

Customer brand engagement via value co-creation with hotel online media and travel websites and its effect on brand equity: the moderating role of culture

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to analyze how hotels' customer brand engagement (CBE) can be enhanced through tourists' value co-creation with hotel online media or travel websites, as a means of achieving greater brand equity. The analysis considers the role of tourist national culture and draws on service-dominant logic as a theoretical framework.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative empirical study was conducted among Spanish and British hotel guests.

Findings – The results of this study show that: hotel CBE has a positive and significant effect on hotel brand equity; for Spanish hotel guests, value co-creation with travel websites has a positive and significant effect on hotel CBE; and for British hotel guests, value co-creation with hotel online media has a positive effect on hotel CBE.

Practical implications – The results of this study point to recommendations to guide hotel companies on how to achieve greater brand equity and CBE through value co-creation.



Originality/value – The main contributions of this study are that: it expands the extant service-dominant logic literature; it demonstrates the influence of CBE on brand equity in the online environment; it demonstrates the moderating role that tourists' national culture plays in the relationship between online value co-creation and CBE; and it empirically demonstrates the impact of value co-creation with the hotel online media and with travel websites as well as the existence of a new phase in the tourist customer journey (the dreaming phase).

Keywords National culture, Brand equity, Customer brand engagement, Travel websites, Online media, Value co-creation

Paper type Research paper

顾客通过与酒店在线媒体和旅游网站共同创造价值实现品牌参与及其对品牌资产的影响：文化的调节作用

摘要

研究目的 – 本研究旨在分析游客如何通过与酒店在线媒体或旅游网站共同创造价值，提升顾客品牌参与（Customer Brand Engagement, CBE），从而实现更高的品牌资产（Brand Equity）。该分析考虑了游客的国家文化，并以服务主导逻辑（Service-Dominant Logic, SDL）为理论框架。

研究方法 – 本研究在西班牙和英国的酒店住客中进行了量化实证研究。

研究发现 – 研究结果表明：1) 酒店CBE对酒店品牌资产具有积极且显著的影响；2) 对于西班牙住客而言，与旅游网站的价值共创对酒店CBE具有积极且显著的影响；3) 对于英国住客而言，与酒店在线媒体的价值共创对酒店CBE具有积极影响。

实践意义 – 本研究结果可为酒店企业提供指导建议，帮助其通过价值共创实现更高的品牌资产和顾客品牌参与。

研究创新 – 本研究的主要贡献包括：1) 扩展了现有的SDL文献；2) 展示了CBE在在线环境中对品牌资产的影响；3) 揭示了游客国家文化在在线价值共创与CBE之间关系中的调节作用；4) 实证展示了与酒店在线媒体及旅游网站进行价值共创的影响，以及游客旅程中新阶段（“梦想阶段”）的存在。

关键词 顾客品牌参与, 价值共创, 品牌资产, 国家文化, 在线媒体, 旅游网站

文章类型 研究型论文

1. Introduction

Brand equity is a key concept in brand management research and is critical to the successful performance of firms operating in the tourism sector – in particular, hotels (Fan *et al.*, 2023). In seeking to understand the process whereby brand equity is created in the online context, the literature recognizes service-dominant logic (SDL) as a suitable theoretical framework (Satar *et al.*, 2023a). SDL can help explain how brand equity is generated in the aforementioned context based on consumers' interactions with different agents related to the brand (Tran *et al.*, 2021). In this field, variables such as customer brand engagement (CBE) and value co-creation are considered key to SDL, helping to explain the effect of these interactions on brands (Bouchriha *et al.*, 2023). Within SDL, it is also essential to consider the role of tourists' national culture, as this influences how they interact with different agents (Grott *et al.*, 2019). However, to date, scholars have produced few explanations of how brand equity is formed in online media from the perspective of SDL (Satar *et al.*, 2023a).

CBE refers to a level of consumer commitment that extends beyond the immediate purchase and focuses on the brand or firm itself (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). The significance of the effect of CBE on brand equity supports the call for more in-depth study of this relationship (Chahal *et al.*, 2020). However, the literature has yet to analyze the possible effect of CBE on brand equity in the hotel sector and the online context, which constitutes a further research gap that the present study seeks to address.

Online media – social networking sites, virtual communities, forums and blogs – constitute the ideal platform for building CBE, as they facilitate the consumer–brand interaction necessary for value co-creation to occur (Lever *et al.*, 2021). In the tourism and hotel context, specifically, interactions with online media are significant and growing and occur between consumers and different tourism agents, including service-providers (hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions and so on) and intermediary travel websites including online travel agencies, metasearch engines and travel review sites (Frías-Jamilena *et al.*, 2017). These interactions occur before, during and after visit and, as recently identified, during the “dreaming” phase of the customer journey (Creevey *et al.*, 2019; Fotis *et al.*, 2011). The dreaming phase is where that journey begins – when people’s interest is piqued and their imagination sparked, such that they take the initial steps toward making their travel dreams a reality (Dai *et al.*, 2022).

Although the literature has examined value co-creation before, during and after visit, it is yet to investigate this phenomenon in the dreaming phase (Dai *et al.*, 2022), which is a perspective that this study aims to address. The literature contends that value co-creation is one of the primary trends in marketing to activate the consumer–brand connection (González-Mansilla *et al.*, 2023). However, the effect of consumer co-creation – with both the tourism service-provider’s (in this case, hotels) own online media and with travel-related websites – on that service-provider’s CBE has not been empirically tested, to date. The present study seeks to address this gap.

Looking more closely at how the brand co-creation process takes place and the relationship between this process and other consumer behavior variables, the literature contends that consumers’ national culture may play an influential role (Cheung *et al.*, 2021b). This, combined with the inherently international nature of the tourism sector, means it is important to analyze whether tourists’ national culture moderates the effect of consumer value co-creation with the hotel’s online media and consumer value co-creation with travel websites, on hotel CBE. Although the literature calls for further investigation into the role of culture in the relationship between value co-creation and CBE (Cheung *et al.*, 2021b), no previous studies have undertaken this task. This research gap will be addressed by the present study.

