

Co-Creation Experiences and Tourist Well-Being: Evidence from Pakistan's Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

In this dynamic era of competition, service-providing organizations, particularly hospitality and tourism companies, must understand the significance of customers' well-being. Thus, this research has provided a comprehensive framework for hospitality and tourism companies in Pakistan to focus on customers' emotional, psychological, and life well-being. It aimed to investigate the influence of co-creation experience on brand love (BLOV) and positive emotions (PEEV) that lead towards customers' well-being. Moreover, it examined the moderating role of service climate (SCL) in the relationship between co-creation experience and BLOV and co-creation experience and PEEV. The data provided by 478 tourists in Pakistan were empirically investigated through SPSS and AMOS. The results highlighted that the co-creation experience significantly influences BLOV and PEEV. Furthermore, customers' well-being is associated with BLOV and PEEV. In addition, the SCL strengthens the overall relationship between co-creation experience and BLOV, as well as between co-creation experience and PEEV.

Keywords: Hedonic Experience, Cognitive Experience, Brand Love, Psychological Well-being, Life Well-being

INTRODUCTION

In this era of competition, every hospitality organization should focus on creating and delivering superior value to its customers. Service-based organizations must maintain continuous contact with their consumers. Within the hospitality industry, particularly hotels, creating value through customer relationship building and value co-creation can offer differentiated or customized guest experiences, thereby maximizing customer engagement (González-Mansilla et al., 2019). The travel and tourism industry has undergone significant changes and revolutions because of technological developments. In the present era, most customers nowadays rely on smart devices to explore diverse places, accommodations, and leisure activities. Such behavior is directly attributable to the growing exposure of humans to information that has become possible using technology. An example in the hospitality services can be observed where a potential visitor can tailor their experience to suit their own preferences by providing predefined specifications of the desired accommodation features, pre-booked meal plans, and necessary arrangements in advance. By analyzing the patterns of previous guests and their preferences, service providers can propose improvements that may not be immediately apparent to the visitor but could be attractive to them. Such information helps tourists make decisions that are in accordance with their interests (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019). This service example illustrates the operationalization of co-creation practices, demonstrating how customer interaction is realized and how CCE is embedded across the hospitality sector in various scenarios. Co-creation experience (CCE) can also enhance the overall experience by increasing consumer quality and value, as well as customer well-being and satisfaction (Arica et al., 2023). Sweeney (2006) proposed that well-being represents the most valid outcome variable within service consumption. The term well-being is used as a multidimensional construct to describe the state of a person or group in many dimensions, such as their physical, psychological, social, or economic state, and its increasing significance is widely recognized across scholars (Diener, 2009; Sirgy et al., 2007). However, the term well-being is very much diversified in definition and often instrumentally shaped by disciplinary priorities. Accordingly, social well-being, psychological well-being, and consumer well-being are used in this study. The potential relationship, in tourism, is the prospective relationship. The relationship between co-creation and well-being constitutes a significant area of investigation in the tourism industry (Dekhili & Hallem, 2020).

Research on the involvement of consumers in co-creation is limited in the hotel and tourism sector (Junaid et al., 2020). Although many tourists anticipate that their experiences would foster a sense of well-being, there is a dearth of research examining the effect co-creation has on well-being in the hospitality domain (Altinay et al., 2019). Therefore, this study addresses how co-creation experiences enhance customer well-being through emotional responses and brand love (BLOV) and positive emotions (PEEV) in a hospitality context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The dynamic market competition has changed consumers' preferences. Now, instead of paying for the goods, they prefer to pay for better experiences. The introduction of Service-Dominant (S-D) logic as a generic theory of co-creation has elicited scholarly interest in discovering the co-creation experience (Hussain et al., 2020; Jain et al., 2017). Moreover, the consumer culture theory (CCT) assumes that the experience of the customers collectively builds experiences through shared resources and market interactions, and it considers the experiential nature of consumption (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). The fact that two streams of study intersect (S-D logic and CCT) suggests that value is always co-created and it is largely determined by the perception of the consumers about their experience of co-creation (Akaka et al., 2015). The theory of engagement (Pansari & Kumar, 2017) suggests that the marketing concept has shifted over the last few years, and its emphasis has ceased to be on relationship marketing and shifted to customer engagement. A Gallup poll supports this idea and discovered that engaged customers come to a restaurant brand 56 percent more frequently than actively disengaged customers (Sorenson & Adkins, 2014). This study builds upon these insights by extending engagement theory to describe the outcomes of the co-creation experiences of consumers in terms of the S-D logic framework. In doing so, it acknowledges that value is inherently contextual in nature, and the source of value is the subjective judgment of consumers of a particular situation. Such contextual variability in customer experience plays a decisive role in influencing the engagement patterns of consumers (Hussain et al., 2020; Chathoth et al., 2016).

