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ASSESSING THE EXTENT TO WHICH CUSTOMER FEEDBACK CONTRIBUTES TO VALUE CO- CREATION: A FOCUS ON THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Siyasanga Mgoduka ^{1*}, Irrshad Kaseeram ² and Shalen Heeralal ³

ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades, the process of creating economic value has changed from single companies contributing individually to co-creating value and integrating customer knowledge into product development. Firms are creating value through the use of engagement experiences between customers and firms. The new locus of value co-creation is interactions between firm stakeholders and customers; hence, organisations need to be designed to revolve around these interactions to identify opportunities for customer-company co-creation. Nonetheless, there are still a lot of unanswered questions regarding value co-creation, its antecedents, and its effects. Literature on the effects of customer feedback on value co-creation is sparse, the existing body of knowledge lacks information regarding the role played by customer feedback to enhance the co-creation of value between firms and their consumers. In context with this, the study aims to assess the extent to which customer feedback contributes to value co-creation by focusing on the tourism industry. In addressing the aforementioned gap, this study employed the Service – dominant (S–D) Logic Theory. Moreover, purposive sampling was used in this study to gather qualitative data from 20 guests who made visits to the 23 targeted game and nature reserves in Mpumalanga. The findings revealed that customer feedback such as preferences and opinions about products and services enhances value co-creation. Moreover, the findings revealed that the use of social media platforms to allow consumers to make suggestions and comments about a service provision enhances value co-creation. This study therefore concludes that firms must encourage customer feedback to enhance value co-creation.

Keywords: Value co-creation, customer feedback, tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) is based on the concept of "exchange" and offers a theoretical explanation of how businesses and consumers interact to

co-create value.¹ In management and marketing literature, the concept of "value" is becoming more and more important. Studies applied in the service sector indicate that businesses can gain a competitive edge by enhancing value management.² This is because customers purchase experiences rather than products or services out of pure necessity.³ A strong relationship exists between customers' perceived value and their inclination to develop loyalty towards the business.⁴

The SDL approach asserts that value arises not only in the realm of service providing but also in the process of interaction between a business and its customers.^{5 6} The use of information and communications technology (ICT) in business-to-customer (B2C) interactions has been widely acknowledged in the literature in recent years.⁷⁸ Furthermore, because of its ability to be used

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¹ Stephen L Vargo and Robert F Lusch, 'Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing' (2004) 68(1) *Journal of Marketing* 1

² Mariana Simanjuntak, 'Designing of Service Dominant Logic and Business Model Canvas: Narrative Study of Village Tourism' (2021) 1(2) *Golden Ratio of Marketing and Applied Psychology of Business* 73

³ Ursula S Grisseemann and Nicola E Stokburger-Sauer, 'Customer Co-Creation of Travel Services: The Role of Company Support and Customer Satisfaction with the Co-Creation Performance' (2012) 33(6) *Tourism Management* 1483.

⁴ Mariana Simanjuntak, 'Designing of Service Dominant Logic and Business Model Canvas: Narrative Study of Village Tourism' (2021) 1(2) *Golden Ratio of Marketing and Applied Psychology of Business* 73

⁵ Michael Etgar, 'A Descriptive Model of the Consumer Co-Production Process' (2008) 36 *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 97

⁶ María del Mar Alonso-Almeida and others, 'Sustainability in Small Tourist Businesses: The Link Between Initiatives and Performance' (2018) 21(1) *Current Issues in Tourism* 1

⁷ María del Mar Alonso-Almeida and others, 'Sustainability in Small Tourist Businesses: The Link Between Initiatives and Performance' (2018) 21(1) *Current Issues in Tourism* 1

⁸ Efthimios Poulis, Konstantinos Poulis, and Lawrence Dooley, 'Information Communication Technology Innovation in a Non-High Technology Sector:

in the process of B2C value co-creation, ICT is particularly important.⁹ ¹⁰With this in mind, it has been determined that businesses should redesign their delivery and customer service procedures to promote better B2C communication through ICT. Ultimately, the goal of this redesign should be to create a sense of increased value by giving the customer a more appealing offer that is individualised to better suit their unique needs and preferences.¹¹

Nonetheless, there are still a lot of unanswered questions regarding value co-creation, its antecedents, and its effects. Literature on the effects of customer feedback on value co-creation is sparse, the existing body of knowledge lacks information regarding the role played by customer feedback to enhance the co-creation of value between firms and their consumers. and this study aims to address that gap by assessing the extent to which customer feedback contributes to value co-creation by focusing on the tourism industry. Globally, tourism is now a key factor in the development of national economies and identities.¹² Additionally, it is a vital tool for encouraging individual engagement, group collaboration, and social cohesiveness.¹³ A synopsis of recent research on the topic will be presented first, followed by the methods utilised, and the discussions and conclusions will be presented last.