In response to all the research gaps identified, the aim of this study is to determine how hotel CBE can be enhanced by tourist co-creation with the hotel’s online media or with travel websites, as a means of achieving greater brand equity, considering the role of tourist national culture. To this end, the present study proposes a theoretical model that offers contributions to the SDL literature. This model is empirically validated to determine whether:

- CBE influences hotel brand equity.
- Value co-creation with the hotel’s online media influences hotel CBE.
- Value co-creation with travel websites influences hotel CBE.
- National culture moderates the effect of tourist value co-creation (with the hotel’s online media and travel websites) on hotel CBE.

2. Literature review

2.1 The influence of customer brand engagement on brand equity

Brand equity is “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (Keller, 1993, p. 2). SDL is one approach that can help explain how brand equity is generated (Satar *et al.*, 2023a). It is a theoretical framework that moves

beyond a company-centered notion of value delivery to a more polycentric and collaborative vision, in which benefits are derived from the integration of resources through interactions between multiple agents (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). SDL proposes that consumers are active creators of brand equity in their own right, as a result of their interactions with service providers and other participants (Frías-Jamilena *et al.*, 2017). Despite the literature having established this understanding, research on mechanisms to improve brand equity within the SDL theoretical framing is lacking (Tran *et al.*, 2021), and particularly so in the online context.

On the premise that SDL is based on consumers' interactions with different agents, CBE and online value co-creation – variables that are also based on interaction – can be considered highly pertinent when seeking to explain brand equity formation in online media (Rather *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, it is necessary to take culture into consideration, as SDL proposes that the cultural context plays an important role in those interactions that take place between consumers and brands that make value co-creation possible (Grott *et al.*, 2019).

CBE, defined as the degree of motivation, involvement and commitment the customer experiences during their interaction with the brand, gives rise to certain cognitive, affective and behavioral attitudes toward that brand (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). CBE comprises three dimensions: cognitive processing, affect and activation (Lever *et al.*, 2021). It is a variable that reflects the strength of the relationship between the consumer and the brand, as it represents interactive experiences with the brand, implies an active relationship with it and creates emotional bonds that give rise to a lasting psychological connection extending beyond the purchase (Bravo *et al.*, 2023).

Therefore, a greater understanding of the relationship between CBE and brand equity in the online context is needed (Chahal *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, in the hotel sector, this relationship has yet to be investigated by scholars. The exceptions that come closest to addressing this question are discussed in the tourism literature, including the positive effect of CBE on dimensions of brand equity such as brand awareness and loyalty (Choirisa *et al.*, 2025; Tian *et al.*, 2021). Finally, within the hotel sphere – albeit not in the online context – Rather *et al.* (2024) and Satar *et al.* (2023b) demonstrate the influence of CBE on brand equity.

In light of these findings, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Hotel customer brand engagement has a positive and significant effect on hotel brand equity.

2.2 The effect of value co-creation on customer brand engagement

Value co-creation can be defined as the value perceived by a customer that arises from interactive, joint, collaborative or personalized activities with the brand or with stakeholders associated with the brand (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). In the hotel sector, value co-creation can take place in the online context in each phase of the customer journey, namely: pre-visit (in which the tourist plans their stay and makes the relevant bookings); during the visit (when the tourist “consumes” the stay); and post-visit (referring to tourists' evaluation of the experience once they have consumed their stay and the opinions or advice they communicate to others about it) (Frías-Jamilena *et al.*, 2017).

The evolution of online media, which is characterized by an abundance of information generated by tourism service-providers and innumerable travel websites (Stojanovic *et al.*, 2022), creates fertile ground for travel inspiration (Dai *et al.*, 2022). This underlines the need to consider an additional part of the tourist journey, the aforementioned dreaming phase, in which consumers use online media to imagine or fantasize about a possible trip without having any immediate need to start making any specific plans. Note that exposure to tourism-

related online media content in this phase awakens a general desire to travel at some point in the future (Dai *et al.*, 2022).

The importance of the dreaming phase lies in the fact that consumers interact with not only the online media of the firms providing tourism services and with travel-related websites but also, thanks to the latter, other tourists. Fellow travelers can, thus, provide suggestions and tips for undertaking a new trip. Therefore, this phase plays an important role in tourists' decision-making about which destination to possibly visit at some point and how to go about it (Fotis *et al.*, 2011). However, compared to the other points along the customer journey, the dreaming phase has received relatively little attention in the literature (Dai *et al.*, 2022; Kim and Chung, 2023), while value co-creation in this particular phase is a specific aspect that has not yet been empirically addressed.

Value co-creation is considered a complex process resulting from the interactions between consumers and other agents (Frías-Jamilena *et al.*, 2017). In this study, "agents" are taken to be providers of tourism services (hotels) and travel websites (those for making bookings, searching for travel information and interacting with other tourists and the platform itself) (Kim *et al.*, 2019). Travel websites include online travel agencies such as Booking.com, specialized sites such as TripAdvisor.com or metasearch engines such as Kayak.com.

Despite the significant interest in the relationship between value co-creation and CBE, little is known about how this relationship operates (Harrigan *et al.*, 2021; Rather *et al.*, 2019). The findings produced by the studies that do exist on how these two variables relate are largely inconclusive (Cheung *et al.*, 2021a).

In the online context, when value co-creation with hotel brands is initiated by the firm itself via its online media – such as its website, social networks, email, online ads or mobile applications – it successfully encourages feedback from consumers to help design a service that aligns with their needs, which is essential for strengthening the hotel brand–consumer relationship (Cheung *et al.*, 2021b). This commitment prompts consumers to feel a strong sense of devotion toward the brand, leading them to invest more time, effort and money in the firm. In short, the process of co-creating value with the firm through online media boosts consumers' psychological connections to the brand, thereby reinforcing CBE (Cheung *et al.*, 2021a).

The literature has demonstrated the positive effect of value co-creation on CBE in the context of travel websites (Harrigan *et al.*, 2021). However, it has yet to be demonstrated specifically in the context of the hotel sector, prompting calls from the literature for more in-depth analysis of this relationship (Rather *et al.*, 2022; Satar *et al.*, 2023a). The following research hypothesis is, therefore, proposed:

H2. Value co-creation with the hotel's online media has a positive and significant effect on hotel customer brand engagement.