Co-Creation Experience and Positive Emotions

Emotions have been recognized as an important customer resource in the value creation process (Arnould et al., 2006; Rodie & Klein, 2000). Even though no single definition of emotion has been established, researchers commonly view emotions as feelings, moods, and affect-related personality traits and involve drives, feelings, and instincts (Gnoth, 1997; Cabanac, 2002; Payne et al., 2008). Co-creation occurs when consumers integrate their operant resources with others for shared benefits (Grönroos, 2011). During this process, emotions are considered operative resources that influence the way the customer value is co-created. Hedonic, social, and cognitive experiences reinforce positive emotions and happiness. The hedonic experience is boosted by intrinsic motivations, where consumers engage in co-creation activities for the sake of enjoyment and entertainment without reliance on external incentives (Chen, 2018; Etgar, 2008). These observations are the basis of our first hypotheses:

H₁: The co-creation experiences (CCE) a) HEEV, b) SEEV, c) CEEV have a positive effect on customers' positive emotions.

Co-creation Experience and Brand Love

Brand love has been described in the literature as both intimate and thrilling, which signifies a high degree of co-creation between brands and their customers, a love that is reciprocal and brings light to the many efforts that the customer goes through to get their preferred brand. In some cases, this attachment has been compared to brand addiction, where customers become so attached to the specific brand that they neglect

options offered by other brands. Such behaviors can be explained by the strength of brand communities whose members do not want to break their brand relationships. Similarly, when one has developed an interest in a brand, the emotional attachment is so strong that it becomes almost impossible to be disengaged (Coelho et al., 2019). Vernuccio et al. (2015) observed that social experiences in these communities are important in enhancing the consumer-brand affective relationship. These results lead to the conclusion that co-creation experiences have a positive impact on brand love development, which underlies the hypotheses of the study.

H₂: The co-creation experiences (CCE) a) HEEV, b) SEEV, c) CEEV have a positive effect on brand love

Positive Emotions and Well-Being

Positive emotions have always been identified as important predictors of ideal well-being. Moreover, experiences such as joy, contentment, interest, and love in human lives not only enhance immediate experience but also influence an individual's long-term satisfaction with life (Fredrickson, 2001). This occurs through the balance of positive and negative emotions, which shape the overall life satisfaction (Diener & Larsen, 1993; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). Experiencing positive emotions elevates life satisfaction and mobilizes these resources to address life's challenges and seize opportunities. In the context of the broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions obtain more contextual value than life satisfaction, because they actively increase the adaptation and growth abilities of people. (Cohn et al., 2009). In this view, positive emotions are not just beneficial in the moment but contribute to future emotional well-being as well by triggering upward spirals (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). Broaden-and-build theory presumes that positive emotions expand thought-action repertoires, which help people be creative, play, and explore, as compared to negative emotions, which limit cognitive and behavioral repertoires (e.g., fight-or-flight responses) (Cohn et al., 2009; Fredrickson et al., 2008). The main assumption of the broaden-and-build theory is that the recurrent occurrence of positive emotions and related cognitive expansions becomes a long-term resource, increasing individual and interpersonal well-being (Kiken & Fredrickson, 2017). On this basis, the study advances H₃:

H₃: Positive emotions have a positive effect on consumer well-being a) LWBBV, b) EWBBV, c), and psychological well-being (PWBBV).

