

# Value co-creation at heritage visitor attractions: A case study of Gladstone's Land

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## **Abstract**

This paper introduces co-creation between management and local stakeholders with the aim of assessing how co-creation adds value to heritage visitor attractions. Using an interpretive case study-based methodology, ethnographic data were collected through nine semi-structured in-depth interviews, 400h of observations/interactions and generated notes/media over a 12-month immersion period. The chosen case study was Gladstone's Land - one of the oldest houses on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh's Old Town. The findings demonstrate that a positive, open relationship between management and local stakeholders benefits the co-creation process. By involving local stakeholders and providing them with an opportunity to co-create value for visitors, heritage visitor attractions serve two purposes: they can meet the demand for an engaging visitor experience and act as a soundboard for the local identity. What this case study has proven is that the mentality of the value creators has a large influence on the value co-creation process.

## **Key words**

Value co-creation; Heritage tourism; Heritage visitor attraction; Gladstone's Land; Local stakeholders

## **1. Introduction**

Heritage sites each have their own unique story, to be shared with whomever has come to listen to them (Garcia et al., 2015). They fulfil a role as tourist visitor attractions and are utilised for leisure, as well as representing part of the identity of the local community and forming a soundboard to perpetuate this identity (Ashworth, 2003). Since heritage protection became progressively important several decades ago, awareness about the need to protect the past has increased among national governments (Bhati et al., 2014). For this reason, the conservation body National Trust for Scotland (NTS) bought the property Gladstone's Land in 1934 (NTS, 2018). Gladstone's Land - the case study adopted in this article - is one of the oldest houses on the 'Royal Mile' in the centre of Edinburgh's Old Town. The house is presented as it was in the seventeenth century, portraying the lives of people from different backgrounds (NTS, 2018; VisitScotland, 2018). This property is a small heritage site whose visitor experience is deemed outdated and not receiving sufficient visitors. Therefore, it is in the process of developing its potential as a heritage visitor attraction (HVA).

One way that heritage sites have developed themselves to attract more customers in recent years is by implementing 'co-creation' among the HVAs and the end customers. In recent literature, studies can be found on tourist interaction with others, and their active participation when they are present on site (Campos et al., 2016; Ghisoiu et al., 2018; Prebensen & Foss, 2011). However, this approach to co-creation does not take in consideration one very important stakeholder of HVA's: the local communities. Value can be created at HVAs in order to maximize the experience for visitors, whilst simultaneously creating value for local stakeholders in the community. Stakeholder theory by Freeman (1984) provides us with a framework that can be used to map out the stakeholders of all different types of businesses. This theory emphasises the importance of the involvement of stakeholders in the

business in order to create value (Parmar et al, 2010). Research regarding local stakeholder involvement in heritage sites often focuses on the impact of tourism development on local stakeholders, linking the concept of community involvement in tourism to sustainable tourism development (Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017; Wearing et al, 2017). Studies can be found on members of the local communities working at HVAs as guides (Frochot and Batat, 2013; Hashimoto and Telfer, 2017; Wu et al., 2015). However, a fundamental gap exists within contemporary academic literature regarding the added value, and thus support, that local stakeholders can bring to HVAs.

This paper seeks to close this gap and contribute to this special issue on ‘co-creation in tourism entrepreneurship’ in two ways: first, by introducing the concept of co-creation among management and local stakeholders; and second, by discussing the related practical aspects through focusing on the role that local stakeholders can have in adding value to an HVA. As a result of this, we build on previous studies by presenting a conceptual framework that can be applied to multiple types of HVAs. In doing so, we establish a better understanding of the relations and actions needed for effective co-creation among management and local stakeholders, in order to create value for all parties.

The conceptual framework presented in this paper has been examined in the context of a case study at Gladstone’s Land. As the site management has a coordinating role and final responsibility, it is of vital importance to establish if they have implemented measures and, if so, which measures to encourage co-creation. Furthermore, it is important to assess the relationship between the stakeholders: is this a competitive or a cooperative relationship? The way in which the local stakeholders and management perceive each other and work together is highly influential for the co-creation process. It is important to know the role of local stakeholders and management in terms of pragmatic actions, in order to improve the experience

for visitors. The following research questions are proposed to examine these issues at Gladstone's Land:

- Research Question 1: What does the management do to encourage value co-creation with local stakeholders?
- Research Question 2: How does the relationship between the management and the local stakeholders influence the value co-creation process?
- Research Question 3: What is the role of the participants of the value co-creation process in the development of the visitor experience?
- Research Question 4: What is the role of the participants of the value co-creation process in relation to each other?

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 *Heritage visitor attractions and community identity***

Heritage has been described by Drummond (2001, p. 6) as “what is or may be inherited”. However, the term heritage is not only used to describe the past that is inherited, but also how contemporary society makes use of this inherited past (Di Pietro et al, 2017; Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996). It includes traditions, values, art, natural riches, cultural activities and historic artefacts, houses and sites (Drummond, 2001). It includes a large variety of attractions and activities upon which a destination can build a lucrative tourism industry. In the tourism industry, heritage sites are placed within the category of visitor attractions, which are arguably the most significant constituent of the tourism ecosystem (Swarbrooke, 1999). HVAs exist in a large range of types and forms, from small-scale locally-based properties to

large attractions that are key elements in a destination's tourism strategy (Leask and Yeoman, 1999).

Both visitors of a heritage site and people who perceive the heritage as part of their own identity can experience the stories that the site has to offer. However, there is a difference in use and perceptions of heritage by visitors and local communities. Ashworth (2003) explains this difference by suggesting that tourism creates its own heritage and therefore its own places, thus instilling the assumption that tourists and residents are inherently different. He states that in many cases heritage is a modern product created by the current users for their contemporary purposes. Thus, tourism creates the heritage it consumes, and touristic attractions are created for and by the tourist. Local communities, on the other hand, have not chosen their own heritage, but it is part of their identity (Ashworth, 2003). Ashworth's theory is applicable to HVAs, as the formation of one's identity through some form of heritage is closely associated with places, landscapes and collective memories (Bohland & Hague, 2009), whereas on the other side, HVAs play a significant role in the engagement of visitors with a destination (Bąkiewicz, 2017; Connell et al., 2015; Leask, 2010). This underscores the importance of heritage sites as not only touristic attractions, but also as important and valuable landmarks for those who consider them as part of their identity.

The link between heritage sites and identity is the subject of ongoing research (see Di Pietro et al, 2017; Timothy and Ron, 2013). It is described by Bohland and Hague (2009, p. 109) as "a crucial element in the construction of personal and group identities as people seek to locate themselves within specific historical trajectories and understandings of the past". Heritage sites and their narratives form a continuum that covers the social and/or historic life of the local community and extend this into the imaginations of their visitors (Calver and Page, 2013).