Turning to value co-creation with travel websites, these sites enable tourists to search for information prior to a trip, conduct tourism-related transactions (i.e. making bookings) and communicate interactively to produce content (participate in social relationships online) (Kim *et al.*, 2019). What is more, these platforms enable users to fully personalize their tourism experience (Wiyata *et al.*, 2024). Travel websites have enormous potential for co-creating value, which is a key differentiating factor in an intensely competitive sector (Díaz *et al.*, 2023).

Travel-website value co-creation, thus, has consequences for the website itself and also for the destinations and tourism firms whose services are offered on them. However, there are no studies that relate value co-creation on travel websites to the CBE of the service-provider brands featured on those sites. The work of Lam *et al.* (2020) comes closest to

addressing this question, demonstrating the influence of the co-creation of the experience with a travel website on destination image.

The present study proposes that tourists' value co-creation with travel websites can influence hotel CBE. This relationship is justified by the fact that hotels are described in some detail on travel websites; this information is frequently updated; and above all, there is a great deal of interactivity between tourists, who share their opinions about the hotel on these sites (Lam *et al.*, 2020). Indirectly, then, these online platforms facilitate digital encounters between consumers and hotels before, during and after the trip (Kim *et al.*, 2019). And it is in these encounters that consumers participate in a value co-creation process that can have an influence that extends beyond mere visit intention, giving rise to CBE with the hotel brand (Zhang *et al.*, 2018).

However, the literature has observed that further research is required into value co-creation with online tourism platforms and how this affects tourism brands (Zhang *et al.*, 2018; Lam *et al.*, 2020). The following research hypothesis is, thus, proposed:

H3. Value co-creation with travel websites has a positive and significant effect on hotel customer brand engagement.

2.2.1 The moderating role of tourist national culture. Research indicates that national culture influences how tourists interact with a tourism-related brand (Sabiote *et al.*, 2013). The most widely used framework for the study of cultural differences, especially in the field of marketing and tourism, is that of Hofstede (Sabiote-Ortiz *et al.*, 2016). Hofstede *et al.* (2010, p. 6) define culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others.” The authors identify six cultural dimensions, with the dimensions of individualism vs collectivism and uncertainty avoidance being extensively referred to in relation to online consumer behavior (Sabiote *et al.*, 2013, Sabiote *et al.*, 2016).

Messner (2022) empirically demonstrates the role played by the cultural dimensions of individualism vs collectivism and uncertainty avoidance in CBE. In this line, this study seeks to determine whether these two dimensions exert a moderating effect on the relationship between tourist value co-creation with the hotel's online media and with travel websites, respectively, and hotel CBE.

2.2.2 Individualism vs collectivism. The individualism versus collectivism cultural dimension is broadly defined as the degree to which people prefer to act as individuals or as members of groups (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). This distinction is reflected in the emotional processes and responses to marketing actions of collectivist and individualist consumers, which differ in important ways (Hollebeek, 2018). Members of collectivist cultures are susceptible to prestige signals and interpersonal influences (Sabiote *et al.*, 2013), meaning that hotel ratings and user reviews on travel websites are particularly relevant for them (De La Hoz-Correa and Muñoz-Leiva, 2019). Of particular relevance is the fact that consumers from collectivist cultures also expect to achieve more consistent results when they are part of a community, and such websites function as communities (Le and Duong, 2020). In short, consumers from collectivist cultures will present a higher level of CBE when they generate knowledge about the brand through co-creation with other users and agents (Hollebeek, 2018) because, for them, online media constitute a means of social interaction (Khan and Fatma, 2021).

In contrast, tourists from individualist cultures, who tend to believe they do not need the support of third parties to achieve their goals (Sabiote-Ortiz *et al.*, 2016), do not attach so much value to the opinions of others (Sabiote *et al.*, 2013). They expect to achieve better results when carrying out a task individually (Le and Duong, 2020) and regard online media merely as a means to acquire information – not expressly as an opportunity to interact with

other users (Khan and Fatma, 2021). What will achieve the engagement with the brand for individualist users is co-creation through direct relationships with the brand (Hollebeek, 2018), in this case, the hotel's online media.

2.2.3 Uncertainty avoidance. The uncertainty avoidance national culture dimension refers to the degree to which people feel threatened by ambiguity and create institutions and beliefs to avoid ambiguous situations (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). Uncertainty-avoidant consumers, thus, seek to minimize risk (Hollebeek, 2018), for example by acquiring brand information through online media containing unbiased product information from other consumers (Le and Duong, 2020). Highly uncertainty-avoidant consumers are more likely to trust such impartial information sources than those controlled by tourism service-providers (De La Hoz-Correa and Muñoz-Leiva, 2019), such as hotel online media. They will analyze value-for-money in all their purchase decisions (Hollebeek, 2018; Sabiote-Ortiz *et al.*, 2016) and will meticulously plan their stay (Michopoulou and Moisa, 2016). Consequently, for uncertainty-avoidant tourists, it is co-creation with the travel website that fosters engagement with the hotel brand, rather than co-creation with the hotel's online media.

Consumers from cultures with a low level of uncertainty avoidance, in contrast, will pay less attention to the risks inherent in purchasing tourism products (Sabiote-Ortiz *et al.*, 2016) and are more likely to trust sources that are controlled by the service-providers themselves rather than information generated by other consumers (De La Hoz-Correa and Muñoz-Leiva, 2019). As these tourists do not require highly detailed planning, the additional information provided by travel websites will not exert a major influence (Michopoulou and Moisa, 2016).

The following research hypotheses are, therefore, proposed:

- H4.* Tourists' national culture moderates the relationship between their value co-creation with the hotel's online media and the hotel's customer brand engagement, such that:
 - H4a.* For consumers from a highly uncertainty-avoidant and collectivist culture, value co-creation with the hotel's online media has no significant effect on hotel customer brand engagement.
 - H4b.* For consumers from a low-uncertainty-avoidance, individualist culture, value co-creation with the hotel's online media has a significant effect on hotel customer brand engagement.
- H5.* Tourists' national culture moderates the relationship between their value co-creation with travel websites and hotel customer brand engagement, such that:
 - H5a.* For consumers from a highly uncertainty-avoidant and collectivist culture, value co-creation with travel websites has a significant effect on hotel customer brand engagement.
 - H5b.* For consumers from a low-uncertainty-avoidance, individualist culture, value co-creation with travel websites has no significant effect on hotel customer brand engagement.