Brand Love and Well-Being

Song et al. (2019) indicated that the development of brand love leads to positive consumer outcomes. As mentioned by Kim and Kim (2018), brand love is strongly associated with behaviors motivated by passion. Aro et al. (2018) proposed well-being as a potential field for further exploration in their research on destination brand love, whereas Junaid et al. (2019) suggested conducting a study on how the brand love affects well-being. Pansari and Kumar (2017) state that people get engaged and helpful to each other in an emotional relationship. On this basis, the current research proposes the following hypothesis:

H₄: Brand love (BLOV) has a positive effect on consumer well-being a) LWBBV, b) EWBBV, c), and psychological well-being (PWBBV).

Moderation of Service Climate

The service climate theory states that customer perceptions of a strong service climate enhance the positive effects of positive customer-to-customer interactions and reduce the negative impact of negative interactions, thus determining the support that customers get through each other. Despite a long history of service climate studies that have concentrated on employee perceptions in service organizations (Bowen & Schneider, 2014), customer perceptions have gained attention, though quite recently, in the literature, especially in face-to-face settings. Considering the role theory, the service climate is a crucial factor that can reduce the gap between the training of managers and the real needs of consumer satisfaction (Gronroos, 1990). Thus, in this study these observations highlight that customers demand a service-based environment so that they can organize their activities in accordance with their objectives. On the basis of these observations, the Hypotheses H₅ and H₆ are as:

H₅: SCL positively moderates the relationship between CCE and PEEV.

H₆: SCL positively moderates the relationship between CCE and BLOV.

The conceptual framework (i.e., shown in Figure 1) is developed based on the discussion given above.

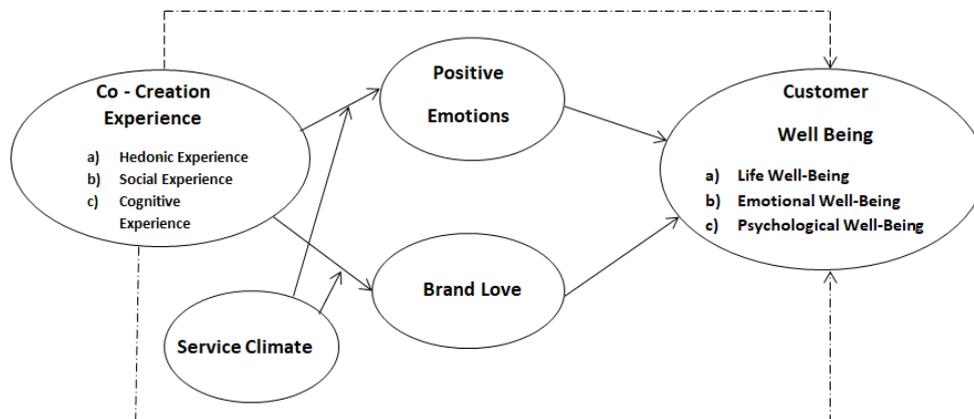


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The research has followed the positivist approach and used the quantitative technique to empirically analyze the data gathered from tourists. We took the help of different tourism companies operating in Pakistan to collect data. The companies provided us with the data of the tourists, and we also shared with them the link (i.e., to the online questionnaire) that they shared with the tourists. We gathered 478 valid responses for

the data analysis. Thus, the sample size of 478 was considered adequate for this research, as it aligns with Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size criteria for an unknown population. Co-creation experience was measured with the 13 items (i.e., 5 for social experience, 3 for hedonic experience, and 5 for cognitive experience) taken from Hussain et al. (2020). The construct “positive emotions” (PEEV) was examined by using a 5-item scale taken from Zhao et al. (2018). A 10-item scale for “brand love” was adopted from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006). Three items taken from Cheng et al. (2018) were used to measure “service climate” (SCL). Life well-being was measured with five items adopted from Diener et al. (1985) (LWBBV). Further, a 6-item scale was used to measure emotional well-being (EWBBV) (Simsek, 2009) of the tourists. Psychological well-being (PWBBV) was measured through 14 items taken from Abbott et al. (2010). The demographic characteristics of respondents were investigated through SPSS, and AMOS was used to evaluate the hypotheses.

RESULTS

SPSS was used to evaluate the demographic characteristics of respondents (i.e., local tourists), and the results highlighted that most of the respondents were males, which indicates that males are more involved in tourism than females. Most of the tourists had bachelor’s or master's level education. The six-factor model was used to ensure the validity of all the constructs (See Table 1), and the values were within the threshold suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999).

