



Homestay customers' perceived value mediates the influence of customer participation and host–customer interaction on customer satisfaction

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With the rapid development of homestay accommodation, it is urgent to study the mechanism of satisfaction of guests as customers. We used value cocreation theory to explore customer participation and host–customer interaction as antecedents of customer perceived value, and how this then influenced their satisfaction. We analyzed data from 344 homestay guests using partial least squares regression and bootstrapping analysis. The results show that customer participation and host–customer interaction affected customers' perception of the functional, emotional, and social value of the homestay experience. Furthermore, perceived functional, emotional, and social value mediated the relationships of customer participation, host–customer interaction, and customer satisfaction. Our results have implications for the improvement of customer satisfaction.

Keywords

customer participation;
host–customer
interaction; perceived
value; customer
satisfaction; homestay;
accommodation

Article Highlights

- Customer participation affected the perceived functional, emotional, and social value of the homestay experience.
- Host–customer interaction affected the perceived functional, emotional, and social value of the homestay experience.
- Perceived functional, emotional, and social value mediated the relationships among customer participation, host–customer interaction, and customer satisfaction.

Homestays are a type of accommodation provided by the owner to guests in a spare room on the property, and includes the serving of breakfast (bed and breakfast; B&B). The concept originated in the United Kingdom and then gradually developed and matured in other countries, such as France, the United States, and Japan (Wu & Yu, 2018). Homestays attract numerous tourists, especially those who travel independently, making it a new accommodation resource and tourism consumption trend (Li et al., 2017). Homestays not only meet people's personalized accommodation needs, but also have practical significance for improving the local ecological environment, revitalizing traditional cultures, and promoting regional economic development (H. Chen et al., 2020). However, the lack of industry standards and government supervision means that the service quality of homestays varies, such that customers do not evaluate their

satisfaction highly, and complain regularly (Sang et al., 2018). *Customer satisfaction* is a comprehensive evaluation made after consumers' experience of a product or service purchased (Johnson & Fornell, 1991) and is, thus, an important indicator to measure service quality (Sang et al., 2018). There have been few studies of the mechanisms of customer satisfaction with homestay accommodation (H. Chen et al., 2020). Thus, we examined the impact of customer participation and host–customer interaction on customer satisfaction, and analyzed customer perceived value as a mediator of this relationship.

Value Cocreation

The traditional view of value creation is based on goods-dominant logic, which holds that enterprises are the creators of value and customers are the destroyers or consumers of value (Normann & Ramirez, 1993). Vargo and Lusch (2004) suggested that service-dominant logic should replace goods-dominant logic. According to the process of value cocreation, services and consumption are carried out simultaneously, and consumers also participate in the creation of value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In the process of an interactive consumption experience, value can be created with and determined by the customer through the integration of operand and operant resources (Jiang et al., 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). In tourism and hospitality settings, *operand resources* are mainly tangible (e.g., raw materials, equipment), and need to be processed by other tools before they can become useful (Madhavaram & Hunt, 2008); in contrast, *operant resources* are intangible (e.g., knowledge, skills, and cultures) and need other resources for deployment (Madhavaram & Hunt, 2008). In the context of tourism, attractions and hotel facilities are examples of operand resources, and the time and energy invested by tourists in the process of their tourism activities are operant resources.

Customer Participation and Customer Perceived Value

In the process of value cocreation, customers are active participants rather than passive recipients (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). *Customer participation* refers to the effort and degree of customers' involvement in activities of common interest through the input of material, emotional, or intellectual resources (Hsieh et al., 2004). It is an important part of the value cocreation process that can affect value cocreation (C.-F. Chen & Wang, 2016; Prebensen & Xie, 2017). There are three main forms of customer participation: attitude participation, information participation, and behavior participation (S. C. Chen & Raab, 2017). *Attitude participation* refers to the willingness of customers to contribute to the process of service value creation, which manifests in the form of customer cooperation, trust, respect, politeness, and friendship (Hsiao et al., 2015). *Information participation* refers to the customer's information contribution to the process of service value creation, which is reflected in the search for and sharing of information. Information search includes reducing uncertainties, understanding the value cocreation environment, and performing tasks in the service context. For example, potential customers will check Internet reviews made by previous guests before booking into a homestay.

