The Impact of Online and Offline Channel Interactions on Guest Value Co-creation Behavior in Rural Homestays in Sichuan of China

Ling Liu*, Ubonwan Khunthong, Thaunjai Sangthong

Faculty of Business and Finance Management, Rattana Bundit University, Bangkok, Thailand
lindada1030@163.com (Corresponding author), ubonwank@gmail.com, thaunjais@yahoo.com

Abstract. Online and offline channel interactions are critical factors influencing guest experience and behavior. However, limited research has systematically examined how these interactions impact guest value co-creation behavior through experiential mechanisms. Based on 406 valid questionnaires collected from rural homestay guests in Sichuan Province, China, this study employed structural equation modeling to test the hypothesized relationships and mediation effects. The results indicate that both online channel interaction ($\beta = 0.202$, $p < 0.01$) and offline channel interaction ($\beta = 0.228$, $p < 0.01$) exert significant direct impacts on guest value co-creation behavior. Memorable tourism experience demonstrates a stronger direct impact on guest value co-creation behavior ($\beta = 0.522$, $p < 0.01$) and is directly impacted by both online ($\beta = 0.453$, $p < 0.01$) and offline channel interactions ($\beta = 0.237$, $p < 0.01$). Mediation analysis further confirms the significant indirect impacts of online and offline channel interactions on guest value co-creation behavior through memorable tourism experience. This study enriches the understanding of the relationship between channel interactions and guest value co-creation behavior and provides practical insights for the sustainable development of rural homestays.

Keywords: Guest value co-creation behavior; Online channel interaction; Offline channel interaction; Memorable tourism experience.

1. Introduction

Rural homestays in China have experienced rapid growth in recent years and have become an important driver of rural tourism and local economic development (Wu & Cui, 2025). Unlike standardized hotels, the experiential value of rural homestays is not primarily derived from physical facilities or price but is deeply embedded in the interpersonal interactions and emotional bonds between hosts and guests. Hosts function not only as service providers but also as facilitators of local culture (Chen et al., 2024), while guests actively construct their own tourism experiences through participation in these interactions. Accordingly, how interactions between hosts and guests are transformed into memorable experiences and subsequently stimulate guest value co-creation behavior has emerged as a central issue for understanding the competitiveness and sustainability of rural homestays (Tao et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023).

The rapid digitalization of tourism has profoundly transformed this interaction process. Before and after their trips, guests communicate with hosts through online channels, while during their stays they primarily rely on offline interactions, rendering interactions between hosts and guests a continuous process spanning the stages before, during, and after the stay. In this process, memorable tourism experience plays a pivotal role in converting service encounters into guest behavioral responses (Pang et al., 2024).

Existing research indicates that both offline interaction (Yen et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2023) and online interaction (Alimamy & Gnoth, 2022; Bu et al., 2022; Chou et al., 2023; Raza et al., 2023) significantly influence guest cognition and behavior. However, research integrating online and offline channel interactions has primarily focused on e-commerce and traditional product consumption contexts. In tourism and homestay research, these two channels are still largely examined in isolation, despite guests experiencing continuous and omnichannel interactions during their trips. This disconnect is particularly pronounced in homestay research. Existing literature not only emphasizes offline channel interactions but also primarily focuses on urban shared accommodation platforms (Cui et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2023), overlooking the fundamental differences in cultural embeddedness and relationships between hosts and guests inherent in rural homestays. This gap significantly limits the explanatory power of existing interaction theories in rural homestay contexts. Furthermore, although tourism experiences have been widely examined, not all experiences translate into value co-creation behavior (Zhou et al., 2023). Only those experiences characterized by strong emotional intensity and enduring memorability are more likely to motivate guest value co-creation behavior. However, the mediating role of memorable tourism experience between different interaction channels and value co-creation behavior has yet to be systematically examined. To address these gaps, this study develops a framework integrating online interaction, offline interaction, memorable tourism experience, and guest value co-creation behavior.

As one of China's most representative rural homestay clusters, Sichuan Province is transitioning its industry from scale expansion to a stage of quality enhancement that emphasizes cultural integration, guest experience, and sustainable operation, providing an ideal empirical context for testing this framework. This study aims to (1) examine the impact of online and offline channel interactions on guest value co-creation behavior, and (2) test the mediating role of memorable tourism experience between different interaction channels and guest value co-creation behavior. Through these analyses, this research not only advances the theoretical integration of interaction and memorable tourism experience, but also provides practical insights for rural homestays to achieve experiential enhancement and sustainable development.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online and offline channel interaction

With the advancement of digital technology and the experience economy, businesses are continuously expanding diverse channels for customer interaction (Cui et al., 2022). Interaction has

transcended traditional single service contact to become a crucial mechanism for shaping tourism experiences and behaviors.