The proposed research model is shown in Figure 1.

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and sample

The study population comprised individuals of Spanish or British nationality who had consumed a tourism stay in a hotel during the previous year and who had used both the

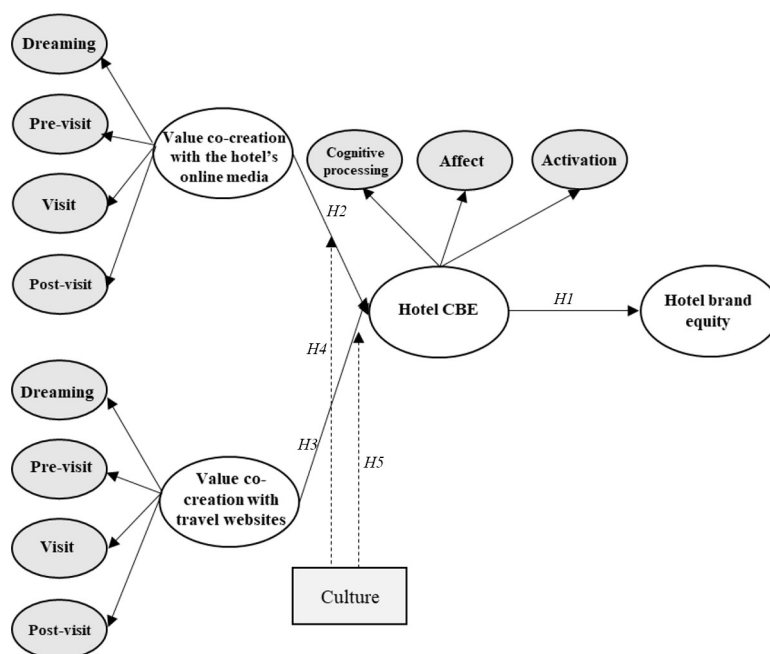


Figure 1. Proposed research model
Source: Authors' own work

hotel's online media and at least one travel website before, during and after their stay. The rationale for selecting Spanish and British individuals for the present study was that the aforementioned cultural dimension indicators developed by Hofstede indicate significant differences between the two cultures. Specifically, Hofstede's scores for these two countries in the individualism vs collectivism dimension (51 for the Spanish vs 89 for the British) and in uncertainty avoidance (86 for the Spanish vs 35 for the British) (Hofstede Insights, 2023) confirm that these dimensions are valid for comparative purposes in the present study (Sabiote-Ortiz *et al.*, 2016).

The sample was selected with the help of two third-party online panels in the UK and Spain. To be eligible to be included in the sample, respondents had to fulfill three requirements: to have stayed in a hotel in the 12 months before the research; to have used a travel website to search for information about the hotel and/or plan or manage their stay at the hotel; and to have searched for information about the hotel or have interacted with the hotel through its website, its social networks, email, web advertisements, its mobile applications and so on.

The data collection was conducted during July–August 2019 and July–August 2020. The initial sample comprised 448 Spanish tourists and 339 British. After eliminating cases that did not meet quality criteria, a final overall sample of 607 tourists (310 Spanish and 297 British) was attained.

3.2 Measurement scales

Respondents completed a questionnaire with items on the following constructs: the scale items for value co-creation (with the hotel's online media and with travel websites) derived from

Frías-Jamilena *et al.* (2017). The items for the CBE scale were taken from Hollebeek *et al.* (2014). Finally, brand equity was measured using items from Yoo and Donthu (2001). All items were measured on seven-point Likert scales (Appendix).

4. Results

To conduct cross-cultural research, it is first necessary to check that the scores obtained from the different samples are comparable (Sabiote-Ortiz *et al.*, 2016). The bias that can be found in extreme response styles when comparing samples from different cultures was eliminated using the “standardization within groups” method (Fischer, 2004). To test for common method bias, Harman’s single-factor test was applied. This is the most widely used method for examining this bias (Tehseen *et al.*, 2017).

After standardizing the data, we confirmed the adequacy of the proposed model and the measurement scales by means of SEM analysis, using AMOS V.26. First, we assessed the psychometric properties of the research model. We opted to estimate the model using the maximum likelihood method combined with bootstrapping (Yuan and Hayashi, 2003). Regarding the model’s overall goodness-of-fit, the normed Chi-square value of 3.71 was adequate, being below the threshold of 5.0, as recommended (Hair *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, the RMSEA value was also considered adequate (0.07) (Hair *et al.*, 2018). The incremental fit indicators also presented suitable values (CFI, 0.92; IFI, 0.92; and TLI, 0.91) (Hair *et al.*, 2018). The model fit can, thus, be considered adequate.

The measurement model was then evaluated to check whether the scales measured each of the latent variables correctly (Table 1). First, the standardized loads between each latent variable and its indicators, and between each construct and its dimensions, were evaluated. The values of all the loads were higher than 0.70; the reference value proposed by Hair *et al.* (2018). The composite reliability (R^2) of each item and dimension was found to be greater than 0.50 – again, as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2018). Regarding the internal consistency of the scales, the values for both composite reliability and variance extracted were adequate (that is, above the reference threshold of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively) (Hair *et al.*, 2018).

Finally, discriminant validity between the different variables in the research model was tested using Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criterion, verifying that the correlations between the different constructs were lower than the value of the square root of the variance extracted (Table 2).

Regarding the research hypotheses (Figure 1), the relationships between value co-creation with hotel online media, value co-creation with travel websites, CBE and brand equity were then analyzed. The results are summarized in Figure 2.

First, *H1* held that hotel CBE has a positive and significant effect on hotel brand equity. This hypothesis received empirical support, as there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables of 0.79 (p -value < 0.01), with a confidence interval of 0.74–0.83.

H2 proposed that value co-creation with the hotel’s online media has a positive and significant effect on hotel CBE. This hypothesis also received empirical support, as there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables of 0.64 (p -value < 0.01), with a confidence interval of 0.45–0.85.

H3 contended that value co-creation with travel websites has a positive and significant effect on hotel CBE. This hypothesis did not find empirical support, as there was a non-statistically-significant relationship between the two variables of 0.18 (p -value > 0.05) and a confidence interval of –0.24–0.36.

