

D. Data Quality and Statistical Analysis

Direct contact during recruitment was used to reduce duplicate responses. No additional statistical control for common method bias was implemented. Analyses were conducted in jamovi 2.7 with the SEMLj module. Robust maximum likelihood estimation was applied. The measurement model was evaluated using standardized factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, McDonald's omega, average variance extracted (AVE), and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). Overall model fit was assessed with chi-square, the comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Three missing cells occurred in P8 and P9; these items were not indicators in the SEM, which used P15–P23. No subgroup, sampling-adjusted, sensitivity, or power analyses were conducted.

Reliability was assessed separately for each latent construct rather than inferred solely from a global coefficient. AVE was used to examine the proportion of indicator variance captured by each construct, and HTMT was used to assess whether pairs of constructs remained empirically distinguishable. Structural paths were interpreted using standardized coefficients and their p values. Coefficients of determination were examined for both endogenous constructs. Because the available output did not include a bootstrapped confidence interval for the indirect effect, the mediation hypothesis was evaluated conservatively: the pattern of component paths and the attenuation of the direct path were described, but a definitive inferential claim of full mediation was avoided.

III. Results

A. Participant Characteristics

The analytical sample included 92 participants. Gender information was available for 91 respondents: 55 were women (60.4% of valid responses) and 36 were men (39.6%). Participants aged 18–25 years (31.5%) and 26–35 years (29.3%) represented 60.9% of the sample. Undergraduate education was the most frequent educational level (54.3%). Administration was the most frequent organizational position (38.0%), and advertising and creative marketing was the largest industry category (26.1%).

TABLE I
Participant Characteristics

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender*	Women	55	60.4
	Men	36	39.6
Age	18–25	29	31.5
	26–35	27	29.3
	36–45	18	19.6
	46–55	9	9.8
	≥56	9	9.8
Education	Technical	16	17.4
	Undergraduate	50	54.3
	Graduate	26	28.3
Position	Administration	35	38.0
	Management	16	17.4
	Supervision	23	25.0
	Strategic planning	18	19.6
Industry	Performing arts	4	4.3
	Visual arts	8	8.7
	Handicrafts/cultural products	13	14.1
	Design	14	15.2
	Personal care	10	10.9
	Jewelry	7	7.6
	Advertising/creative marketing	24	26.1
	Clothing/footwear	12	13.0

*Gender percentages use 91 valid responses.

B. Measurement Model

Standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.657 to 0.824 for destination attractiveness, 0.776 to 0.822 for creative value, and 0.699 to 0.831 for tourist experience; all loadings were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Reliability coefficients exceeded 0.80 and AVE exceeded 0.50 for all constructs. HTMT values were below 0.90. However, the HTMT ratio between creative value and tourist experience was 0.871, which satisfies the liberal 0.90 criterion but exceeds the conservative 0.85 criterion and therefore indicates conceptual proximity between these constructs.

The loading ranges indicate that every retained indicator contributed meaningfully to its intended latent variable, although the lower loading of 0.657 for destination attractiveness suggests that not all indicators represented the construct with equal strength. Alpha and omega were closely aligned for each construct, providing no indication that reliability depended on a single coefficient. AVE values between 0.592 and 0.646 support convergent validity. The HTMT pattern was strongest between creative value and tourist experience, which is theoretically plausible because both refer to the experiential capacity of the venture. This proximity warrants caution but does not, under the 0.90 benchmark used in this analysis, require collapsing the constructs.

TABLE II
Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Items	Loading range	α	ω	AVE
Destination attractiveness	P15–P17	0.657–0.824	0.803	0.811	0.592
Creative value	P18–P20	0.776–0.822	0.842	0.845	0.646
Tourist experience	P21–P23	0.699–0.831	0.812	0.816	0.597

TABLE III
HTMT Discriminant Validity

Construct	1	2	3
1. Destination attractiveness	1.000		
2. Creative value	0.748	1.000	
3. Tourist experience	0.808	0.871	1.000

C. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model produced mixed overall fit: $\chi^2(24) = 41.5$, $p = 0.014$; CFI = 0.953; TLI = 0.929; RMSEA = 0.089, 90% CI [0.047, 0.128]; and SRMR = 0.049. CFI and SRMR were adequate, TLI was acceptable, and RMSEA indicated marginal fit with a wide confidence interval. The model explained 56.7% of the variance in creative value and 78.8% of the variance in tourist experience.