In retail and service research, online channel interaction is typically defined as the process of information and emotional exchange between businesses and customers via internet platforms (Aw et al., 2021; Frasquet et al., 2024; Gao & Huang, 2021; Swoboda & Winters, 2021). In homestays, online channel interaction optimizes service processes by presenting accommodation and service details before arrival (Chen et al., 2024;Pang et al., 2024). This helps guests form reasonable expectations and facilitates personalized communication before the stay, thereby enhancing trust and positive perceptions (Qu et al., 2023; Hua et al., 2024). Such interactions extend beyond information transfer to include emotional exchange and relationship building, with communication after the stay extending the overall service experience(Chen et al., 2024).

Offline channel interaction primarily occurs through face-to-face exchanges in physical contexts, characterized by greater immediacy and frequency (Cui et al., 2022;Ozuna & Steinhoff, 2024). In homestays, cultural experiences and community engagement immerse guests in local lifestyles and enable interaction with community members. These interactions deepen understanding of local culture and strengthen emotional connections (Lu et al., 2024; Tan & Hsu, 2024; Wu et al., 2023). Offline channel interaction also enables hosts and guests to communicate needs and feedback, collaboratively resolve issues, and enhance guests' sense of participation and belonging (Chen et al., 2024).

Omnichannel research indicates that consumers often perceive online and offline channels as interconnected components of a holistic experiential system during consumption (Swoboda & Winters, 2021; Wang & Wang, 2024). However, existing studies in rural homestays predominantly examine interactive effects from a single channel perspective, with insufficient attention to synergistic mechanisms. Therefore, this study examines online and offline channel interactions as integrated components of a unified experiential process in rural homestays.

2.2.Guest value co-creation behavior

Yi and Gong (2013) conceptualized guest value co-creation behavior as comprising two higher-order dimensions: participation behavior and citizenship behavior. Participation behavior includes information seeking, information sharing, responsible behavior, and personal interaction, while citizenship behavior encompasses feedback, advocacy, helping, and tolerance. This multidimensional framework provides a crucial theoretical foundation for studying value co-creation behavior in service industry.

Existing research has explored guest value co-creation in sectors such as hospitality and tourism, business to business transactions, and healthcare services (Bu et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2024; Peng et al., 2024; Suh & Moradi, 2023). In rural homestays, guests can participate in value creation by providing service feedback, engaging in experiential activities, and sharing accommodation experiences on social media and online platforms. This enhances service quality and brand influence while generating broader market recognition and potential customer bases for homestays (Ding et al., 2024; John & Supramaniam, 2024; Wang et al., 2023). However, prior studies predominantly examine antecedents through lenses such as brand identity and emotional attachment, often blurring the boundaries between interaction and value co-creation behavior. Therefore, this study explores how interactions directly and indirectly influence guest value co-creation behavior to extend existing research in this field.

2.3.Memorable tourism experience

Memorable tourism experience refers to tourism experiences that persist in long term memory after the trip, are characterized by strong emotional salience, and are positively evaluated (Kim, 2014; Hosany et al., 2022). This type of experience typically exceeds guests' prior expectations and

remains retrievable in memory. It influences their overall evaluations of the destination and their subsequent perceptions (Leung et al., 2022).

Memorable tourism experience has become a significant research topic in tourism studies. By integrating local cultural elements, natural landscape resources, and high-quality services, destinations can effectively enhance tourists' experiential quality and strengthen the memorability of tourism experiences (Kahraman & Cifci, 2023). Building on the scale developed by Kim (2014), subsequent studies have further validated and extended the multidimensional theoretical framework. Recent literature has also emphasized the importance of examining the applicability and cross cultural validity of these experiential dimensions across different cultural and geographical contexts (Rodrigues et al., 2023; Sthapit et al., 2022; Sthapit et al., 2024). In this study, memorable tourism experience is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, and knowledge.

2.4. Affective events theory

Affective events theory, proposed by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), explains how situational events influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors through emotional responses. With the expansion of research contexts, Affective events theory has been progressively applied to tourism and service studies to elucidate the formation of affective experiences during service interactions and their behavioral consequences. Events experienced by tourists during interactions can be regarded as affective events. These events trigger emotional responses, which further influence satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioral intentions (Tu et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2023).

Online and offline channel interactions in rural homestays constitute significant contextual events within the tourist experience. These interactions shape behavioral responses by influencing tourists' emotions and experiential perceptions. Consequently, Affective events theory provides a crucial theoretical foundation for understanding the relationships among channel interactions, memorable tourism experiences, and guest value co-creation behaviors.