Table 1. Model Fit Scores

CMIN/DF	CFI	NFI	IFI	RFI	TLI	GFI	RMSEA
2.038	0.917	0.849	0.917	0.836	0.909	0.841	.046

In the second stage of analysis using AMOS, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was done. The results highlighted that AVE values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.5 as suggested by Hair et al. (2011). Moreover, the Cronbach's Alpha (α) values for the constructs were within the 0.7 to 0.9 (i.e., the criteria suggested by Hair et al., 2011). In the whole model, only eight items were removed as their loadings were below the threshold limits. The results for the discriminant validity (i.e., Fornell-Larcker criteria) presented in Table 2 confirmed the establishment of discriminant validity. Structural equation modelling was done to evaluate all the hypotheses (See Table 3).

Table 2. Discriminant Validity of all Variables

	AV E	PG V	HE V	SEV V	CE V	PEV V	SC V	BL V	LWB V	EWB V	PR V
PGV	0.518	0.720									
HEV	0.631	0.462	0.794								
SEV	0.56	0.36	0.54	0.75							

	9	6	5	5							
CEV	0.53 8	0.48 7	0.55 7	0.65 1	0.73 4						
PEV	0.67 5	0.46 5	0.69 0	0.53 8	0.66 2	0.82 2					
SCV	0.62 3	0.31 4	0.42 3	0.50 3	0.50 7	0.53 0	0.78 9				
BLV	0.67 7	0.47 3	0.70 6	0.55 0	0.64 1	0.81 8	0.56 2	0.82 3			
LWB V	0.64 9	0.37 6	0.28 6	0.34 2	0.41 7	0.29 1	0.25 0	0.32 9	0.806		
EWB V	0.61 7	0.52 4	0.27 9	0.31 8	0.40 7	0.33 2	0.25 3	0.35 1	0.768	0.785	
PRV	0.61 5	0.62 3	0.34 5	0.34 1	0.45 0	0.38 8	0.31 7	0.40 1	0.474	0.535	0.78 4

Table 3. Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Description	Standardized Estimates	Result
First (H1a)	HEEV → PEEV	.406	Supported
First (H1b)	SEEV → PEEV	.136	Supported
First (H1c)	CEEV → PEEV	.419	Supported
Second (H2a)	HEEV → BLOV	.473	Supported
Second (H2b)	SEEV → BLOV	.107	Supported
Second (H2c)	CEEV → BLOV	.345	Supported
Third (H3a)	PEEV → LWBBV	.136	Supported
Third (H3b)	PEEV → EWBBV	.214	Supported
Third (H3c)	PEEV → PGV	.271	Supported
Third (H3d)	PEEV → PRV	.191	Supported
Fourth (H4a)	BLOV → LWBBV	.249	Supported
Fourth (H4b)	BLOV → EWBBV	.222	Supported
Fourth (H4c)	BLOV → PGV	.283	Supported
Fourth (H4d)	BLOV → PRV	.228	Supported

The first hypothesis (i.e., H1) aimed to determine the influence of hedonic experience (HEEV), social experience (SEEV), and cognitive experience (CEEV) on the positive emotions of the tourists, and the results highlighted that the positive emotions of the tourists are strongly associated with their social, hedonic, and cognitive experience. Similarly, the second hypothesis (i.e., H1) aimed to determine the influence of hedonic experience (HEEV), social experience (SEEV), and cognitive experience (CEEV) on brand love, and the results highlighted that the brand love of the tourists is based on social, hedonic, and cognitive experience. Moreover, the third hypothesis (H3) investigated the influence of positive emotions (PEEV) on life well-being

(LWBBV), emotional well-being (EWBBV), positive relations (PRV), and personal growth (PGV), and the results supported all the sub-hypotheses, including H3a, H3b, H3c, and H3d. Furthermore, the fourth hypothesis highlighted the significant influence of brand love (BLOV) on life well-being (LWBBV), emotional well-being (EWBBV), positive relations (PRV), and personal growth (PGV), and the results supported all the sub-hypotheses, including H4a, H4b, H4c, and H4d. The results for the moderation of service climate are shown in Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and Figures 2, 3, 4.