Customer perceived value is a subjective evaluation of the effectiveness of a product or service after the customer receives the benefit of the product or service and subtracts the cost paid in obtaining it. According to the theory of consumption value (Sheth et al., 1991), perceived value is experiential and operationalized as a multidimensional structure that reflects the customer's overall experience of service consumption (Zeithaml, 1988). This study divided customer perceived value into three dimensions: *Functional value* refers to the practical utility that customers obtain from the homestay, including facilities, services, and convenience of the location (Zhang et al., 2018); *emotional value* refers to the pleasure and emotional satisfaction that customers receive from the homestay experience (Sheth et al., 1991); and *social value* includes the friendships and feelings of respect that customers acquire from the homestay experience (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001).

Cocreation of value refers to the core principle of service-oriented logic and is the main premise of customer participation behavior, which is embodied in compliance with the service provisions of the homestay and positive communication with the host. In the context of adventure tourism, Prebensen and Xie (2017) found

that customer participation is closely related to customer perceived value. Further, in a study of airline systems C.-F. Chen and Wang (2016) found that customer participation can affect customer perceived value. Therefore, we put forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Customer participation will have a significant positive impact on the perceived functional value of a homestay.

Hypothesis 1b: Customer participation will have a significant positive impact on the perceived emotional value of a homestay.

Hypothesis 1c: Customer participation will have a significant positive impact on the perceived social value of a homestay.

Host–Customer Interaction and Customer Perceived Value

Through interaction, guests communicate their desires to hosts, and hosts can then provide the corresponding products and services, effectively reducing guests' doubts and perceived risks, and increasing their perception of functional value (Choi et al., 2015). In a series of interactions throughout the homestay experience—for example, the accommodation reservation and reception process—guests receive emotional rewards from the host, increasing their personal emotional energy and promoting the formation of emotional value (Xie & Ying, 2016). Professionalism and high-quality service provided by hosts will give guests a sense of respect, self-recognition, and pride, which translate to social value. Therefore, we put forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: Host–customer interaction will have a significant positive impact on the perceived functional value of a homestay.

Hypothesis 2b: Host–customer interaction will have a significant positive impact on the perceived emotional value of a homestay.

Hypothesis 2c: Host–customer interaction will have a significant positive impact on the perceived social value of a homestay.

Customer Perceived Value and Satisfaction

When customers perceive a high (vs. low) value of products and services, their satisfaction is greater (Jiang et al., 2016; Moliner et al., 2007). In the context of hospitality management, customer perceived value is regarded as an important precursor to satisfaction (Yang & Mattila, 2016). The existing rural tourism literature shows that functional, emotional, and social value types can improve tourist satisfaction and, thus, tourist loyalty (Peña et al., 2012). Lee et al. (2007) investigated the perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of tourists in Korea, and found that all three aspects of perceived value (functional, emotional, and overall value) had a significant impact on tourists' satisfaction. Therefore, we put forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: Perceived functional value will have a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction with homestays.

Hypothesis 3b: Perceived emotional value will have a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction with homestays.

Hypothesis 3c: Perceived social value will have a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction with homestays.

The Mediating Role of Customer Perceived Value

The more value customers perceive in the process of using a service, the greater their satisfaction tends to be (Jiang et al., 2016; Moliner et al., 2007). Therefore, it can be inferred that customer participation affects customer satisfaction through value cocreation. Using a homestay, as compared with other types of accommodation, provides more interactive space and communicative opportunities for consumers, which directly affects the subsequent value perception, evaluation, and behavior tendencies of the guest (H. Chen et al., 2020). Therefore, it can also be inferred that host–customer interaction influences customer

satisfaction through value cocreation. As such, we put forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4a: Perceived functional value will mediate the relationship between customer participation and customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4b: Perceived emotional value will mediate the relationship between customer participation and customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4c: Perceived social value will mediate the relationship between customer participation and customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5a: Perceived functional value will mediate the relationship between host–customer interaction and customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5b: Perceived emotional value will mediate the relationship between host–customer interaction and customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5c: Perceived social value will mediate the relationship between host–customer interaction and customer satisfaction.