3. Research model and hypotheses development

Grounded in Affective Events Theory, this study conceptualizes online and offline channel interactions in rural homestays as affective events. These interactions influence guest value co-creation behavior directly or indirectly through memorable tourism experience. Figure 1 presents the proposed research model, and the research hypotheses are developed accordingly.
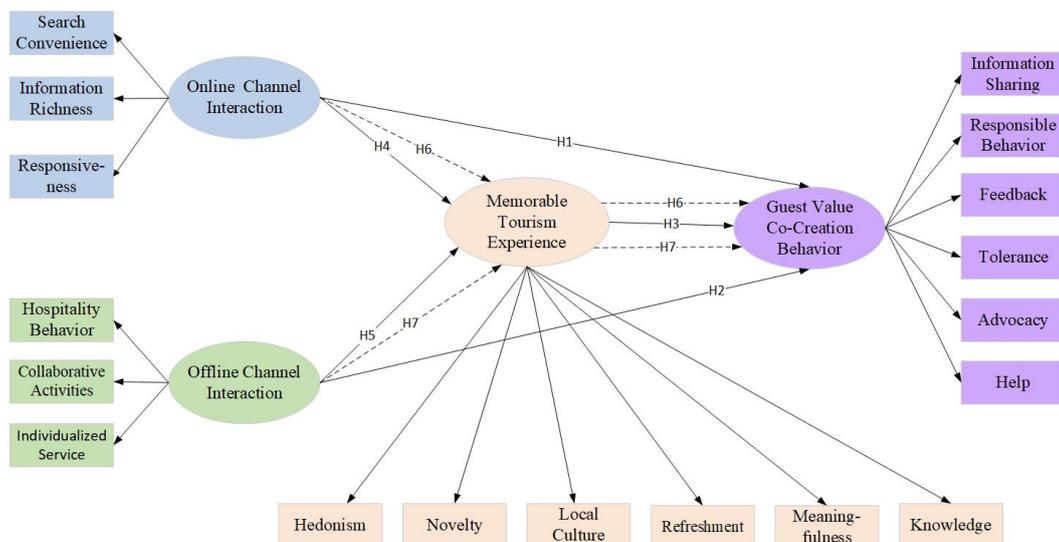

Fig.1: Conceptual Framework of the study

3.1.Impact of online and offline channel interactions on guest value co-creation behavior

Channel interactions enhance mutual understanding between firms and guests and facilitate guest participation in value co-creation (Cui et al., 2023).

Online channel interaction is primarily manifested through content customization and diversified modes of information presentation (Swoboda & Winters, 2021). These interactive features enhance guests' cognitive clarity regarding service providers, reduce perceived transaction uncertainty (Woosnam et al., 2024), and stimulate value co-creation behaviors such as information sharing and idea exchange (Wang & Wang, 2024). In addition, online channel interaction involves emotional communication and social connectedness, which strengthen guests' trust and emotional identification and further encourage value co-creation behavior (Cui et al., 2023; Woosnam et al., 2024).

Offline channel interaction exerts a more direct influence on guests' emotional engagement and behavioral responses. Face-to-face interaction strengthens guests' understanding of service content and local culture, enhances their sense of participation and belonging, and increases their tendency to respond through positive behaviors such as feedback, recommendations, and assistance to others (Lu et al., 2024; Tan & Hsu, 2024). Empirical evidence further suggests that, in peer-to-peer accommodation, stronger perceived interpersonal interactivity is associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in value co-creation behavior (Wu et al., 2023).

Based on the above analysis, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Online channel interaction has a direct impact on guest value co-creation behavior.

H2: Offline channel interaction has a direct impact on guest value co-creation behavior.

3.2.Impact of memorable tourism experience on guest value co-creation behavior

Memorable tourism experience refers to a positively valenced tourism experience that remains salient in guests' memory beyond the consumption stage (Zhou et al., 2023).

Compared with ordinary tourism experience, memorable tourism experience is associated with stronger engagement after consumption (Kahraman & Cifci, 2023). Greater memory salience corresponds to a stronger willingness to engage in service interactions, which is reflected in increased levels of guest value co-creation behavior. Due to its enduring presence in memory, memorable tourism experience exerts a stable and direct influence on subsequent guest behavior (Sthapit et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2023).

Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Memorable tourism experience has a direct impact on guest value co-creation behavior.

3.3.Impact of online and offline channel interactions on memorable tourism experience

Channel interactions influence memorable tourism experience primarily through emotional arousal, experiential depth, and overall experiential integration (Cui et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023).

Online channel interaction extends the temporal boundaries of tourism experience. Tourists can engage in experience construction before visiting and continue to revisit relevant experiential content after the trip (Hosany et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023). Frequent and highly interactive online communication enhances tourists' understanding and expectations (Cui et al., 2023; Frasquet et al., 2024). As a result, tourism experiences become more coherent and immersive at both cognitive and emotional levels, increasing their likelihood of remaining salient in memory and developing into memorable tourism experiences (Leung et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2023).

Positive memories formed during the accommodation process enhance guests' overall perceptions of their stay. Offline channel interaction represents a key situational source of positive accommodation memories. The authenticity and innovativeness of interactions, as well as hosts' hospitableness, strengthen guests' emotional perceptions of the accommodation process (Tan & Hsu, 2024; Wu et al., 2023). Consequently, accommodation experiences gain greater emotional depth and memory salience (Lu et al., 2024; Tan & Hsu, 2024). At the same time, offline channel interaction

directly shapes on-site experiential perceptions. Face-to-face communication intensifies emotional responses and situational involvement. It reinforces guests' overall impressions and supports the formation of memorable tourism experience (Tan & Hsu, 2024; Zhou et al., 2023).