## **2.2 *Local communities as stakeholders in tourism operations***

Historically, stakeholders have been defined as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). Macbeth et al. (2002) argue that other interest groups and individuals, in particular local residents and indigenous groups, also need recognition as stakeholders in their own right. Stakeholder theory, as developed by Freeman (1984), emphasises the importance of stakeholder engagement by suggesting that if the relationships between a business and the groups and individuals who can be affected or are affected by this business are analysed, then existing problems can be addressed effectively (Parmar et al, 2010). A business seen from a stakeholder perspective can be understood as a set of relationships among groups that have a stake in the activities that make up the business (Freeman, 1984; Parmar et al, 2010). The key aspect here is how these stakeholders, including managers and local communities, engage with each other to create and trade value (Parmar et al, 2010). According to Freeman’s stakeholder theory, it is the manager’s job to maintain and nurture these relationships, in order to create as much value as possible.

In his study on stakeholder perspectives on the development of church tourism in Dublin, Kiely (2013) identifies two main theories on stakeholder collaboration: relationship templates that attempt to add value through a process of collaborative synergy and collaborative relationships based on competitive templates. This collaborative engagement may lead to mutually beneficial relationships between stakeholders and innovative outcomes (Dredge, 2006; Gjerald and Lyngstad, 2015). Fyall et al. (2001) advocate this viewpoint by stating that when a number of key elements such as international growth in demand for heritage tourism, accessible facilities and identifiable stakeholders are in place, then inter-stakeholder collaboration should create the opportunity to package the visitor product and, in this way, draw more visitors to the site. However, in order to create this opportunity, it is important that

the relative power of all stakeholders is perceived as equal, otherwise this could impede their opportunity to engage with each other in a collaboration (Freeman; 2010, Kiely; 2013; Marques and Borba, 2017).

According to Timothy and Boyd (2003), it is important to recognize the importance of local communities in the development of the tourism product as by treating them with respect, and addressing their concerns and ideas, the negative social impacts of tourism can be alleviated. Woo et al. (2018) conclude from their research, which explores the impact of tourism on the quality of life of stakeholders, that community residents' perceptions of tourism impact and their life satisfaction are contingent on whether or not they are involved in the tourism sector. Those who are affiliated with the tourism sector (such as people working at HVAs) are likely to perceive tourism impact on their community positively. This is attributable to the positive impact on their economic well-being, which spills over into the sense of well-being in non-material life domains (Woo et al, 2018). Accordingly, collaboration between the management of a site and the local stakeholders must be implemented for two key reasons: firstly, to enhance the effectiveness of the functioning of a heritage site as a visitor attraction; and secondly, to add value to the life quality of the local community.

### **2.3 *The heritage experience***

In the past, many preservation bodies and heritage site managers adopted the 'curatorial approach', which promoted permitted access (Calver and Page, 2013; Chhabra, 2008). However, since the turn of the millennium, the number of heritage sites used as HVAs has increased, thus increasing competition between heritage sites for visitors and for financial funding (Algieri et al., 2018; Connell et al., 2015). Preservation bodies and managers have adopted the belief that the use of heritage for tourism can actually help preserve the past and



transmit it to future generations, whilst simultaneously enhancing the opportunity for people to identify themselves through the historic narratives of heritage sites (Calver and Page, 2013; Di Pietro et al, 2017). This has led to substantial changes in the management of heritage attractions. The focus has been on the improvement of visitor services, changing the general management orientation from the curatorial approach to a more open and hospitable management approach, and focussing on accessibility and engagement (Calver and Page, 2013).

In their seminal work, Pine and Gilmore (1998) introduced the concept of the 'experience economy', which develops before this shift in management approach is implemented. According to this theoretical concept, consumers unquestionably desire experiences instead of merely purchasing services and goods. In order to meet this demand, companies need to amalgamate experiences with their traditional offerings, thus shifting from a service-oriented product to an experience-oriented product. The experience economy has become an instrumental and determining factor for innovations of services and products offered in the tourism industry (Frochot and Batat, 2013; Nagy, 2012) and therefore also for HVAs. An experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props to engage customers in a memorable event (Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

Smith and Waterton (2013) argue that heritage itself is an experience; as heritage is so closely linked to identity, it has an emotive nature. Identity is not a tangible product that you 'have', but something that is experienced and performed. In order to relate to and engage in heritage, thus participating in an experience as described in experience theory by Pine and Gilmore (1998), Smith and Waterton (2013) state that viewers must emotionally engage with the heritage as it must be a combination of action, reaction, feeling and understanding that heritage has been created.

#### **2.4 *Local stakeholder added value to HVAs***

Combining the results of the research by Woo et al. (2018), who conclude that local stakeholders perceive tourism development more positively if they are active in it, and the idea that heritage itself is an experience when it expresses the identity of the local stakeholder, it can be determined that the involvement of local stakeholders in an HVA creates value for managers involved in the tourism development, as well as the local stakeholders themselves.

Despite the limited research on the different means in which local stakeholders can contribute to an HVA in general, noteworthy research can be found on the role of local residents as tour guides at an HVA (see Frochot and Batat, 2013; Hashimoto and Telfer, 2017; Wu et al., 2015). When local residents work at heritage sites as a tour guide, they can enhance the tourist experience by interpreting and presenting the site, as well as acting as cultural mediators of its authenticity, cultural value and lifestyle (Frochot and Batat, 2013). When the narratives of a heritage site are conveyed by local guides who are familiar with the stories and the cultural background, this will lead to a more authentic experience for visitors than if they are conveyed by someone external (Hashimoto and Telfer, 2017). Furthermore, local guides can contribute to the level of engagement of the visitor experience (Melvin, 2015). Nowadays, the use of static interpretation media can be perceived as dry and unappealing to visitors, as people are accustomed to receiving information in straightforward and entertaining ways through today's media (Dueholm and Smed, 2014). Interactive storytelling provides visitors with a chance to interact with the narrator, thus creating an opportunity for value creation. Frochot and Batat (2013) state that guides potentially have the most significant role on the site, as they are the face of the site that is presented to the visitors, thus greatly influencing the tourist experiences.