To verify that tourists’ national culture was playing a moderating role in the proposed relationships between value co-creation with the hotel’s online media and value co-creation

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and indicators of convergent validity and internal consistency of the scales

Factor	Mean, standard deviation, skew and kurtosis	Standardized loads, confidence interval and <i>p</i> -value	Individual reliability (R^2), confidence interval and <i>p</i> -value
<i>First-order dimensions</i>			
Value co-creation with the hotel's online media in the dreaming phase		CR = 0.85; AVE = 0.66	
VCHD1	5.54; 1.16; -0.67; 0.21	0.72 (0.68; 0.76)**	0.52 (0.46; 0.57)**
VCHD2	5.49; 1.34; -0.95; 0.76	0.76 (0.72; 0.80)**	0.58 (0.52; 0.64)**
VCHD3	5.49; 1.20; -0.89; 1.19	0.78 (0.74; 0.81)**	0.60 (0.54; 0.65)**
Value co-creation with the hotel's online media pre-visit		CR = 0.84; AVE = 0.64	
VCHPRE1	5.53; 1.21; -0.73; 0.30	0.76 (0.64; 0.78)**	0.57 (0.50; 0.63)**
VCHPRE2	5.56; 1.19; -0.85; 0.84	0.72 (0.74; 0.83)**	0.52 (0.43; 0.59)**
VCHPRE3	5.77; 1.04; -0.68; 0.41	0.75 (0.75; 0.83)**	0.56 (0.49; 0.62)**
Value co-creation with the hotel's online media during the visit		CR = 0.89; AVE = 0.73	
VCHV1	5.14; 1.44; -0.86; 0.57	0.73 (0.68; 0.77)**	0.54 (0.47; 0.60)**
VCHV2	5.52; 1.21; -0.90; 1.01	0.83 (0.79; 0.86)**	0.69 (0.63; 0.75)**
VCHV3	5.61; 1.24; -0.97; 1.12	0.83 (0.80; 0.87)**	0.70 (0.64; 0.75)**
Value co-creation with the hotel's online media post-visit		CR = 0.89; AVE = 0.72	
VCHPOST1	5.17; 1.48; -0.87; 0.44	0.81 (0.77; 0.84)**	0.65 (0.59; 0.70)**
VCHPOST2	4.87; 1.62; -0.73; -0.09	0.80 (0.76; 0.84)**	0.65 (0.58; 0.70)**
VCHPOST3	4.70; 1.70; -0.66; -0.36	0.79 (0.74; 0.83)**	0.62 (0.54; 0.68)**
<i>Value co-creation with travel websites</i>			
Value co-creation with travel websites in the dreaming phase		CR = 0.90; AVE = 0.76	
VCTWD1	5.50; 1.33; -1.07; 1.20	0.81 (0.78; 0.85)**	0.66 (0.60; 0.72)**
VCTWD2	5.39; 1.42; -1.04; 0.92	0.82 (0.78; 0.85)**	0.67 (0.61; 0.72)**
VCTWD3	5.36; 1.34; -0.88; 0.71	0.84 (0.80; 0.86)**	0.70 (0.64; 0.74)**
Value co-creation with travel websites pre-visit		CR = 0.88; AVE = 0.71	
VCTWPRE1	5.54; 1.28; -0.97; 0.99	0.80 (0.76; 0.84)**	0.64 (0.58; 0.70)**
VCTWPRE2	5.52; 1.29; -0.99; 1.00	0.73 (0.66; 0.77)**	0.53 (0.44; 0.60)**
VCTWPRE3	5.53; 1.29; -1.04; 1.29	0.84 (0.81; 0.87)**	0.70 (0.65; 0.75)**
Value co-creation with travel websites during the visit		CR = 0.93; AVE = 0.81	
VCTWV1	5.10; 1.50; -0.78; 0.24	0.81 (0.77; 0.84)**	0.65 (0.60; 0.71)**
VCTWV2	5.34; 1.32; -0.84; 0.82	0.88 (0.85; 0.91)**	0.78 (0.72; 0.83)**
VCTWV3	5.38; 1.33; -0.91; 0.86	0.89 (0.86; 0.91)**	0.78 (0.74; 0.82)**
Value co-creation with travel websites post-visit		CR = 0.94; AVE = 0.84	
VCTWPOST1	4.98; 1.63; -0.83; 0.07	0.90 (0.88; 0.92)**	0.81 (0.77; 0.85)**
VCTWPOST2	4.88; 1.72; -0.77; -0.21	0.90 (0.88; 0.92)**	0.81 (0.77; 0.85)**
VCTWPOST3	4.72; 1.70; -0.64; -0.29	0.84 (0.81; 0.87)**	0.71 (0.65; 0.76)**
<i>CBE</i>			
Cognitive processing		CR = 0.89; AVE = 0.79	
COG1	5.32; 1.35; -0.88; 0.64	0.81 (0.76; 0.86)**	0.66 (0.58; 0.73)**
COG2	5.39; 1.34; -0.86; 0.62	0.90 (0.86; 0.92)**	0.80 (0.75; 0.84)**
Affect		CR = 0.90; AVE = 0.83	
AFF1	5.36; 1.30; -0.83; 0.65	0.88 (0.85; 0.91)**	0.78 (0.73; 0.83)**
AFF2	5.34; 1.32; -0.86; 0.72	0.87 (0.83; 0.89)**	0.75 (0.68; 0.80)**

(continued)