Based on the above analysis, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Online channel interaction has a direct impact on memorable tourism experience.

H5: Offline channel interaction has a direct impact on memorable tourism experience.

3.4. Mediating role of memorable tourism experience

Memorable tourism experience is an experiential outcome formed through emotional responses and memory retention. It serves as a key mechanism linking interactive perceptions to behavioral outcomes (Hosany et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2023). As a construct rooted in experience and memory, it shapes guests' subsequent behavioral orientations.

According to affective events theory, emotional reactions elicited by interaction events in specific contexts influence individuals' overall experience evaluations and subsequent behavioral responses. In the rural homestay context, channel interaction represents a salient affective event during the accommodation experience. Such interaction evokes guests' emotional responses, making accommodation experiences more likely to be retained in memory and perceived as memorable tourism experiences.

Channel interaction not only affects guests' immediate experiential perceptions but also indirectly influences their subsequent behaviors. Online channel interaction fosters memorable tourism experiences by increasing guests' anticipation before the trip and building emotional connections across different stages of the stay (Leung et al., 2022; Qu et al., 2023). Offline channel interactions strengthen memory salience and experiential attachment through immersive on site engagement and emotional resonance (Sthapit et al., 2022; Kahraman & Cifci, 2023). These experiences motivate guests to engage in value co-creation behavior.

Based on the above analysis, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H6: Online channel interaction has an indirect impact on guest value co-creation behavior through memorable tourism experience.

H7: Offline channel interaction has an indirect impact on guest value co-creation behavior through memorable tourism experience.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Sample and procedure

Guests who had stayed in rural homestays in Sichuan Province within the past year and had interacted with hosts through both online and offline channels constituted the target population of this study.

Data were collected from May to July 2025. A convenience sampling method was adopted. Data were collected through a combination of online and offline surveys. Online surveys were administered through the Questionnaire Star platform. Offline surveys were conducted at rural homestays located in five regions of Sichuan Province, including Chengdu, Aba, Dazhou, Luzhou, and Guangyuan.

At the beginning of the survey, screening questions were used to confirm respondents' recent rural homestay experience in Sichuan Province and their engagement in both online and offline interactions with hosts. Only respondents who answered "yes" to all questions were allowed to proceed with the survey. A total of 428 questionnaires were collected. After excluding invalid responses, 406 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis, with an effective response rate of 94.9%.

4.2. Variable measurement

The measurement of variables was based on established scales in the relevant literature and adapted for this study. Guest value co-creation behavior was measured using items adapted from Yi and Gong (2013) and Wu et al. (2023). Memorable tourism experience was measured using items adapted from Kim et al. (2012). Online channel interaction was measured using items adapted from Liu (2003) and Cui et al. (2022). Offline channel interaction was measured using items adapted from Tan (2024) and Wu et al. (2023). A five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was used to measure all items.

To ensure semantic equivalence and measurement accuracy, all items were translated using a translation and back-translation procedure. The back-translated version was compared with the original English version to ensure consistency. In addition, five experts in the relevant field assessed the content validity of the measurement items using the item objective congruence approach, and minor revisions were made accordingly. Prior to the formal survey, a pre-survey with 30 respondents was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The final questionnaire was then used for formal data collection.

5. Data Analysis and Results

5.1. Descriptive statistical analysis

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. A total of 406 valid responses were obtained, with a balanced gender distribution (50.5% male and 49.5% female). Respondents aged 26–45 accounted for 51.5% of the sample, followed by those aged 46–55 (19.5%) and 56 and above (16.2%). In terms of education, 39.2% held a bachelor's degree and 32.3% had a junior college qualification, indicating a relatively well educated sample. Respondents were drawn from diverse occupational backgrounds. Regarding income, 85.4% of the respondents reported a monthly income above RMB 5,000. Relaxation (36.7%), local culture exploration (27.3%), and family travel (25.9%) were the primary travel motivations.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Basic characteristic information	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	205	50.5
	Female	201	49.5
Age	18–25	52	12.8
	26–35	108	26.6
	36–45	101	24.9
	46–55	79	19.5
	56 and above	66	16.2
Education level	High school or below	56	13.7
	Junior college	131	32.3
	Bachelor's degree	159	39.2
	Postgraduate or above	60	14.8
Occupation	Student	29	7.2
	Company staff	97	23.9
	Freelancer	120	29.5
	Government employee	110	27.1
	Others	50	12.3
Monthly income (RMB)	Below 5000	59	14.6
	5000–8000	151	37.1
	8001–10000	140	34.5
	Above 10000	56	13.8
Travel motivation	Relaxation	149	36.7
	Family/Parent–child travel	105	25.9
	Exploring local culture	111	27.3
	Participating in special events	25	6.2
	Others	16	3.9

5.2. Reliability and validity analysis

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement scales. As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs ranged from 0.779 to 0.874, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 and indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Composite reliability was further assessed using rho_a and rho_c. The rho_a values ranged from 0.782 to 0.876, while the rho_c values ranged from 0.872 to 0.915, all above the recommended cutoff of 0.70, confirming the reliability of the measurement model.