The use of local guides is an example of how local stakeholders can be involved and add value to an HVA. Therefore, it is contextually relevant to Gladstone's Land, which makes use of voluntary guides by local community members. Traditionally, value was considered a trade-off between functional utility and the price paid (Choi et al., 2010). However, in today's experience economy, value has gone beyond this functional/financial purpose and shifted to more symbolic meanings of consumption (Frochot and Batat, 2013). Value is not only created through utilitarian platforms; it is greatly influenced by the personal experience of others (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Holbrook (2006) therefore states that value is of an interactive nature and, whilst it is collectively produced, it is individually experienced.

## **2.5 Value co-creation**

A way of developing a memorable experience, and thus creating value for visitors, is by engaging local stakeholders in the experience through co-creation (Boswijk et al., 2007). Berridge (2007, p. 161) states that the core focus of experience design is to "create desired perceptions, cognitions and behaviour amongst users, customers, visitors or the audience". The joint role of organisations and local stakeholders in the value co-creation process is theorised in the Service Dominant (S-D) logic paradigm (Lusch and Vargo, 2011). S-D logic posits that service is the fundamental basis of business and that service is exchanged for service, therefore they interact through mutual service provision to co-create value (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). In S-D logic, the involved parties represent dynamic and active resources, enabling complex interactions between multiple organisations (Xiang et al., 2015). This implies that value co-creation is not limited to one supplier and customer but occurs between an entire network of stakeholders (Cabiddu et al., 2013; Gamble and Gilmore, 2013).

According to the theory of S-D logic, value can only be determined in the process of consuming what is referred to as value-in-use (Lusch and Vargo, 2011). Value-in-use is the first component of value co-creation, the second being co-production (Gamble, 2018). Co-production occurs through the integration and application of resources contributed by services providers and service beneficiaries (Cabiddu et al., 2013; Lusch and Vargo, 2011). The supplier in this situation can assume two roles: that of value facilitator and that of value co-creator (Grönroos, 2008). As value facilitator, the service provider provides resources, thus value-in-use, to facilitate value creation. As value co-creator, the service provider interacts with an external stakeholder, thus creating co-production (Cabiddu et al., 2013; Navarro et al., 2014).

The locus of S-D logic lies in value-creation networks and actors as resource integrators (Williams & Aitken, 2011), while stakeholder theory centres on the idea that firms need to integrate the interests of their stakeholders in their strategic plans and decision-making processes (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Jones, 1995), in order to create and distribute value (Freeman 1984). In this sense, stakeholder theory focuses on values as a central feature of managing firms (Phillips et al. 2003), which infers that these two perspectives are irrefutably compatible as firms will use their stakeholders in the value co-creation process for the benefit of all.

## **2.6 *Conceptual framework***

Combining the concept of co-creation with the importance of local community involvement in the design of an engaging heritage experience, we suggest that co-creation among management of heritage sites and local stakeholders may enhance the value of the heritage site as a visitor attraction. Together, the management and local stakeholders involved in the development of the visitor experience could be envisioned as value facilitators and value co-creators (Bhati et

al., 2014). When management act as value facilitators by providing stakeholders with necessary resources to create their own value (Grönroos, 2008), Freeman's stakeholder theory underscores the pertinence of management nurturing these relationships as a means of facilitating the creation of value (Freeman, 1984). Conversely, when they work together synergistically, stakeholder theory explains how this collaborative approach drives value co-creation by optimising the visitor experience, thus providing customers with value through a more engaged visitor experience (Parmar et al., 2010).

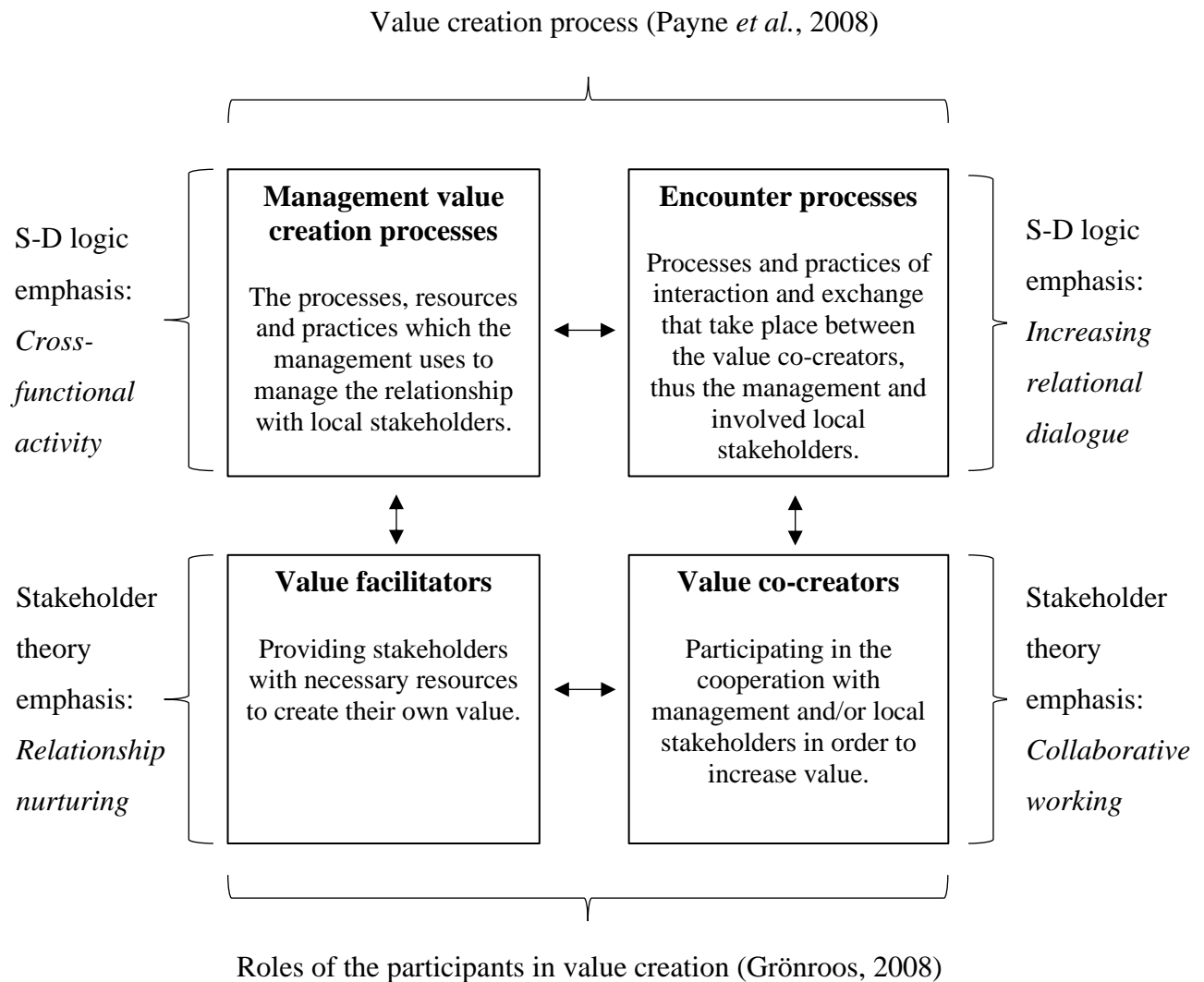
The benefits of heritage tourism development for local stakeholders in a destination have been discussed extensively in the contemporary tourism literature (see Drummond and Cano, 2015; Leask, 2016; Mody et al., 2017). However, there has been minimal research on the co-creation of an experience between heritage site management and local stakeholders. The following studies address similar topics: Grimwade and Carter (2000) investigated the balance between preservation of smaller heritage sites and its contemporary use. In doing so, they emphasised the importance of giving meaning to sites and recognising their potential value for the community. More recently, Payne et al. (2008, p. 85) created a framework in adherence with S-D logic, which serves to identify the value creation process by means of three fundamental components:

- *Supplier value-creating processes*: the processes, resources and practices that the supplier uses to manage the relationship with customers and other relevant stakeholders, in line with how S-D logic emphasizes cross-functional activity;
- *Encounter processes*: the processes and practices of interaction and exchange that take place within customer and supplier relationships, with emphasis on the S-D logic perspective of increasing relational dialog, and which need to be managed in order to develop successful co-creation opportunities; and

- *Customer value-creating processes*: the processes, resources and practices that customers use to manage their activities, in accordance with the S-D logic assertion that relevant meanings are constructed through customer experiences over time.

In their study on co-creation among hotels and disabled customers, Navarro et al. (2014) combine this co-creation framework with the specified roles of participants as defined by Grönroos (2008). This combination of frameworks is also applicable to value co-creation at small HVAs. However, as the current study focusses on the co-creation between management and local stakeholders, the final steps, in which the customer creates his/her own value, are omitted. Furthermore, the processes and roles have been redefined in order to accommodate the relationship between management and local stakeholders.

As a corollary of the above discussion, we conceptualise the value co-creation process between HVA management and local stakeholders as a framework which integrates the value creation process (S-D logic) with the inherent roles of the participants (stakeholder theory). Through this framework, which is presented below in Figure 1, the concept of co-creation can be applied to the collaboration between management and local stakeholders to add value to the visitor experience at Gladstone's Land.



**Figure 1. A framework for co-creation among management and local stakeholders**

HVAs can add value to their visitor experience through value co-creation among management and local stakeholders. The conceptual framework presented above is a means to assess how this theory can be applied to real life situations. It is based on two main components in the value creation process: the supplier value-creating process and the encounter-process (Grönroos, 2008; Payne *et al.*, 2008). These two steps in the value creation process have been correlated with the roles that management and local stakeholders can assume in this process: value facilitators and value co-creators.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive methodology, in which the data provide the researcher with the opportunity to achieve ‘depth’ rather than ‘breadth’ (Blaxter et al., 2006; Veal, 2011). In adherence with the research questions of the study, the qualitative methodology took the form of a case study, in which data were drawn from people’s experiences and practices, thus strong recommendations for pragmatic stakeholder implications can be established from them. Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 544-545) describe a qualitative case study as “an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources”. This allows the researchers to explore an issue through a variety of lenses, leading to a better understanding of the multiple facets of a case (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Case study data have been shown to allow the researcher to show the complexity of social life (Blaxter et al., 2006). As the research questions of this study are designed to provide a view on the role of the participants of the value co-creation process and the role between the management and the local stakeholders, thus observing the situation from different perspectives and assessing a complex and social situation, a case study has been chosen as the research methodology.

Gladstone’s Land was chosen as the case study for this research because it is in the process of developing its potential as an HVA. In this process, the staff are looking for ideas and ways to develop their product, yet balancing this with the need to retain the authenticity of the site. Not only are local stakeholders involved in the decision-making processes, they are also an essential element in the presentation of the product. The people working at this HVA consist of the management team and a wide range of volunteers, who come from the local community. The collaboration between the management and the volunteers, who classify as local stakeholders, provides us with more insight into the role of the local stakeholders in the



value co-creation process and the role of the relationship between the management and the local stakeholder in the value co-creation process, thus attesting to the aptness of this particular HVA site to answer the research questions of the study.

### ***3.1 Case study overview – Gladstone’s Land***

Gladstone's Land is a surviving high-tenement house that is situated in the Old Town area of Edinburgh, Scotland and dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It has been renovated and furnished by the National Trust for Scotland and is considered to be a popular tourist attraction within the city centre. The site was originally built in 1550 but was purchased and redeveloped in 1617 by Thomas Gledstanes, a wealthy local merchant (Edinburgh-Royal Mile website, 2018). Its prominent location (on the ‘Royal Mile’ tourist area between Edinburgh Castle and the Palace of Holyrood) and the extent of its accommodation mark out the affluence of its mercantile owner. However, in addition to residing there, Gledstanes rented sections of the building to various tenants from different social classes. Accordingly, the restored building offers a unique insight into different types of Edinburgh life of the period. The overcrowded conditions of the Old Town, and the physical limitations of the site, meant that the house could only be extended in depth or in height (the current building is six stories high) (Information-Britain, 2018).

### ***3.2 Research design***

In order to gather the qualitative data for this research, an ethnographic research design was implemented for the chosen case study site of Gladstone’s Land. This decision was taken in accordance with views expressed in the tourism management literature that ethnographic research can offer fascinating insights into the decision-based operations of hospitality and

tourism sites (Martin and Woodside, 2012). With an ethnographic design, the researcher integrates into the culture of the studied organisation over an extensive time and collects a range of data types throughout the period of their immersion (Arendt et al., 2012). The data collection through this approach therefore included a range of intangible knowledge gained through observations/interactions and tangible information through generated notes and media, in addition to standard interview data from key personnel associated with the site (Martin and Woodside, 2012). The three types of ethnographic data that were collected for the present study are detailed below.