Table 1. Continued

Factor	Mean, standard deviation, skew and kurtosis	Standardized loads, confidence interval and <i>p</i> -value	Individual reliability (<i>R</i> ²), confidence interval and <i>p</i> -value
Activation		CR = 0.89; AVE = 0.80	
ACT1	4.97; 1.54; -0.78; 0.11	0.84 (0.81; 0.87)**	0.71 (0.65; 0.76)**
ACT2	4.95; 1.54; -0.77; 0.17	0.87 (0.82; 0.90)**	0.75 (0.67; 0.81)**
Overall brand equity		CR = 0.94; AVE = 0.84	
OBE1	5.32; 1.28; -0.87; 0.97	0.84 (0.80; 0.86)**	0.70 (0.63; 0.74)**
OBE2	5.22; 1.37; -0.77; 0.33	0.92 (0.90; 0.94)**	0.85 (0.81; 0.89)**
OBE3	5.28; 1.37; -0.79; 0.44	0.88 (0.86; 0.91)**	0.78 (0.73; 0.83)**
<i>Second-order dimensions</i>			
Value co-creation with the hotel		CR = 0.94; AVE = 0.81	
Value co-creation with the hotel online media in the dreaming phase		0.93 (0.89; 0.96)**	0.86 (0.79; 0.92)**
Value co-creation with the hotel online media pre-visit		0.87 (0.80; 0.93)**	0.76 (0.65; 0.86)**
Value co-creation with the hotel online media during the visit		0.94 (0.91; 0.96)**	0.88 (0.82; 0.93)**
Value co-creation with the hotel online media post-visit		0.74 (0.68; 0.80)**	0.55 (0.46; 0.64)**
Value co-creation with travel websites		CR = 0.95; AVE = 0.83	
Value co-creation with travel websites in the dreaming phase		0.95 (0.93; 0.97)**	0.90 (0.86; 0.94)**
Value co-creation with travel websites pre-visit		0.90 (0.85; 0.93)**	0.81 (0.72; 0.87)**
Value co-creation with travel websites during the visit		0.93 (0.90; 0.96)**	0.87 (0.82; 0.92)**
Value co-creation with travel websites post-visit		0.74 (0.67; 0.79)**	0.54 (0.45; 0.62)**
CBE		CR = 0.96; AVE = 0.89	
Cognitive processing		0.94 (0.91; 0.96)**	0.88 (0.82; 0.93)**
Affect		0.95 (0.92; 0.97)**	0.90 (0.85; 0.95)**
Activation		0.88 (0.85; 0.92)**	0.78 (0.72; 0.85)**

Note(s): CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Variance extracted; ** = *p*-value ≤ 0.01
Source(s): Authors' own work

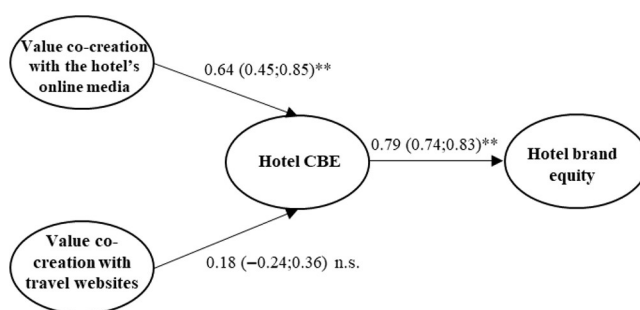
with travel websites, respectively, and hotel CBE, we performed a multi-group SEM analysis with factorial invariance. Here, two distinct groups of consumers were identified, by nationality (Spanish vs British). The adequacy of the estimated model's fit was then checked (normed Chi-Square: 2.62; RMSEA: 0.05; CFI: 0.90; and IFI: 0.90) (Hair *et al.*, 2018).

The following aspects of the results are of note (Figure 3):

- *H4* establishes that the effect of value co-creation with the hotel's online media on hotel CBE is moderated by the tourist's national culture. It was found that, among Spanish consumers (collectivist culture, high uncertainty avoidance), value co-creation with the hotel's online media has no significant effect on hotel CBE (standardized coefficient: 0.21; confidence interval: -0.11–0.48; and *p*-value > 0.05). By contrast, among British consumers (individualist culture, low uncertainty avoidance), value co-creation with the hotel's online media does exert a significant effect on hotel CBE of 0.88 (confidence interval: 0.68–1.10; and *p*-value < 0.01). *H4a* and *H4b*, thus, receive empirical support.

Table 2. Discriminant validity assessment

Variable	Value co-creation with the hotel's online media	Value co-creation with travel websites	CBE	Brand equity
Value co-creation with the hotel's online media	0.90			
Value co-creation with travel websites	0.86	0.91		
CBE	0.78	0.71	0.94	
Brand equity	0.68	0.63	0.77	0.92

Source(s): Authors' own work**Figure 2.** Results for hypotheses *H1*, *H2* and *H3***Note(s):** Standardized coefficient (confidence interval); ** = p -value ≤ 0.01 ; and ns = non-significant relationship**Source:** Authors' own work

- *H5* proposes that the effect of value co-creation with travel websites on hotel CBE is moderated by the tourist's national culture. It was found that, among Spanish consumers, value co-creation with travel websites has a significant effect on the hotel's CBE of 0.64 (confidence interval: 0.35–0.92; and p -value < 0.01). By contrast, among British consumers, value co-creation with travel websites does not exert a significant effect on hotel CBE (standardized coefficient: -0.10 ; confidence interval: -0.32 – 0.10 ; and p -value > 0.05). There was, thus, empirical support also for *H5a* and *H5b*.

Table 3 presents a summary of the hypothesis testing.

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

This study makes a number of contributions to the advancement of the SDL theoretical framework, based on the possibilities that the online context generates for amplifying consumer interaction and building brand equity. The objective was to determine how hotels' CBE can be enhanced by value co-creation to achieve greater brand equity. Specifically, this study has empirically demonstrated the effect that hotel CBE has on brand equity and the

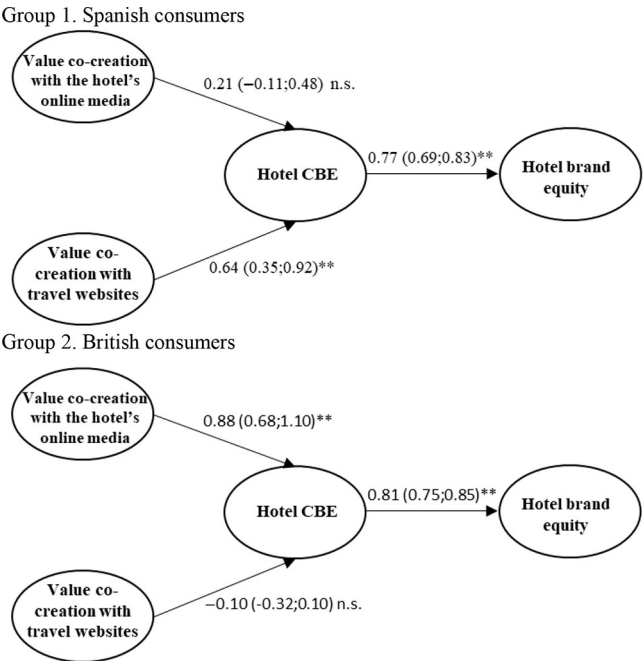


Figure 3. Results for hypotheses *H4* and *H5*

Note(s): Standardized coefficient (confidence interval); ** = *p*-value ≤ 0.01; * = *p*-value ≤ 0.05; and ns = non-significant relationship