Convergent validity was evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE). The AVE values for all constructs ranged from 0.694 to 0.782, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.50 and demonstrating satisfactory convergent validity. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. As shown in Table 3, the square roots of the AVE for all constructs exceeded their correlations with other constructs. This indicates adequate discriminant validity and shows that each construct is empirically distinct.

Table 2. Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
SC	0.789	0.790	0.877	0.703
IF	0.834	0.835	0.900	0.751
RE	0.779	0.782	0.872	0.695
HB	0.867	0.869	0.910	0.716
CA	0.851	0.860	0.900	0.694
IS	0.861	0.861	0.915	0.782
HE	0.791	0.793	0.878	0.705
NO	0.870	0.871	0.911	0.720
LC	0.861	0.861	0.915	0.782
RF	0.874	0.876	0.914	0.725
ME	0.832	0.832	0.899	0.749
KN	0.842	0.843	0.904	0.759
IN	0.835	0.835	0.900	0.752
RB	0.843	0.843	0.905	0.761
FB	0.830	0.831	0.898	0.746
TO	0.842	0.842	0.904	0.759
AD	0.854	0.854	0.911	0.774
HL	0.785	0.785	0.875	0.699

Note: SC = Search Convenience; IF = Information Richness; RE = Responsiveness; HB = Hospitality Behavior; CA = Collaborative Activities; IS = Individualized Service; HE = Hedonism; NO = Novelty; LC = Local Culture; RF = Refreshment; ME = Meaningfulness; KN = Knowledge; IN = Information Sharing; RB = Responsible Behavior; FB = Feedback; TO = Tolerance; AD = Advocacy; HL = Help.

5.3. Main effect analysis

We used SmartPLS 4.0 to test the main effects, and the results are presented in Table 4. Online channel interaction (ONI) has a significant direct effect on guest value co-creation behavior (VCB) ($\beta = 0.202$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H1. Offline channel interaction (OFI) also has a significant direct effect on guest value co-creation behavior (VCB) ($\beta = 0.228$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H2. Memorable tourism experience (MTE) has a significant direct effect on guest value co-creation behavior ($\beta = 0.522$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H3. Furthermore, online channel interaction has a significant direct effect on memorable tourism experience (MTE) ($\beta = 0.453$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H4. Offline channel interaction has a significant direct effect on memorable tourism experience (MTE) ($\beta = 0.455$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H5.

Table 3. Discriminant validity

Construct	SC	IF	RE	HB	CA	IS	HE	NO	LC	RF	ME	KN	IN	RB	FB	TO	AD	HL
SC	0.838																	
IF	0.539	0.867																
RE	0.525	0.558	0.833															
HB	0.443	0.506	0.569	0.846														
CA	0.494	0.488	0.524	0.516	0.833													
IS	0.432	0.449	0.511	0.497	0.500	0.884												
HE	0.440	0.511	0.520	0.507	0.474	0.441	0.840											
NO	0.470	0.506	0.554	0.505	0.457	0.470	0.466	0.849										
LC	0.484	0.510	0.565	0.530	0.475	0.488	0.503	0.517	0.884									
RF	0.493	0.503	0.574	0.553	0.555	0.535	0.502	0.524	0.595	0.852								
ME	0.437	0.470	0.554	0.490	0.443	0.434	0.485	0.487	0.497	0.504	0.865							
KN	0.410	0.442	0.480	0.474	0.401	0.542	0.432	0.465	0.507	0.532	0.465	0.871						
IN	0.453	0.459	0.479	0.511	0.488	0.452	0.511	0.463	0.493	0.479	0.415	0.466	0.867					
RB	0.445	0.412	0.571	0.535	0.474	0.474	0.511	0.524	0.514	0.573	0.492	0.433	0.484	0.872				
FB	0.483	0.524	0.561	0.518	0.524	0.509	0.501	0.503	0.531	0.568	0.451	0.469	0.492	0.490	0.864			
TO	0.435	0.488	0.521	0.470	0.419	0.501	0.496	0.493	0.488	0.543	0.485	0.419	0.455	0.499	0.510	0.871		
AD	0.489	0.503	0.504	0.494	0.493	0.427	0.513	0.500	0.496	0.569	0.483	0.469	0.479	0.478	0.437	0.516	0.880	
HL	0.498	0.468	0.534	0.480	0.485	0.518	0.543	0.516	0.473	0.549	0.509	0.466	0.453	0.541	0.534	0.524	0.526	0.836

Table 4. Structural model results

Relationship between variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-Value
ONI -> VCB	0.202	0.202	0.038	5.346	0.000**
OFI -> VCB	0.228	0.228	0.038	5.941	0.000**
MET -> VCB	0.522	0.521	0.043	12.12	0.000**
ONI -> MET	0.453	0.454	0.037	12.341	0.000**
OFI -> MET	0.455	0.455	0.036	12.566	0.000**

Note:l ** significant at the 0.01 level   * significant at the 0.05 level

5.4.Mediation analysis

We further examined the mediating role of memorable tourism experience in the relationships between channel interactions and guest value co-creation behavior. As shown in Table 5, the indirect effect of online interaction on guest value co-creation behavior through memorable tourism experience was significant ($\beta = 0.237$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H6. Similarly, the indirect effect of

offline interaction on guest value co-creation behavior through memorable tourism experience was also significant (β = 0.237, p < 0.01), supporting H7.