The conceptual model is shown in Figure 1.

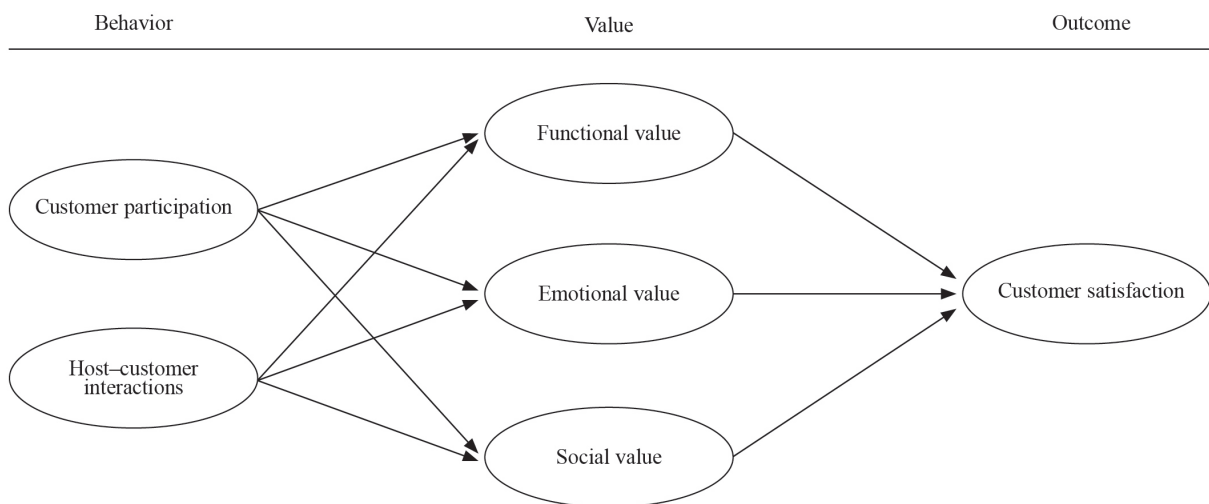


Figure 1. *Theoretical Model*

Method

Participants and Procedure

For this study we commissioned Sojump to conduct a random sampling survey. Sojump is a well-known professional online survey company that conducts self-report online questionnaires in China. Of 384 completed questionnaires, 40 were removed, leaving 344 valid responses in the final sample (effective recovery rate = 89.58%). In accordance with Churchill’s (1979) principle, data screening was carried out as follows: We excluded from analysis surveys in which more than 30% of data were missing and surveys in which respondents selected the same option repeatedly. Then, the averages of the sample data were used to replace missing data points.

Among the 344 respondents, the average age was 30.51 years ($SD = 5.68$, range = 20–60). There were 183 men (55.52%) and 161 women (44.48%). Regarding level of education, seven participants had not completed

junior college (2.03%), 100 had completed junior college (29.07%), 189 held a bachelor's degree (54.94%), and 48 held a master's degree (13.95%).

Measures

Participants rated all items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Customer Participation

Customer participation was measured with four items revised from S. C. Chen and Raab (2017) to fit the study context: "I searched for information about the homestay before my stay," "I strictly followed the rules of the homestay," "When I encountered difficulties and needed help, I took the initiative to communicate with the host," and "I actively cooperated with the host's instructions and arrangements."

Host–Customer Interaction

Host–customer interaction was measured with four items from Wang (2018): "The host and I greeted each other," "I chatted freely with the host in a relaxed atmosphere," "The host and I talked about something other than work," and "I communicated with the host without barriers."