Source: Authors' own work

Table 3. Summary of hypothesis-testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Empirical support
<i>H1</i>	CBE→brand equity	Yes
<i>H2</i>	Co-creation with the hotel's online media→CBE	Yes
<i>H3</i>	Co-creation with travel websites→CBE	No
<i>H4</i>	Co-creation with the hotel's online media→CBE (moderating role of culture)	Yes
<i>H5</i>	Co-creation with travel websites →CBE (moderating role of culture)	Yes

Source(s): Authors' own work

moderating role that culture plays in the effect of both value co-creation with the hotel's online media and value co-creation with travel websites, respectively, on hotel CBE.

5.2 Theoretical implications

This work constitutes an important advance *vis-à-vis* the SDL research to date. First, it contributes to explaining how brand equity is formed, thereby responding to a need identified by the literature (Tran *et al.*, 2021). Second, the work empirically demonstrates the multi-actor nature of value co-creation in the online context (Vargo and Lusch, 2016), responding to calls by authors such as Lam *et al.* (2020) to study the effect of co-creation through online

media activity that is controlled by service-providers vs activity not controlled by them. This study contributes by offering, for the first time, a comparative analysis of the impact of value co-creation – via the online media of a service provider versus travel websites – on the brand of that provider.

Third, in addition to the three traditionally recognized phases of the tourism consumption process (before, during and after visit), the dreaming phase proposed by Fotis *et al.* (2011) was incorporated into the present study, being included for the first time in a construct of value co-creation. Its inclusion responds to the need identified by Creevey *et al.* (2019) to investigate in greater depth the online media actions that can influence CBE in the different phases of the hotel-stay consumption process. It also addresses the future line of research proposed by Dai *et al.* (2022), based on carrying out empirical studies that include the dreaming phase.

Turning to the different relationships demonstrated here, first, CBE has been shown to influence hotel brand equity. This result is in line with findings from the literature in the *offline* tourism context (Satar *et al.*, 2023b). However, the present research contributes by demonstrating empirically, for the first time, that this relationship exists in the hotel sector online context. This finding is also important for the theoretical framework supporting SDL, which has been shown to be suitable for investigating CBE (Rather *et al.*, 2019) and for explaining how brand equity can be built (Satar *et al.*, 2023b).

Second, value co-creation with the hotel's online media has been shown here to influence hotel CBE. This result contradicts previous studies conducted in the tourism sphere, such as those of Bouchriha *et al.* (2023), Satar *et al.* (2023a) and Zhang *et al.* (2018), all of which demonstrate that it is CBE that influences value co-creation. However, the present result is consistent with that of Harrigan *et al.* (2021) with respect to travel website brands, and it is grounded in the idea that, under the SDL paradigm, consumers' active participation in co-creating with the brand helps to strengthen their relationship to it (Cheung *et al.*, 2021a). Hence, this finding contributes to a literature that, while analyzing the relationship between the two variables, has yielded inconclusive results (Cheung *et al.*, 2021a). Furthermore, it responds to calls to examine the relationship between these two variables overall in greater depth (Rather *et al.*, 2022; Satar *et al.*, 2023a) – and to deepen the study of value co-creation in the hotel context (González-Mansilla *et al.*, 2023) – by demonstrating this relationship for the first time in the aforementioned context.

Third, this is the first study to investigate empirically the relationship between value co-creation with travel websites and hotel CBE, to the best of the authors' knowledge. As such, it responds to the need identified by Zhang *et al.* (2018) to deepen scholarly understanding of how value co-creation on travel websites affects tourism brands. However, the results did not provide empirical support for the proposed relationship, in contrast to the findings of other studies, such as that of Lam *et al.* (2020), who demonstrated that value co-creation via travel websites influenced destination brand image.

In view of this finding and in response to Cheung *et al.* (2021b), who propose research into the role of moderating variables such as culture in the relationship between value co-creation and CBE, the results were then examined in a multigroup model to determine whether tourists' national culture may play a moderating role in this relationship (and in that of value co-creation with the hotel/CBE). We found that culture does, indeed, exert a moderating influence – a discovery that lends weight to the premise of SDL, which holds that cultural context plays an important role in the consumer–brand interactions that can generate value co-creation (Grott *et al.*, 2019). Specifically, value co-creation with the hotel's online media influences hotel CBE for consumers from individualist, low-uncertainty-avoidance cultures (in this case, British), while value co-creation with travel websites influences hotel

CBE for consumers from collectivist and highly uncertainty-avoidant cultures (in this case, Spanish). These results contribute to the theoretical proposals of authors such as [Hollebeek \(2018\)](#) and respond in a novel way to future lines of research suggested by authors such as [Rather et al. \(2022\)](#), [Zhang et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Lam et al. \(2020\)](#), to deepen scholarly understanding of the effects of value co-creation with different agents in the tourism online context.

5.3 Practical implications

These results will be of practical value for firms in the tourism sector, especially hotels, as they provide insights that can help improve brand equity development via online media. Specifically, they provide suggestions and recommendations to guide firms on methods for achieving greater CBE through value co-creation with tourists, taking cultural differences into consideration.

For hotels to fully benefit from the opportunities provided by CBE in terms of enhancing their brand equity, as highlighted in this research, they need to consider an online media strategy that invites consumers and prospective consumers to participate in co-creating value at all points of the customer journey – including the dreaming phase. This latter finding, that co-creation also takes place in the dreaming phase, is demonstrated empirically here and holds great potential for hotel firms, which should focus on designing an online strategy that enables them to:

- interact with consumers to inspire them before they make any decisions about which destination to visit in the future (dreaming phase);
- jointly design tailor-made tourism experiences with consumers ([González-Mansilla et al., 2023](#); [Satar et al., 2023a](#)) (pre-visit phase);
- collaborate with consumers during their stay so that everything is to their liking (visit phase); and
- maintain contact with tourists, interacting with them after the trip (post-visit phase).