Table 5. Mediation analysis results

Relationship between variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-Value
OFI -> MET -> VCB	0.237	0.237	0.028	8.497	0.000**
ONI -> MET -> VCB	0.237	0.236	0.026	8.964	0.000**

6. Conclusion

This study explored the impact of online and offline channel interactions on guest value co-creation behavior in rural homestays. The results show that online and offline channel interactions, as well as memorable tourism experience, have significant direct effects on guest value co-creation behavior. Memorable tourism experience exerts the strongest influence. Both functional communication and affective interaction stimulate guests' willingness to engage in value co-creation activities. Memorable experiences serve as a key driver of such behavior.

Online and offline channel interactions also have significant effects on memorable tourism experience, with comparable effect sizes. Memorable tourism experience depends on both pre-arrival communication and immersive offline interaction during the stay. Together, these interactions form a coherent experiential process that enhances the memorability of the stay. These findings align with prior research (Hosany et al., 2022; Kim, 2014; Leung et al., 2022). Online channel interaction builds trust and shapes expectations. Offline interaction strengthens cultural immersion and emotional connection. Together, they promote the formation of memorable tourism experiences.

Memorable tourism experience mediated the relationship between online and offline channel interactions and guest value co-creation behavior. Guests who developed meaningful and enjoyable stay experiences were more likely to engage in value co-creation behavior. Such behaviors included knowledge sharing, feedback provision, and positive recommendations, among others. This finding is consistent with prior research. Experience and memory connect interaction with subsequent behavioral responses (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022).

6.1. Theoretical implications

This study makes several theoretical contributions to research on value co-creation in rural homestays. It extends interaction research by adopting a multi-channel perspective. Previous studies mainly examine guest behavior within single interaction settings. This study integrates online and offline channel interactions into a unified analytical framework and highlights their complementary and synergistic roles in shaping guest value co-creation behavior. This perspective enriches the theoretical understanding of interaction in digitally mediated and hybrid service environments.

The findings also reinforce the central role of memorable tourism experience in the value co-creation process. Memorable tourism experience is not treated solely as a tourism outcome (Rodrigues et al., 2023; Sthapit et al., 2024). Instead, it is positioned within the interaction process. The results highlight the importance of experiential and memory-based mechanisms in linking interaction with guest behavioral responses. This perspective advances understanding of how experiential processes underpin guest value co-creation and extends the theoretical scope of memorable tourism experience within co-creation research.

Building on these insights, this study develops an integrated framework linking multi-channel interaction, memorable tourism experience, and guest value co-creation behavior. By incorporating these constructs into a unified conceptual structure, the study provides a clearer explanation of how

guest value co-creation behavior forms in rural homestay contexts. This framework advances the application of value co-creation and interaction research in rural homestays. It also offers a stronger theoretical foundation for future studies on multi-channel interaction and guest behavioral engagement.

6.2. Managerial implications

This study provides several managerial implications for rural homestays seeking to enhance guest value co-creation behavior. Homestay hosts should prioritize the creation of memorable tourism experiences. Particular attention should be given to experiential dimensions such as hedonism, meaningfulness, local culture, and novelty. Hosts can embed local cultural elements, storytelling, and immersive activities into service delivery. These practices strengthen guests' emotional connections and sense of involvement. They also motivate guests to engage in value co-creation behaviors such as information sharing, feedback, and advocacy (Hosany et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2023).

Rural homestays should continuously improve the quality of online channel interaction. Prompt responses to guest inquiries, accurate and engaging information provision, and the effective use of online platforms to showcase cultural features and experiential highlights can help build trust and reduce uncertainty. High-quality online channel interaction allows guests to form positive expectations before arrival and lays the foundation for subsequent value co-creation.

Offline channel interaction remains essential for facilitating guest participation in value co-creation. Face-to-face communication helps establish emotional connections and enables individualized service delivery. Hosts should demonstrate warmth, patience, and respect throughout the service process. They should also encourage guests to participate in local cultural and experiential activities. These interactions enhance immersion and strengthen guests' sense of belonging. They further motivate guests to provide feedback, share experiences, and support the homestay.

At the strategic level, rural homestays should integrate online and offline channel interactions to create a coherent service experience. Information communicated online should align with offline service delivery to ensure that guest expectations are fulfilled. Online channel interaction helps shape expectations and attract guests, whereas offline interaction reinforces and realizes these expectations. Coordinated multi-channel interaction can create seamless experience journeys, strengthen memorable tourism experiences, and continuously stimulate guest value co-creation behavior.