### *3.2.1 Observations / interactions*

Over a twelve-month period from October 2015 – September 2016, the lead researcher spent a total of approximately 400h at the case study site of Gladstone's Land, initially in the capacity of a Volunteer and later as a Senior Property Assistant. During this extensive immersion period, the researcher conducted regular observations of the operations of the site during meetings with senior management, corporate events and visitor tours. Over time, the researcher was accepted as a member of staff at the site and participated in various aspects of its operations. This included responsibility for welcoming the visitors, answering any visitor questions regarding the site and/or other issues, supervising volunteers, and assisting the Property Manager, Visitor Service Manager and other staff, from front of house issues to administrative tasks. Through this full immersion into the operations of the HVA at various levels, the lead researcher gained full access to observations and interactions with both senior management and local stakeholders of Gladstone's Land. The subsequent data obtained in relation to such qualified and relevant parties, many of whom were also formally interviewed as detailed below, thus

fulfilling the ‘credibility’ criterion of Guba’s (1981) construct for qualitative research trustworthiness.

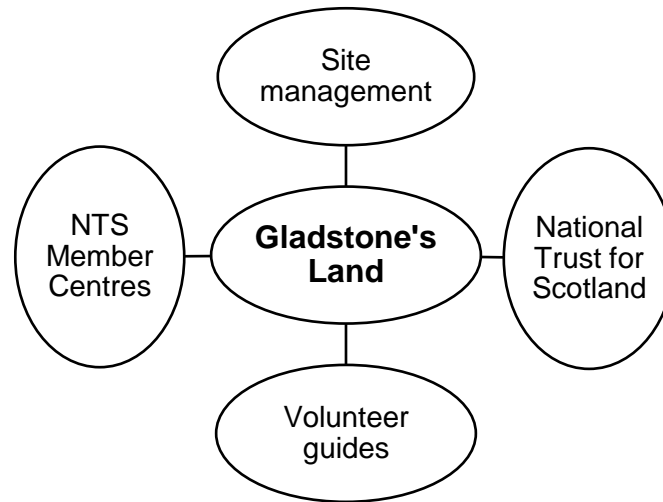
### *3.2.2 Generated notes / media*

Over the 12-month immersion period in which the lead researcher engaged in regular observation and participatory activities at the case study site, the intangible knowledge gained in relation to the site’s operations was complemented by the generation of notes and media. A total of 27 A4 pages of hand-written field notes were recorded in two separate journals – one for detailing observations and the other for detailing interactions with staff and visitors at Gladstone’s Land. In addition to these notes, the lead researcher also generated media based on gained understandings of the site’s operations – including a 20-slide PowerPoint Presentation, a promotional site video and 18 site photographs (see Appendix C).

### *3.2.3 Interviews*

The observations, interactions and generated notes and media were supplemented with nine in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews – as opposed to structured or unstructured – was chosen as it allows the interviewer to create an overall representation of the views of the respondent whilst remaining open to new ideas on the topic that naturally arise during the interview (Arendt et al., 2012). A snowballing sampling method was adopted, in which personal contacts were used to identify other people to interview. Thus, the process ‘snowballs’ until all of the necessary information is collected (Blaxter et al., 2006). Other stakeholders were then identified, creating an overview of all local stakeholders and management involved at the case study site. A stakeholder map for

Gladstone's Land was created, with Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory as a guideline (see Figure 2 below).



**Figure 2. Stakeholder map of Gladstone's Land**

This stakeholder map provides a holistic overview of the involved stakeholders that were interviewed, ensuring that no stakeholders were overlooked. As a result of the above sampling technique, nine in-depth interviews were conducted with management and stakeholders of Gladstone's Land: three with full-time senior staff from the management team and six with volunteering guides, one of whom was a representative for the Members' Centre. Furthermore, the interviewees represented demographic diversity in terms of age, gender and professional background. Accordingly, the heterogeneity that was established in our interview sample served to contextualise the research from distinct perspectives, which fulfilled the 'transferability' criterion of Guba's (1981) construct for qualitative research trustworthiness.

Two sets of interview questions were prepared, based on whether the interviewees were local stakeholders or management. The set of questions for the local stakeholders included questions such as "What is your relationship with the management of Gladstone's Land?" and "To what extent do you feel the management aims to involve you in the development of Gladstone's Land as a tourist attraction?" The full set of interview questions is presented in

Appendix A. The set of questions for the management included questions such as “How do you view the communication with other stakeholders at Gladstone’s Land?” and “How do you think the cooperation between the management and the local stakeholders influences the visitor experience?” The full set of interview questions is presented in Appendix B. All interviews were conducted on the site of Gladstone’s Land from 11-13 July 2016 and recorded with a digital voice recorder, resulting in a total of 207 minutes of interview data. All of the interview audio files were then transcribed verbatim, resulting in a total of 75 pages of transcripts.

As a summary of the three ethnographic data types of the study’s case study research design, Table 1 below provides a detailed breakdown of the data collection including timepoints and cumulative information.

<b>Ethnographic Data Type</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Date/Time</b>	<b>Data Count</b>
<b>Observations / Interactions</b>	Employment (Volunteer)	10:00 – 17:30, 1 day per week Oct 2015 – May 2016	225 hours (approx.)
	Employment (Senior Property Assistant)	10:00 – 17:30, 1 day per week May – September 2016	125 hours (approx.)
	Employment (Senior Property Assistant, festival period)	10:00 – 17:30, 3-4 days per week August 2016	50 hours (approx.)
<b>Generated Notes / Media</b>	1 PowerPoint Presentation	March 2016	20 PowerPoint slides
	1 Site video	7 March 2016	2 minutes
	18 Site photographs	27 October 2015 – 12 July 2016	n/a
	Handwritten notes	Throughout employment period October 2015 – September 2016	Observation journal: 20 pages; Interactions journal: 7 pages
<b>Interviews</b>	Manager 1	13 July 2016	12 min; 4 pages
	Manager 2	11 July 2016	32 min; 11 pages
	Manager 3	13 July 2016	17 min; 4 pages
	Guide 1	12 July 2016	33 min; 13 pages

Guide 2	12 July 2016	8 min; 6 pages
Guide 3	12 July 2016	24 min; 10 pages
Guide 4	12 July 2016	20 min; 8 pages
Guide 5	12 July 2016	11 min; 6 pages
Guide 6	12 July 2016	50 min; 13 pages

**Table 1. Breakdown of ethnographic data collection**

### **3.3 Data analysis**

The gathered data were analysed by deconstructing the transcribed interview data into codes (Arendt et al., 2012), then reconstructing them according to the research questions. An inductive coding approach was adopted, which addressed the existing research questions but also identified new insights and questions (Veal, 2011). The data were analysed through the analytical technique of explanation building. This technique is a continuous process whereby a logical explanation of what has been discovered through the case studies is developed by referencing between theories and the discovered data (Yin, 2003). By adopting this technique, the discovered data were matched with the framework provided in the literature review. This addressed the objectives of the research and provided an overview of how site management can add value to the experiences of visitors to HVAs by co-creation with local stakeholders. In doing so, the rigour of our analysis approach has taken steps towards the fulfilment of the ‘dependability’ criterion of Guba’s (1981) construct for qualitative research trustworthiness.