Table 4. Moderation 1

Variable	SE	Un SE	P-Value
HEEV→BLOV	0.51	0.503	Supported
SCL→BLOV	0.3	0.291	Supported
SCLX_HEEV→BLOV	0.199	0.198	Supported

Note: SCL= Service Climate

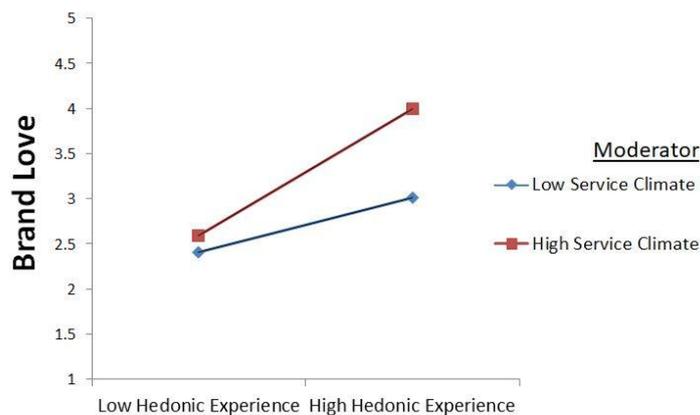


Figure 2. Moderation of SCx HEEV and Brand Love

The figure shows that SCL strengthens the relationship between HEEC and BLOV. Table 5 shows the results for the second moderation.

Table 5. Moderation 2

Variable	SE	Un SE	P-Value
SEEV→ BLOV	0.299	0.286	Supported
SCL → BLOV	0.315	0.304	Supported
SCL_X_SEEV→BLOV	-0.014	-0.012	Unsupported

Table 6. Moderation 3

Variable	SE	Un SE	P-Value
CEEV→ BLOV	0.408	0.393	Supported
SCL→ BLOV	0.259	0.248	Supported

SCL_X_CEEV→BLOV	0.069	0.058	Supported
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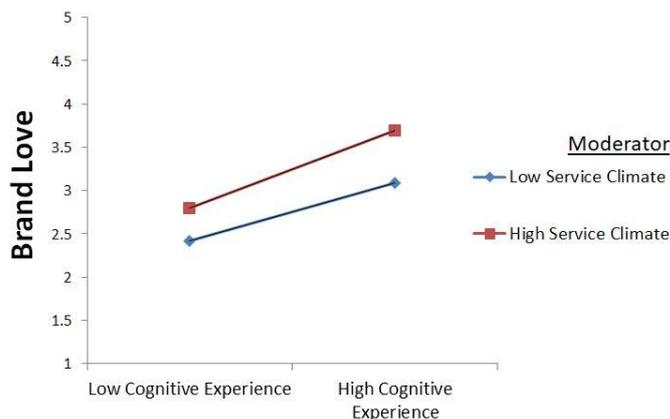


Figure 3. Moderation of SCL between CEEV and BLOV

The figure given above shows that CL strengthens the relationship between CEEV and BLOV.

Table 7. Moderation 4

Variable	SE	Un SE	P-Value
HEEV → PEEV	0.429	0.419	Supported
SCL→ PEEV	0.304	0.291	Supported
SCL_X_HEEV→ PEEV	-0.025	-0.025	Unsupported

Table 8. Moderation 5

Variable	SE	Un SE	P-Value
SEEV → PEEV	0.324	0.312	Supported
SCL→ PEEV	0.315	0.305	Supported
SCL_X_SEEV→ PEEV	-0.006	-0.005	Unsupported

Table 9. Moderation 6

Variable	SE	Un SE	P-Value
CEEV → PEEV	0.458	0.443	Supported
SCL → PEEV	0.251	0.242	Supported
SCL_X_CEEV→ PEEV	0.073	0.062	Supported