6.3. Limitations and future research

Although this study extends research on online and offline channel interaction, several limitations remain and provide directions for future research. First, this study relied on cross-sectional data. Future research could employ longitudinal tracking or experimental methods to more precisely capture the causal dynamics of guest behavior as it evolves over time. Second, this study did not consider the potential roles of guest type (first-time guests and repeat guests) or incentive mechanisms (material or emotional incentives). Future research could examine the moderating effects of these factors to better enrich the theoretical research frame-work. Finally, this study mainly focused on online and offline channel interactions between hosts and guests. With the rise of smart tourism and artificial intelligence services, future research could explore how digital innovations such as service robots reshape interaction partners and influence memorable tourism experience and subsequent value co-creation behavior (Liu, Yin, & Li, 2024).

References

Alimamy, S., & Gnoth, J. (2022). I want it my way! The effect of perceptions of personalization through augmented reality and online shopping on customer intentions to co-create value. *Computers in Human Behavior,* 128, 107105.

Aw, E. C. X., Basha, N. K., Ng, S. I., & Ho, J. A. (2021). Searching online and buying offline: Understanding the role of channel-, consumer-, and product-related factors in determining webrooming intention. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* 58, 102328.

Bu, Y., Parkinson, J., & Thaichon, P. (2022). Influencer marketing: Homophily, customer value co-creation behaviour and purchase intention. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* 66, 102904.

Chen, H., Fu, S., & Lyu, B. (2024). Homestays in China: Mediator effects of brand perception upon host–guest interaction and tourist behavior intention. *Heliyon*, 10(8), e29820.

Chou, S., Chen, C.-W., & Wong, M. (2023). When social media meets low-cost airlines: Will customer engagement increase customer loyalty? *Research in Transportation Business & Management*, 47, 100945.

Cui, M., Cheng, L., & Shang, Y. (2024). The influence of experiencescape of home-based accommodation on tourists' subjective well-being at cultural heritage sites: The role of value co-creation. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management,* 31, 100845

Cui, X., Xie, Q., Zhu, J., Shareef, M. A., Goraya, M. A. S., & Akram, M. S. (2022). Understanding the omnichannel customer journey: The effect of online and offline channel interactivity on consumer value co-creation behavior. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 65, 102869.

Ding, K., Gong, X. Y., Huang, T., & Choo, W. C. (2024). Recommend or not: A comparative analysis of customer reviews to uncover factors influencing explicit online recommendation behavior in peer-to-peer accommodation. *European Research on Management and Business Economics*, 30(1), 100236.

Frasquet, M., Ieva, M., & Mollá-Descals, A. (2024). Customer inspiration in retailing: The role of perceived novelty and customer loyalty across offline and online channels. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 76, 103592.

Gao, M., & Huang, L. (2021). Quality of channel integration and customer loyalty in omnichannel retailing: The mediating role of customer engagement and relationship program receptiveness. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 63, 102688.

Hua, X., Hasan, N. A. M., & De Costa, F. (2024). Leveraging Electronic Word-of-Mouth to Enhance Mobile App Consumer Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Brand Awareness. *Journal of Logistics, Informatics and Service Science*, 11(2), 184-201.

Hosany, S., Sthapit, E., & Björk, P. (2022). Memorable tourism experience: A review and research agenda. *Psychology & Marketing*, 39(8), 1467-1486.

Jiang, G.-X., Li, Y.-Q., Zhang, S.-N., & Ruan, W.-Q. (2022). How to impress guests: Key factors and strategy configurations for the accommodation memories of homestay guests. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management,* 50, 267–276.

John, S. P., & Supramaniam, S. (2024). Value co-creation research in tourism and hospitality management: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 58, 96-114.

Kahraman, O. C., & Cifci, I. (2023). Modeling self-identification, memorable tourism experience, overall satisfaction and destination loyalty: Empirical evidence from small island destinations. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 6(2), 1001-1023.

Kaniadakis, A., & Farmaki, A. (2024). Responsibilisation of participants in sharing economy platforms: The case of Airbnb and the hotelisation of hosting practice. *new media & society*, 26(10), 5763-5783.

Kim, J.-H. (2014). The antecedents of memorable tourism experiences: The development of a scale to measure the destination attributes associated with memorable experiences. *Tourism Management*, 44, 34–45.

Leung, W. K., Cheung, M. L., Chang, M. K., Shi, S., Tse, S. Y., & Yusrini, L. (2022). The role of virtual reality interactivity in building tourists' memorable experiences and post-adoption intentions in the COVID-19 era. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 13(3), 481-499.

Liu, J., Liu, J., & Qu, H. (2024). Can hospitableness promote patients' eWOM behaviour? The role of perceived overall fairness, treatment effectiveness and disease severity. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 122, 103883.

Liu, X. X., Yin, C. Y., & Li, M. R. (2024). The power of voice! The impact of robot receptionists' voice pitch and communication style on customer value cocreation intention. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 122, 103819

Lu, J., Lai, I. K. W., Zhang, H., Liu, G., & Li, J. (2024). How can tourism be made engaging and meaningful? A measurement scale for ritual interaction. *Tourism Management*, 103, 104900.