Customer Perceived Value

Perceived functional value was measured with three items from Jiang et al. (2019): "The homestay facilities met my needs," "The services provided by the homestay met my needs," and "The location of the homestay met my needs." Perceived emotional value was measured with three items from Sheth et al. (1991): "I experienced some new things," "The experience made me feel comfortable and relaxed," and "The experience put me in a good mood." Perceived social value was measured with three items from Sweeney and Soutar (2001): "The experience made me feel the recognition and respect of others," "The experience made me meet new friends," and "The experience helped me enhance my emotional connection with family and friends."

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction was measured with three items from Jiang et al. (2019): "I was very satisfied with the homestay," "I think the homestay was worthwhile," and "I think the homestay met my expectations."

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using SPSS 20.0 and SmartPLS 3.0. First, the demographic characteristics of the sample were analyzed, then the reliability and validity of the measurement model were tested. Finally, the research hypotheses and mediating effects were tested using partial least squares regression and bootstrapping analysis.

Results

We used Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability to test the reliability of the measurement model. Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability values all exceeded the threshold of .70, indicating good reliability (see Table 1).

Table 1. Measurement Model Reliability Statistics

Latent variables	Observed variables	Loadings	AVE	CR	α
Customer participation (CP)	CP1	.88	.74	.92	.88
	CP2	.83			
	CP3	.85			
	CP4	.88			
Host–customer interaction (HCI)	HCI1	.81	.63	.87	.80
	HCI2	.74			
	HCI3	.83			
	HCI4	.78			
Perceived functional value (PFV)	PFV1	.89	.74	.90	.82
	PFV2	.84			
	PFV3	.85			
Perceived emotional value (PEV)	PEV1	.84	.77	.91	.85
	PEV2	.88			
	PEV3	.92			
Perceived social value (PSV)	PSV1	.85	.67	.86	.75
	PSV2	.79			
	PSV3	.82			
Customer satisfaction (CS)	CS1	.92	.83	.94	.90
	CS2	.91			
	CS3	.91			

Note. AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability.

Validity Testing

Convergent validity reflects the validity of items related to the variable being measured. Table 1 shows that the standardized factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) values were all greater than .50, indicating that the requirement for convergent validity was satisfied (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

According to the standard of Fornell and Larcker (1981), when the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlation coefficient between the variables, this meets the requirement for discriminant validity. Table 2 shows that our variables had good discriminant validity.

Table 2. Correlation Analysis Results of Testing for Discriminant Validity

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Customer participation	.86					
2. Host–customer interaction	.56	.79				
3. Perceived functional value	.56	.67	.86			
4. Perceived emotional value	.64	.64	.61	.88		
5. Perceived social value	.58	.61	.61	.62	.82	
6. Customer satisfaction	.65	.69	.65	.64	.69	.91

Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 shows that customer participation had a significant positive impact on customers’ perception of functional, emotional, and social value, thus supporting Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c. Host–customer interaction had a significant positive impact on customers’ perception of functional, emotional, and social value, thus supporting Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c. Perceived functional, emotional, and social value all affected customer satisfaction, thus supporting Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c.

Table 3. Structural Path Model of Hypothesis Testing Outcomes

Hypothesis	Routes	Standardized coefficient	Result
H1a	Customer participation → Perceived functional value	.38***	Supported
H1b	Customer participation → Perceived emotional value	.45***	Supported
H1c	Customer participation → Perceived social value	.20***	Supported
H2a	Host–customer interaction → Perceived functional value	.42***	Supported
H2b	Host–customer interaction → Perceived emotional value	.44***	Supported
H2c	Host–customer interaction → Perceived social value	.58***	Supported
H3a	Perceived functional value → Customer satisfaction	.46***	Supported
H3b	Perceived emotional value → Customer satisfaction	.39***	Supported
H3c	Perceived social value → Customer satisfaction	.12***	Supported

Note. *** $p < .001$.

We conducted a bootstrapping analysis to examine the proposed mediation effects. The number of resamples was set at 5,000 and we calculated 95% confidence intervals. Table 4 shows that the three aspects of customer perceived value each had a significant mediating effect in all the examined relationships, thus supporting Hypotheses 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5b, and 5c.