## **4. Results**

The primary data found through the interviews and observations at Gladstone’s Land are now presented in adherence with the research questions in this section. We structure the findings

into the four key categories of: management encouragement of value co-creation; the influence of the relationship between management and local stakeholders on the co-creation process; the role of participants in the visitor experience; and the role of participants in the value co-creation process. By incorporating direct evidence of the data collected from the interviews, observations, interactions and generated media, we demonstrate how these findings emerged from the data as opposed to author predispositions. In doing so, we fulfil the ‘confirmability’ criterion of Guba’s (1981) construct for qualitative research trustworthiness.

#### ***4.1 Management encouragement of value co-creation***

All three interviewed members of the management team stated that they highly encourage volunteers and other local stakeholders to present ideas for the development of the visitor experience. Manager 1 discussed the virtues of staff and volunteers in terms of “their understanding and wanting to be a part of [the development process]”. Five of the six guides that were interviewed stated that they experience a sense of freedom regarding their interpretation and storytelling, allowing them to feel engaged with the value creation process. Guide 3 commented: “It’s about a level of freedom that you’re granted. Different guides will tell the story in different ways”. This encouragement was first observed by the lead researcher in month 5 of the immersion period. When writing an educational course assignment about the experience design at Gladstone’s Land, and how to improve this, the Manager of the property assisted by answering questions and providing full access to the property. At that point, the Manager and the National Trust for Scotland were collaborating on plans to improve the experience design and thus the visitor experience.

In month 9 of the immersion period, the lead researcher was asked to design one of the rooms of the property, arranging the furnishings in the room in order to improve the visitor

experience of this section of the property. This feeling of encouragement was asserted in conversations with the other volunteers at the property at this stage of the immersion period, who stated that they had at different times also been asked to give their input or assist with the development of the visitor experience.

#### ***4.2 The influence of the relationship between management and local stakeholders on the co-creation process***

In conversations with different volunteers at Gladstone's Land in Month 8 of the immersion period, most of the volunteers suggested that they attempted to optimise their tour performances for their own personal motivations but also to support the management. Thus, the positive management relationship was a motivation for volunteers performing at their highest ability, which ensured a good visitor experience.

Two of the six interviewed guides felt that none of their suggestions or ideas regarding the visitor experience would be considered by the management, whereas the others believed that they would. Informal conversations with the guides in Month 10 revealed that this difference in opinion related to the relationship they had with the management. When guides felt that their views were disregarded by the management, they stated that they did not offer their input as doing so would prove futile. Therefore, in order to receive the input in the visitor experience of volunteers, the development of positive relationships between volunteers and management was paramount.

The interviews with the managers revealed their difficulties in achieving and maintaining a positive relationship between the volunteers and their management team. Manager 1, referring to relations with all local stakeholders, stated: "When you have more than



a hundred volunteers alone, and everyone's of a different generation, has a different way of learning, a different way of understanding, then trying to communicate things to that many people is a huge challenge". Various observed debates among members of the management team throughout the immersion period on how to maintain a positive relationship with certain volunteers confirm both managerial challenges and also the effort that they invested in maintaining this positive relationship.

### **4.3 *Role of participants in the visitor experience***

All three interviewed members of the management expressed that the voluntary guides denote the most important asset of their visitor experience. Manager 2 stated: "You just need to look at TripAdvisor reviews [of Gladstone's Land], 99% of them mention how amazing the guides were". All of the interviewed guides believed that they have a connection with the building and its history. Guide 5 stated: "You feel like you're almost telling a personal story when you're telling about the people that lived here."

Through the observations conducted during the immersion period at Gladstone's Land, it was evident that all of the interviewed guides aim to make the experience personal and engaging for the visitors, even going as far as dressing in period costumes and offering the visitors similar costumes to become part of the immersive experience (see site photograph in Appendix C). By listening to the different tours given by the guides, it became apparent that each tour was unique and differentiated from the others. Each guide incorporated his or her own personal anecdotes and information, thus creating personal added value for the visitor experience.

#### ***4.4 Role of participants in the value co-creation process***

All of the interviewed guides discussed the sense of identity that they feel when giving guided tours at Gladstone's Land. Guide 2 defined his role as a guide as being a stakeholder in the process of sharing knowledge, stating: "You're a stakeholder in everything that is around you, and it is important to absorb all that's interesting around you and to pass it on to people". Guide 1 commented: "There's nothing that gives me more satisfaction than being referred to as that good guide upstairs". In further informal conversations, he related his motivation to create added value to the visitor experience to the sense of identity that being a guide has provided. All of the guides referred to a sense of pride they feel when recanting tales of Gladstone's Land, perceiving it as part of their history and identity, and a willingness to share this with the visitors.

During the interviews, all three of the managers discussed the sense of identity that the majority of the stakeholders feel due to their work for Gladstone's Land. Manager 2 commented that "For some guides it's a role, they identify with being a volunteer guide at Gladstone's Land, it's part of their identity". Furthermore, observations and conversation with the guides in months 1-3 of the immersion period revealed that this feeling of identity is enhanced for them when they wear the period costumes as they then become part of the story (see site photographs in Appendix C).

Describing the role of the guides, Manager 1 commented that "They help create and make it feel authentic". The general manager confessed that the furniture in the property is not originally from the property itself, but from different houses from the same time period – thus takings steps towards circumventing anachronisms that may detract from the visitor experience (see site photographs in Appendix C). However, the lead researcher observed that the volunteers use their identity as a guide to convince people of the authenticity of the visitor

experience. Both the interviews and further conversations with the General Manager and Visitor Service Manager in Month 11 of the immersion period reveal that, in the design of the visitor experience, the role of the guides is always considered to be one of the most important aspects in the value creation during the visit.

## **5. Discussion**

Management value creation processes have been described as the processes, resources and practices that management use to regulate the relationship with local stakeholders. Value, however, cannot solely be created by management; it is of an interactive nature and greatly influenced by the personal experience of the customers (Holbrook, 2006). Thus, when an HVA aims to create value through co-creation among management and local stakeholders, the local stakeholders should be given the opportunity to engage in the development process of the visitor experience. Our findings therefore contribute to stakeholder theory as, in the context of HVAs, we demonstrate how management creates value by integrating stakeholder interests into their strategic processes (Freeman, 1984; Jones, 1995).