TABLE IV
Structural Paths and Hypothesis Results

Hyp.	Structural path	β	p	Decision
H1	Attractiveness → Creative value	0.753	<0.001	Supported
H2	Creative value → Tourist experience	0.595	0.008	Supported
H3	Attractiveness → Tourist experience (direct)	0.349	0.107	Inconclusive

Destination attractiveness was positively associated with creative value ($\beta = 0.753$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Creative value was positively associated with tourist experience ($\beta = 0.595$, $p = 0.008$), supporting H2. The direct path from destination attractiveness to tourist experience was not statistically significant after creative value was included ($\beta = 0.349$, $p = 0.107$). The coefficient product was approximately 0.448, but no inferential estimate or confidence interval for the indirect effect was available. Consequently, the results are compatible with mediation but do not formally confirm H3.

The explained variance was substantial for both endogenous variables. Destination attractiveness accounted for 56.7% of the variance in creative value, indicating a strong relationship between the perceived destination context and the value entrepreneurs believe their initiatives create. Together, destination attractiveness and creative value accounted for 78.8% of the variance in tourist experience. These estimates describe the explanatory performance of the specified model within this sample; they should not be interpreted as population-level predictive accuracy because the study did not use probability sampling or out-of-sample validation.

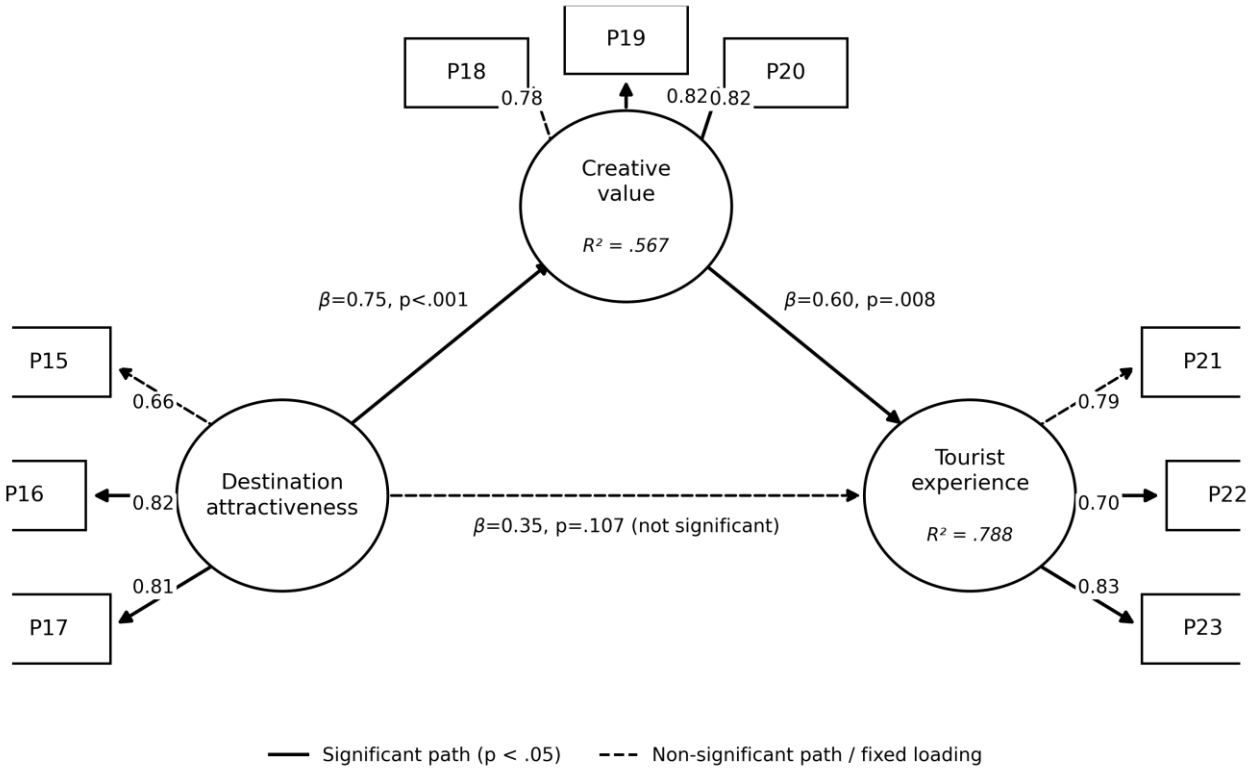


Fig. 1. Structural model. Standardized coefficients are shown; $R^2 = 0.567$ for creative value and $R^2 = 0.788$ for tourist experience.