Table 4. Results of Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis	Routes	Indirect	Result
H4a	Customer participation → Perceived functional value → Customer satisfaction	.17***	Supported
H4b	Customer participation → Perceived emotional value → Customer satisfaction	.17***	Supported
H4c	Customer participation → Perceived social value → Customer satisfaction	.02**	Supported
H5a	Host–customer interaction → Perceived functional value → Customer satisfaction	.19***	Supported
H5b	Host–customer interaction → Perceived emotional value → Customer satisfaction	.17***	Supported
H5c	Host–customer interaction → Perceived social value → Customer satisfaction	.08**	Supported

Note. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

There has been little research on the process of creating value between hosts and guests in the context of homestay accommodation. Our research fills this gap by empirically testing the role of customers and hosts in the value cocreation process.

Practical Implications

First, our results show that customers’ participation was positively related to their perception of functional, emotional, and social value. This substantiates prior findings that customer participation can promote their

perceived value (C.-F. Chen & Wang, 2016; Prebensen & Xie, 2017). To increase the active participation of customers in the process of value creation, hosts should provide detailed information on the Internet, for example, the procedure for check-in, the specific location of the homestay property, and whether smoking and pets are permitted.

Second, our results indicate that host–customer interaction could result in guests having a positive perception of the functional, emotional, and social value of the homestay experience. On the basis of these findings, the host should take the initiative to communicate with guests, treat them as friends, and offer emotional services (e.g., offering a warm service temperament). Hosts should also undertake targeted training to strengthen their customer communication and improve their ability to provide interactive services to their guests.

Third, our results indicate the three aspects of customers' perceived value positively affected their satisfaction. This supports findings in the hospitality management literature regarding the role of perceived value in promoting customer satisfaction (Lee et al., 2007; Peña et al., 2012). Therefore, in the process of value cocreation, hosts should provide good-quality facilities, improve services, and enhance the interaction with their guests to promote the perception of functional, emotional, and social value of the homestay.

Fourth, we found that the three aspects of customer perceived value mediated the relationships among customer participation, host–customer interaction, and customer satisfaction. These results are consistent with those of C.-F. Chen and Wang (2016), who showed that customer participation can influence customer satisfaction through the three aspects of customer perceived value. We also found that host–customer interaction affected customer satisfaction through all three aspects of customer perceived value.

Theoretical Implications

Our research has theoretical implications for value cocreation and hospitality management. First, although some progress has been made in examining the value cocreation process between host and customer (Busser & Shulga, 2018; Malshe & Friend, 2018), we empirically tested customer participation and the impact of host–customer interaction on value cocreation. We examined the impact of customer participation and host–customer interaction on customer satisfaction regarding three aspects of customer perceived value, which increases accumulated knowledge of the value cocreation process that is formed by the efforts of hosts and their customers.

Second, previous studies have examined the impact of customer participation on value cocreation (C.-F. Chen & Wang, 2016; Jiang et al., 2019; Prebensen & Xie, 2017), but the role of host–customer interaction in value cocreation has received less attention. Our research has introduced host–customer interaction into the process of value cocreation, and we found that host–customer interaction promotes customers' perception of functional, emotional, and social value, which extends the theoretical depth of the value cocreation literature.

Finally, although the role of perceived customer value has been confirmed in the context of the hospitality and tourism industries (Lee et al., 2007; Peña et al., 2012), few scholars have examined this in the context of homestay accommodation (H. Chen et al., 2020). We defined three aspects of customer perceived value and verified their impact on satisfaction through empirical research. Therefore, this study expands the application scenarios of consumption value theory in the process of value cocreation.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are some limitations to our research. First, data were collected through an online survey, which means that the process lacked our supervision. As a result, the responses may be lacking in appropriate data quality. Future researchers could consider collecting face-to-face data. Second, the antecedents of customer

participation were not included in this study. Future researchers could add individual customer characteristic variables as antecedents of customer participation to increase the predictive accuracy of the model. Third, we divided customer perceived value into functional, emotional, and social value types, whereas future researchers could consider additional aspects, such as economic, green, and epistemic value types. Finally, we used a correlational research design, which precludes us making causal inferences. Future studies could use experimental methods to verify the causal relationships between variables.

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