In answer to our first research question of how management encourages value co-creation with local stakeholders, Gladstone's Land management provides the resources and the practices that can then be used by the local stakeholders, the voluntary guides in this case, to create value through participation of the development process of the HVA. Once the guides make use of this provision of resources and are open to the practices set by the management then value can be determined (Lusch and Vargo, 2011). In the current study, the ethnographic data have revealed that this works relatively smoothly. The management runs the property with an open-door policy, encouraging volunteers to come forward with ideas and propositions for the improvement of the visitor experience, whilst also collaborating with external heritage

conservation organisations to enhance the HVA experience design. These findings enhance our understanding of the value creation process by contributing to the S-D logic emphasis of cross-functional activity vis-à-vis management value creation processes (Payne et al., 2008). Our empirical data also reveal how HVA site management provide the volunteers with a range of developmental opportunities for creative input in the form of freedoms to dress in period costume, adding their own knowledge to their story or design aesthetics for the HVA presentation. This essentially gives them a sense of empowerment and thus the ability to engage in the co-creation process of generating value for the visitors. This challenges Grönroos and Helle's (2010) theory that value co-creation is most effective when the customers are the driving force behind the value creation, as our findings indicate that in HVAs it is the local stakeholders who represent the most critical component in the value co-creation process.

### **5.1 *Encounter processes***

Encounter processes are the practices and processes of interaction and exchange that take place between value co-creators, in this case the management and involved local stakeholders. The observations and interviews reveal that Gladstone's Land is operated with a clear management that sets out process and practice guidelines for all local stakeholders to work with. This style of encounter processes contributes to the theoretical discussion by Kiely (2013), who identifies two main stakeholder collaboration processes: relationship templates that attempt to add value through a process of collaborative synergy, and collaborative relationships based on competitive templates.

In answer to our second research question of how the relationship between management and stakeholders influences the value co-creation process, at Gladstone's Land a clear process of collaborative synergy has been established. Despite the fact that there are guides and

members of the Member Centre that do not always feel heard, the case study data revealed that the majority of the local stakeholders believe that the management takes their opinions and ideas for improvement into consideration, thus working together with them to add value to the visitor experience. Our findings demonstrate how this has a positive effect in HVA contexts, as even though some stakeholders do not agree with certain management decisions in the first instance, there is opportunity for understanding, which eventually leads to favourable outcomes. Often these outcomes take the form of enhanced tour performances from the volunteers, as they are driven by personal motivations combined with those aimed to support management relations.

A key aspect mentioned by multiple stakeholders is the importance of the personal mentality of the participants of the encounter processes. Hence, nurturing and maintaining positive working relations with management is strategically significant for the volunteers, as it can circumvent managerial resistance to their creative input in the process. The management is also concerned about the relationship with the local stakeholders, which is attributable to difficulties in maintaining a healthy relationship with large groups of individuals with diversified demographics and learning approaches. Our findings indicate that these challenges may be overcome to a certain extent through ongoing managerial investment in relationship management with stakeholders. These findings are theoretically significant as they advance our understanding of encounter processes within management-stakeholder relationships at HVAs, thus contributing to S-D logic perspectives on increasing relational dialogs as a means of value co-creation (Payne et al., 2008).

## 5.2 *Value facilitators*

The role of value facilitator is that of the people who are providing others with necessary resources to create their own value. In today's tourism industry, the emphasis lies in the role of the experience, thus the demand for a service used as the stage and goods (such as costumes) as props to engage customers in a memorable event (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). This allows people to gain knowledge but also to experience a place through different senses, as if they were travelling back in time to that location (Frochot and Batat, 2013).

In answer to our third research question of what role participants of value co-creation process play in the development of the visitor experience, at Gladstone's Land value is generated in co-creation with the local stakeholders. Thus, the role of value facilitator is that of the volunteer guides who are in direct contact with the guests. In our case study, it has been observed that voluntary guides are not only active as value facilitators but are arguably the most important facet of the visitor experience. They have the role of interactive storytellers, thus providing a unique and differentiated experience for which the current demand is markedly high. This study reveals that the value-facilitators mostly recognise the sense of identity that Gladstone's Land brings them, and the importance of this in their presentation to the visitors. This insight is correlated with Ashworth's (2003) theory, as the guides are both part of the local community that perceive Gladstone's Land as part of their identity, but also fulfil a role in carrying out this identity through the property as an HVA to tourists. As they observe the tales of the property as part of their history and identity, they are enthusiastic in sharing the tales in their own way with the visitors, thus making the visitor experience more tailored and context-specific.

The case study ethnographic data reveal that the guides at Gladstone's Land acknowledge the importance of making an experience personal. This is one of the ground

conditions for the creation of value through co-creation among value facilitators (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Yet the volunteers also expand the experience beyond personal to immersive – through the recreation of authenticity by way of costume participation, thus facilitating value through engagement. Accordingly, our empirical findings reveal how Gladstone’s Land have revised their visitor experience to make it more character-based, through engaged storytelling and costumes, thus giving the guides the resources to help the visitors relate to the people living at that period of time. These insights contribute to the theoretical discussion of S-D logic in relation to how dynamic and active resources facilitate complex interactions between stakeholders to co-create value (Xiang et al., 2015), whilst also adding to stakeholder theory by offering new insights into the roles of participants in value creation with an emphasis on stakeholder relationship nurturing (Grönroos, 2008).

### **5.3 Value co-creators**

The role of value co-creator can best be described as a participator in the cooperation between management and/or local stakeholders in order to increase value. In answer to our fourth research question of what role participants of the value co-creation process play in relation to each other, as this study has shown, the role of value facilitator is mainly occupied by those volunteer guides who are in direct contact with the visitors. In this respect, they essentially represent stakeholders in the knowledge sharing process, who are motivated by aspects of personal pride in their identity and the desire to create added value to the HVA through immersion and expansion of the site’s ‘story’. In doing so, they can counteract any inauthenticity of the site aesthetics by leveraging their own identity to convince visitors of the authenticity of the HVA.

Stakeholder theory posits that a synergistic approach to nurturing management-stakeholder relations drives value co-creation by optimising the visitor experience (Parmar et al., 2010). In advancement of this theoretical understanding, our empirical findings show how the role of the managers is to set in place the resources, processes and practices that allow the value facilitators to create the value. It was observed that the management in Gladstone's Land provides value-in-use, which then creates co-production once the management interacts with the local stakeholders (Cabiddu et al., 2013; Navarro et al., 2014). Therefore, the most clearly defined roles of the involved value co-creator are that of the management and the value-facilitators - in the case of Gladstone's Land, the guides. These findings offer new theoretical insights into the roles of participants in value creation (Grönroos, 2008), whilst advancing the stakeholder theory perspective of collaborative working.