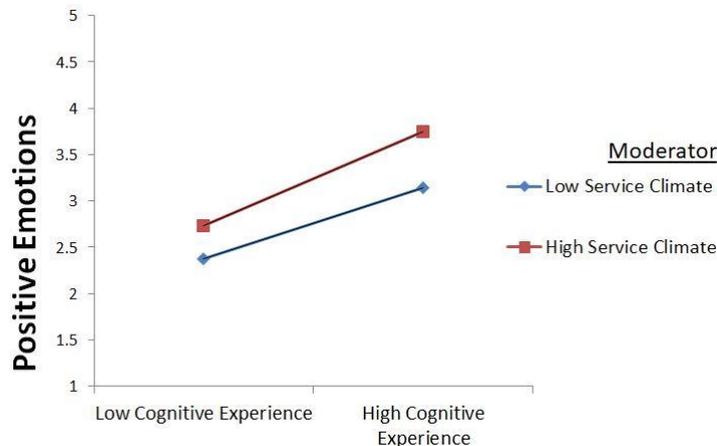


Figure 4. Moderation of SCL between CEEV and PEEV

DISCUSSION

The research primarily focused on the impact of CCE on the well-being of the hospitality and tourism sector in Pakistan. The study emphasized the analysis of hedonic, social, and cognitive facets of experience, as well as the effects of positive emotions and brand love, on a range of consumer well-being facets, such as life, emotional, and psychological ones. The research questions aimed at establishing whether co-creation experiences are a big determinant of consumer wellbeing. The current research is an important addition to the branding and hospitality literature because it explores two topical and more popular areas, which are co-creation and customer well-being. This work extends the literature in service-based industries by providing a thorough examination of how co-creation fosters positive emotions, increases brand love, and customer well-being. Tourism and hospitality are two fields where the well-being of tourists can be boosted through offering them the chance to experience co-created and memorable moments. Though various tourism organizations have proposed that travelling can enhance wellbeing, the assumption has not been empirically supported. In fact, travelling might not be an independent predictor of wellbeing; on the contrary, its influence might be subject to complementary factors, including the degree of social or cognitive activity, which can contribute together to the wellbeing of tourists.

The first hypothesis was developed to determine whether co-creation positively influences the positive emotions expressed by the customers, and our findings showed that this hypothesis was accepted. Consumer participation is an important factor in producing a unique and memorable experience. There should also exist a rapport between the customer and the activity, and it should uplift the customer to a higher level of positive emotions and overall mood. When customers post their travel experiences and memorable moments with their friends, it not only benefits themselves and the company but also other customers. In the findings, we concluded that hedonic, social, and cognitive experiences lead to an increase in the level of happiness and positive emotions of a person. The second hypothesis, that CCE has a

great influence on brand love, was also accepted. The strongest relationship, in both respects, is customer engagement in CCE, where personal involvement of consumers is the key driver to customer happiness and brand love. When the customer experience with a brand is positive and fulfilling, customers fall in love with it and become fully devoted to its particulars.

Positive emotions positively influence the well-being of consumers, and this is our third hypothesis, which is also justified, as positive emotions are pointers to prosperity or ideal well-being. Positivity enhances the possibility of an individual becoming positive in the future. The experiences of traveling leave people with good emotions that, in turn, contribute to preventing any negative outcomes and enhancing overall life satisfaction and well-being (Mitas et al., 2012). BLOV positively impacts on the overall well-being of the consumer, which is also important since customers who have a high emotional attachment to a certain brand are more likely to become highly influential, as evidenced by their engagement with that brand. The existence of a strong consumer brand relationship is needed to provide value to both brand and consumer well-being (Junaid et al., 2020). The findings of this research suggest that the extent of happiness of a consumer is directly proportional to his or her affection towards the brand. The relationship between hedonic experience and brand love was stronger because service climate acted as the moderator in the interaction. It states that when the consumer receives a good atmosphere and attractive lighting, he is pleased and his hedonic experience is elevated, which eventually elevates the consumer's affection towards the brand.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The research has provided a comprehensive framework that can help tourism and hospitality firms in Pakistan. However, it has some limitations that could be considered in further studies. First, the research has mainly focused on the tourism industry, but co-creation in tourism differs significantly from that in other settings, such as hotels, restaurants, educational institutions, and retail and online shops. Secondly, the research has highlighted co-creation, positive emotions, and brand love as antecedents of consumers' well-being. In the future, studies can extend the framework by incorporating additional factors that support tourism companies in enhancing consumers' well-being. Third, the questionnaire was used to gather data from tourists in Pakistan. However, a standardized questionnaire, despite being a methodologically sound tool, could have limited the respondent to writing in detail about their experiences. Thus, mixed methods could be applied in future studies, where both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews or focus groups would be used to gain a thorough perspective regarding the experiences of co-creation in the tourism and hospitality sector.

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