Notwithstanding, the core issue for hotels is to determine which channels to target in their communications efforts – their own online media or external travel websites – to best achieve co-creation with consumers that contributes to increasing hotel CBE. The present results show us that the national culture of the tourist plays an important role in this regard.

For consumers from individualist, low-uncertainty-avoidance national cultures, it is important for hotels to use their online media (website, social networks and so on) appropriately. Such media should aim to not only inspire the consumer to decide to plan a trip that includes the hotel (by providing information about the establishment and its offer) but also facilitate the planning of the stay (promoting the process as pleasant and saving time and money), the stay itself (providing useful online resources to support the tourist in making the most of their visit and fully enjoying their stay) and the post-visit phase (making it easy to provide feedback and share their experiences and opinions with other tourists) ([Frias-Jamilena et al., 2017](#)).

In contrast, for consumers from collectivist, highly uncertainty-avoidant cultures, the hotel's marketing efforts and resources need to be channeled into engaging with intermediary travel websites. To attract consumers from collectivist, highly uncertainty-avoidant cultures, the most important factor is that hotels strategically manage their online reputation – by nudging consumers toward generating favorable reviews ([González-Mansilla et al., 2023](#)), offering a timely, personalized response to these opinions, systematically analyzing them and drawing lessons from them to improve performance where necessary ([Niu and Fan, 2018](#)). Taken together, these steps constitute a means for consumers to co-create with the travel

websites (González-Mansilla *et al.*, 2023) and thereby feel engaged with the hotel through CBE and, in doing so, improve brand equity via these third-party opportunities.

5.4 Limitations and future research

Like all research, there are limitations that can be considered as constituting potential future lines of research. The key methodological limitation is that the current study population consisted of British and Spanish hotel consumers, so the generalization of the results to other sectors or consumers from different national cultures should be approached with caution. One future line of research would be to replicate the study with other types of tourism firms or in different geographical areas.

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Appendix. Measurement scales for all variables

Construct / dimension / item

Value co-creation with the hotel's online media (Frías-Jamilena et al., 2017)

Value co-creation with the hotel's online media in the dreaming phase.

My interactions with the hotel via online media meant that ...

VCHD1. I wanted to visit and explore the destination/location in which the hotel is located.

VCHD2. I was encouraged to plan the trip.

VCHD3. I was excited about my stay at the hotel.

Value co-creation with the hotel's online media pre-visit

My interactions with the hotel via online media meant that ...

VCHPRE1. I was able to save time when planning my stay.

VCHPRE2. I was able to select services at a good price.

VCHPRE3. Organizing the booking was a pleasant experience.

Value co-creation with the hotel's online media during the visit

My interactions with the hotel via online media meant that ...

VCHV1. I found useful resources for my stay (such as websites, mobile applications [...]).

VCHV2. I was able to make the most of my stay.

VCHV3. I enjoyed my stay to the full.

Value co-creation with the hotel's online media post-visit

My interactions with the hotel via online media meant that ...

VCHPOST1. I offered suggestions about the hotel and my stay.

VCHPOST2. I shared my experiences with other tourists.

VCHPOST3. I enjoyed the post-stay phase (sharing positive experiences with my friends via social networks, giving my opinion about the hotel or hotel chain, etc.).

Value co-creation with travel websites (Frías-Jamilena et al., 2017)

Value co-creation with travel websites in the dreaming phase.

My use of online travel agencies or specialized websites (Booking, Kayak, TripAdvisor, travel agent websites [...]) during the booking process meant that ...

VCTWD1. I learned more about the hotel and its offer.

VCTWD2. I was encouraged to plan the trip.

VCTWD3. I was excited about my stay at the hotel.

Value co-creation with travel websites pre-visit

My use of online travel agencies or specialized websites (Booking, Kayak, TripAdvisor, travel agent websites [...]) during the booking process meant that ...

VCTWPRE1. I was able to save time when planning my stay.

VCTWPRE2. I was able to select services at a good price.

VCTWPRE3. Organizing the booking was a pleasant experience.

Value co-creation with travel websites during the visit

My use of online travel agencies or specialized websites (Booking, Kayak, TripAdvisor, travel agent websites [...]) during the booking process meant that ...

VCTWV1. I found useful resources for my stay (such as websites, mobile applications [...]).

VCTWV2. I was able to make the most of my stay.

VCTWV3. I enjoyed my stay to the full.

Value co-creation with travel websites post-visit.

My use of online travel agencies or specialized websites (Booking, Kayak, TripAdvisor, travel agent websites [...]) during the booking process meant that ...

VCTWPOST1. I offered suggestions about the hotel and my stay.

VCTWPOST2. I shared my experiences with other tourists.

VCTWPOST3. I enjoyed the post-stay phase (sharing positive experiences with my friends via social networks, giving my opinion about the hotel or hotel chain, etc.).

CBE (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014)

Cognitive processing

The online presence of the hotel (website, social networks, opinions on Booking and TripAdvisor [...]) makes me ...

PROC1. Think about the hotel.

PROC2. Interested in the hotel.

Affect

The online presence of the hotel (website, social networks, opinions on Booking and TripAdvisor [...]) makes me ...

AFF1. Feel positive about the hotel.

AFF2. Feel good about the hotel.

Activation

The online presence of the hotel (website, social networks, opinions on Booking and TripAdvisor [...]) makes me ...

ACT1. Spend more time visiting this hotel online media than on the competitions.

ACT2. Choose to visit *this* hotel online media when I want to hotel online media.

Overall brand equity (Yoo and Donthu, 2001)

The online presence of the hotel (website, social networks, opinions on Booking and TripAdvisor [...]) means that [...]

OBE1. It makes sense to choose this hotel over another in the same category.

OBE2. I prefer this hotel even if there is another hotel with the same characteristics.

OBE3. If there is another hotel similar to this one, I think it would be smarter to choose this one.

Source(s): Authors' own work

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