## **6. Conclusions**

The aim of this research was to assess how co-creation among management and local stakeholders can add value to the visitor experience within HVAs. Using a combinative framework of stakeholder theory and S-D logic as our theoretical lens, the findings have demonstrated that a positive, open relationship between management and local stakeholders benefits the co-creation process. Theoretical discourse on stakeholder management and value co-creation discusses the conceptualisation of distinct stakeholder collaboration processes based on relationship and competitive templates (Kiely, 2013). On account of the current study's empirical findings, we contribute to these discussions by theorising how, when management involve local stakeholders in these collaborative processes and provide them with an opportunity to co-create value for visitors, HVAs essentially serve two separate but inter-related purposes. First of all, they fulfil marketing objectives through their aptitude for meeting



the demand for a visitor experience that is engaging and thus value-adding (Gamble et al., 2011). Secondly, in doing so they effectively act as a soundboard for the local identity, thus contributing to wider cultural objectives. Our findings are therefore theoretically significant for both S-D logic and stakeholder theory development as they offer new insights into how this value co-creation process is not most effectively driven by consumers as previously assumed (Grönroos and Helle, 2010), but rather by the local stakeholders when they work collegially and compatibly with management at HVAs. For this to happen, it is essential in this process that both the management and the local stakeholders act as representatives of the local identity, in order to tell the story of their heritage.

In our study, Gladstone's Land has a unique story, narrating many years of history and culture and thus representing their local identity. Smaller heritage sites, such as this case study, face the risk of becoming meaningless through a lack of appreciation of the heritage story they can tell, and their narratives might fade into obscurity over time. In order to avert this, their stories must be packaged in engaging experiences that reach wide audiences. Our findings therefore have significant managerial implications as they demonstrate how local stakeholders are essential in the creation of value, for when they support the heritage site and value co-creation among the management and local stakeholders occurs, the stories of the sites will be remembered and thus safeguarded for future generations.

This case study has proved that the mentality of the value creators has a large influence on the value co-creation process. At Gladstone's Land, a very positive relationship between the management and the local stakeholders was evidenced. In advancement of how S-D logic emphasis on cross-functional activity intersects with stakeholder theory emphasis on relationship nurturing, our findings suggest that when management combine an open-door policy with a level of freedom that the volunteers (who function as value facilitators)

experience, this makes them feel involved in the development of the HVA. This allows them to add their personal knowledge and personalise the experience for the visitors, thus perpetuating the local cultural identity whilst adding value to the HVA. In terms of future managerial implications regarding the presentation of story-based culture and the creation of more visitor awareness, the Gladstone's Land case study provides a good example of how management value creation processes, and inherent stakeholder involvement, can be exercised efficiently. This insight contributes to theoretical discourse of how the S-D logic emphasis on increasing relational dialogue intersects with stakeholder theory emphasis on collaborative working. Furthermore, other HVAs could use the findings of this study to help them enhance their own efficiency and effectiveness of co-creating value with their external stakeholders, thus demonstrating practical implications for practitioners derived from our new insights in the value creation process (Payne et al., 2008) and the roles of participants in value creation (Grönroos, 2008).

### ***6.1 Limitations and future research***

The primary data for this research were collected on the basis of the conceptual framework that was derived from the analysis of secondary data. This has guaranteed the validity of the research, ensuring that the research questions were answered. However, all qualitative research investigations are subject to certain limitations which must be acknowledged. For instance, we note the limitations of the snowball sampling method used in our methodology, in that participants were not selected randomly from a population, which can limit the statistical validity and generalizability of study findings (Vashistha et al, 2015). However, the people interviewed at Gladstone's Land were appointed by the management, and by each other, therefore creating a sample of interviewees that were familiar with each other, thus not making

it a random sample. We also acknowledge the limitation that the context of our investigation space was confined to one HVA, thus providing the possibility for future related studies to adopt a multiple case study approach and explore to what extent the findings from our study generalise to different types of HVA. This research direction may have strong pragmatic implications as it could establish how HVAs, which are ostensibly differentiated and unique, can learn from each other in terms of enhancing their operations through value co-creation processes.

The conceptual framework that we developed, presented and discussed can also be used for further research in other case studies, in order to further advance theoretical understanding of how S-D logic and stakeholder theory, when considered together, explain value co-creation processes in different managerial contexts (such as HVAs). Given that very few studies have attempted to integrate these two theoretical constructs and apply them to an empirical investigation, we have taken some initial investigative steps from which other scholars could build upon. Moreover, in this research study, the customers were not consulted as the focus of our empirical sampling remained on the relationship between the management and local stakeholders. Future studies could therefore include the views of visitors to heritage sites as to whether they experienced added value through co-creation among management and local stakeholders, thus providing a dual perspective which could further corroborate and extend the findings from the present study.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview questions (local stakeholders at Gladstone's Land)**

What do you do for Gladstone's Land?

What is your connection with Gladstone's Land?

What is, according to you, the story of Gladstone's Land?

What do you think of the current way Gladstone's Land is presented to visitors?

What do you think is the unique value of Gladstone's Land?

How do you see your contribution to Gladstone's Land as a visitor attraction?

Do you think it is important for your contribution that you are local and/or have a connection with the property?

Do you feel like people from Edinburgh are involved in what is going on at Gladstone's Land?

Do you feel a certain sense of pride towards Gladstone's Land and its story?

How do you see the future of Gladstone's Land?

What is your relationship with the management of Gladstone's Land?

Do you feel the management of the site takes your interests and ideas in account?

To what extent do you feel like the management aims to involve you in the development of Gladstone's Land as a tourist attraction?

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview questions (management at Gladstone's Land)**

How long have you been working at Gladstone's Land and/or the NTS?

What is, according to you, the story of Gladstone's Land?

What do you think of the current way Gladstone's Land is presented to visitors?

What do you think is the unique value of Gladstone's Land?

What is the role of the guides at Gladstone's Land?

How do you see their contribution to Gladstone's Land as a visitor attraction?

Do you think it is important that they are locals and/or have a connection with the property and its surroundings?

Who would you identify as the main stakeholders of Gladstone's Land?

How do you view the communication with these other stakeholders?

Do you take their interests and ideas into account when making decisions?

In how far does the head office of the NTS influence your work?

How do you think the cooperation between the management and the local stakeholders influences the visitor experience?

How do you see the future of Gladstone's Land?

## Appendix C

### Site Photographs from Gladstone's Land (source: the authors)



Exterior site photographs of Gladstone's Land, Edinburgh



**Site photographs of staff in period costumes**





**Site photographs of furnishings from the same time period**



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