Munasinghe, S., Hemmington, N., Schänzel, H., & Poulston, J. (2022). Hospitality beyond the commercial domain: A triadic conceptualisation of hospitality in tourism from a host-guest encounter perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 107, 103316.

Ozuna, E., & Steinhoff, L. (2024). "Look me in the eye, customer": How do face-to-face interactions in peer-to-peer sharing economy services affect customers' misbehavior concealment intentions?. *Journal of Business Research*, 177, 114582.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114582

Pang, J., Fu, X., & Qi, Y. (2024). The role of peer-to-peer interactions in sharing accommodation: From cocreation experience to peer customer engagement. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 120, 103764.

Peng, J., Peng, Z., Lei, S., & Xie, L. (2024). Family-customer happiness and its impact on customer citizenship behavior: a study of parent–child consumption in robot restaurants. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 53, 101273.

Raza, A., Ishaq, M. I., Khan, A., Ahmad, R., & Salem, N. H. (2023). How fashion cewebrity influences customer engagement behavior in emerging economy? Social network influence as moderator. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 74, 103392.

Rodrigues, Á., Loureiro, S. M. C., Lins de Moraes, M., & Pereira, R. G. (2023). Memorable tourism experience in the context of astrotourism. *Anatolia*, 34(2), 235-247.

Sadighha, J., Pinto, P., Guerreiro, M., & Campos, A. C. (2024). Stimulating customer participation behaviour and boosting value co-creation in hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 119, 103733.

Sthapit, E., Björk, P., Coudounaris, D. N., & Stone, M. J. (2022). A new conceptual framework for memorable Airbnb experiences: guests' perspectives. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 16(1), 75-86.

Sthapit, E., Ji, C., Dayour, F., & Badu-Baiden, F. (2024). Memorable wildlife tourism experience: Evidence from the Mole National Park. Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 33, 100904.

Suh, T., & Moradi, M. (2023). Transferring in-store experience to online: An omnichannel strategy for DIY customers' enhanced brand resonance and co-creative actions. *Journal of Business Research*, 168, 114237.

Swoboda, B., & Winters, A. (2021). Effects of the most useful offline-online and online-offline channel integration services for consumers. *Decision Support Systems*, 145, 113522.

Tan, G., & Hsu, C. H. (2024). Can host–tourist interaction pull the plug on tourist stereotypes? Exploring the power of emotional solidarity. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 50, 101211.

Tao, C. (B.), Deng, B., & Sun, J. (2023). Memorable interactive experiences between hosts and guests in B&Bs and their generation process: The host perspective. *Tourism Management*,95,104694.

Tu, H., Guo, W., Xiao, X., & Yan, M. (2020). The relationship between tour guide humor and tourists' behavior intention: A cross-level analysis. *Journal of Travel Research*, 59(8), 1478–1492.

Wang, D., Liu, A. T., & Cheung, C. (2023). Understanding memorable tourism experience: Long-term memory system and revisit intention. European Journal of Tourism, *Hospitality and Recreation*, 13(2), 125-141.

Wang, J., & Wang, C. (2024). Understanding shoppers' cross-channel analysis of influencing factors of online and offline channels: Evidence from clothing product. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 81, 104000.

Wang, M. Y., Li, Y. Q., Ruan, W. Q., & Zhang, S. N. (2023). How B&B experience affects customer value cocreation under the social servicescape: an emotional psychological perspective. T*ourism Review*, 78(1), 72-88.

Weiss, H. M., & Cropanzano, R. (1996). Affective events theory: A theoretical discussion of the structure, causes and consequences of affective experiences at work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 18(3), 1–74.

Woosnam, K. M., Sharma, S., Stylidis, D., & Singh, G. (2024). Quality interactions give rise to residents' desire to engage with tourists: A cognitive appraisal model. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 53, 101295.

Wu, W., & Cui, C. (2025). High-quality development of rural homestays in China: Supply and demand characteristics, path selection, and social effect evaluation system construction. *Tourism and Hospitality Prospects*, 9(3), 20–43.

Wu, X., Han, X., & Moon, H. (2023). Host-guest interactions in peer-to-peer accommodation: Scale development and its influence on guests' value co-creation behaviors. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 110, 103447.

Yen, C. H., Teng, H. Y., & Tzeng, J. C. (2020). Innovativeness and customer value co-creation behaviors: Mediating role of customer engagement. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 88, 102514.

Yen, C. H., Teng, H. Y., & Tzeng, J. C. (2020). Innovativeness and customer value co-creation behaviors: Mediating role of customer engagement. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 88, 102514.

Yi, Y., & Gong, T. (2013). Customer value co-creation behavior: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Business research*, 66(9), 1279-1284.

Zhou, G., Liu, Y., Hu, J., & Cao, X. (2023). The effect of tourist-to-tourist interaction on tourists' behavior: The mediating effects of positive emotions and memorable tourism experiences. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 55, 161-168.