IV. Discussion

A. Main Findings

The model indicates that destination attractiveness is strongly associated with entrepreneurs' perceptions of creative value and that creative value, in turn, is associated with the tourist experiences they believe their ventures generate. Once creative value was included, the direct association between destination attractiveness and tourist experience was not statistically significant. This pattern suggests that attractiveness may be translated into experience largely through opportunities for expression, learning, participation, and cultural co-production. However, the cross-sectional design and the absence of a confidence interval for the indirect effect preclude a definitive causal or full-mediation conclusion.

B. Relationship to Previous Research

The findings are consistent with evidence that destination attributes affect subsequent outcomes through experiential and value-related mechanisms. Memorable tourism experiences can transmit the influence of authenticity and image to revisit intentions [3], while bodily and cognitive participation helps form memorable experiences in cultural creative tourism [4]. Comparable indirect patterns have been observed for perceived value in cultural festivals [15], tourism participation and value co-creation in rural art tourism [16], and perceived value in heritage environments [17]. The present study extends this logic to creative urban ventures in an intermediate Latin American city and, distinctively, examines the relationships from the entrepreneurs' perspective.

The comparison with heritage research is informative because different contexts may preserve different degrees of direct influence. Large heritage sites can affect visitors through infrastructure, accessibility, services, environmental cues, and interpretation systems even when active co-creation is limited [17]. Small creative ventures may rely more heavily on direct interaction and personalized delivery. One plausible interpretation is therefore that entrepreneurs perceive creative value as the channel through which broad destination appeal becomes relevant to the specific experience offered by their venture. This explanation is theoretically consistent with the model but was not directly measured and should be tested in future comparative designs.

The results also align with research emphasizing immersion and participation. Multisensory narratives and interactive environments can activate emotions and encourage value co-creation [9], while situated involvement appears particularly important for memorability [13]. In practical terms, these mechanisms suggest that the creative component of an offering should be designed as an action performed with the visitor rather than merely as an object displayed to the visitor. The statistical model does not identify which particular intervention is most effective, but it provides a basis for examining participatory design, storytelling, learning, and cultural interaction as potential components of creative value.

C. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The study contributes quantitative evidence to a field in which destination attractiveness, creative value, and tourist experience have often been studied separately or in different geographical and sectoral settings. The observed structural pattern positions creative value as a potentially important

connective mechanism rather than a merely complementary attribute. From a managerial standpoint, initiatives that focus solely on aesthetics or promotion may have limited experiential relevance unless accompanied by co-creative opportunities such as participatory workshops, immersive narratives, and activities that engage visitors cognitively and actively. Support organizations may therefore consider training programs in co-creative experience design alongside destination-promotion initiatives. These implications are contextual orientations rather than universal prescriptions.

D. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations constrain interpretation. The cross-sectional design prevents causal inference. The convenience sample of 92 entrepreneurs, recruited without an a priori power analysis, limits representativeness and generalizability. All constructs were self-reported in the same instrument, and no statistical control for common method bias was implemented. Model fit was mixed, with RMSEA at 0.089 and a wide upper confidence bound. The HTMT value of 0.871 between creative value and tourist experience also indicates conceptual proximity. Most importantly, responses were provided by entrepreneurs rather than tourists; the results therefore reflect entrepreneurs' perceptions of the experiences generated by their ventures, not visitors' direct evaluations. Future studies should estimate the indirect effect with bootstrap confidence intervals, compare entrepreneur and tourist reports, use probability sampling where feasible, and adopt longitudinal or multi-source designs.

A useful next step would be a dyadic design linking each entrepreneur's description of the offering with evaluations from visitors who experienced it. Such a design would reveal whether entrepreneurial perceptions correspond with tourist-reported attractiveness, creative value, and memorability. Multi-city replication could assess whether the structural pattern is specific to San Pedro Sula or extends to other intermediate cities with different tourism infrastructures. Longitudinal measurement before, during, and after the experience would also provide stronger evidence about temporal ordering. Finally, future measurement work should examine content validity and test whether creative value and tourist experience remain distinct when broader item sets and alternative informants are used.

V. CONCLUSIONS

From the perspective of creative entrepreneurs in San Pedro Sula, destination attractiveness was significantly associated with creative value, which was in turn significantly associated with tourist experience. The nonsignificant direct path after creative value was incorporated is consistent with an indirect mechanism, although formal confirmation requires an inferential estimate and confidence interval for the indirect effect. The findings suggest that strengthening creative value through cultural co-production, active participation, and immersive narratives may complement efforts centered on initial destination attractiveness. Replication with tourist respondents, larger samples, and longitudinal evidence is needed before the structural pattern can be generalized.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors thank the creative entrepreneurs of San Pedro Sula who participated in this study, as well as the Chamber of Commerce for facilitating access to the participant network.

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