Achieving Competitive Advantage in the Shipping Industry' (2013) 33(6) *The Service Industries Journal* 594

⁹ Gareth Shaw, Adrian Bailey, and Allan Williams, 'Aspects of Service-Dominant Logic and Its Implications for Tourism Management: Examples from the Hotel Industry' (2011) 32(2) *Tourism Management* 207

¹⁰ Ingo O Karpen, Liliana L Bove, and Bryan A Lukas, 'Linking Service-Dominant Logic and Strategic Business Practice: A Conceptual Model of a Service-Dominant Orientation' (2012) 15(1) *Journal of Service Research* 21

¹¹ Ursula S Grisseemann and Nicola E Stokburger-Sauer, 'Customer Co-Creation of Travel Services: The Role of Company Support and Customer Satisfaction with the Co-Creation Performance' (2012) 33(6) *Tourism Management* 1483

¹² Ulrich Gunter, Egon Smeral, and Bozana Zekan, 'Forecasting Tourism in the EU After the COVID-19 Crisis' (2024) 48(5) *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* 909

¹³ Raphaël K Akamavi, Fahad Ibrahim, and Raymond Swaray, 'Tourism and Troubles: Effects of Security Threats on the Global Travel and Tourism Industry Performance' (2023) 62(8) *Journal of Travel Research* 1755

2. CONCEPTUAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Service – dominant (S–D) Logic Theory

The conventional, fundamental goods-dominant (G-D) logic of exchange, which marketing acquired from economics, considered products as the object of trade and services as a specific case of goods.¹⁴ This logic is represented by the concept of service-dominant (S-D) logic. The G-D logic of exchange emerged as the prevailing logic in economics and its scholarly offspring, marketing included.¹⁵ Because of G-D logic's predominance and the functional benefits it implies, the literature is just now beginning to recognise the importance of more experiential, expressive, phenomenological, and emotional benefits. S-D logic is centred on the micro-activity of service-for-service trade, which serves as the foundation for the co-creation and advancement of society.¹⁶

A collection of essential concepts known as the S-D Logic of marketing underpins the following procedures: To obtain a competitive advantage, companies need to do the following: i) recognise and develop core competencies; ii) identify customers who can profit from these competencies; iii) build relationships to offer value propositions that satisfy customers' needs; and iv) discover ways to enhance performance through close customer interaction.¹⁷

Value propositions are created by firms, but only customers have the authority to determine value, according to S-D logic.¹⁸ All stakeholders contribute to the creation of value, which is established by the benefits of utilising goods and services. Value emerges through the inherent collaboration of producers and consumers rather than being something that

¹⁴ Xavier Font and others, 'Value Co-Creation in Sustainable Tourism: A Service-Dominant Logic Approach' (2021) 82 *Tourism Management* 104200

¹⁵ Juan Jose Blazquez-Resino, Arturo Molina, and Agueda Esteban-Talaya, 'Service-Dominant Logic in Tourism: The Way to Loyalty' (2015) 18(8) *Current Issues in Tourism* 706

¹⁶ Mariana Simanjuntak, 'Designing of Service Dominant Logic and Business Model Canvas: Narrative Study of Village Tourism' (2021) 1(2) *Golden Ratio of Marketing and Applied Psychology of Business* 73

¹⁷ Stephen L Vargo and Robert F Lusch, 'Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing' (2004) 68(1) *Journal of Marketing* 1

¹⁸ Xavier Font and others, 'Value Co-Creation in Sustainable Tourism: A Service-Dominant Logic Approach' (2021) 82 *Tourism Management* 104200

can simply be provided by a provider.¹⁹ The service-dominant (S-D) logic was used in the current study to assess the extent to which customer feedback contributes to B2C value co-creation.

2.1.1 Value Co-creation theory: evolving.

Companies are forced to take a creative approach since they are constantly searching for new and more effective ways to satisfy the needs of their customers. Market rivals encourage the creation of market-driven businesses and customer-driven concepts²⁰. Existing research raised an argument that one way to innovate is to involve the consumer in the design process to ensure that the final product is suited to their strategies as well as their needs and desires.²¹ Due to this marketing perspective, customer-centric innovation was created, which aims to shift innovation efforts away from corporate structures and toward a position closer to the customers. This shift is also evident in the increasing number of interested parties working together, which gave rise to the concept of open innovation.²²

In order to boost productivity,²³ argue for the adoption of a marketing perspective that involves educated consumers in the product creation process. That establishes the foundation of co-creation, which is a turning point in the relationship between the consumer and the business.²⁴ Despite the hype, questions always come up when the word "co-creation" is mentioned.

¹⁹ Abbie-Gayle Johnson and Barbara Neuhofer, 'Airbnb—An Exploration of Value Co-Creation Experiences in Jamaica' (2017) 29(9) *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 2361

²⁰ Juan Jose Blazquez-Resino, Arturo Molina, and Agueda Esteban-Talaya, 'Service-Dominant Logic in Tourism: The Way to Loyalty' (2015) 18(8) *Current Issues in Tourism* 706

²¹ Fernando Antonio Monteiro Christoph D'Andrea and others, 'Co-Creation: A B2C and B2B Comparative Analysis' (2019) 37(6) *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 674

²² Krithika Randhawa, Ralf Wilden, and Jan Hohberger, 'A Bibliometric Review of Open Innovation: Setting a Research Agenda' (2016) 33(6) *Journal of Product Innovation Management* 750

²³ Christopher H Lovelock and Robert F Young, 'Look to Consumers to Increase Productivity' (1979) 57(3) *Harvard Business Review* 168

²⁴ Stephen L Vargo and Robert F Lusch, 'Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing' (2004) 68(1) *Journal of Marketing* 1

Confusion results from a lack of theoretical coherence.²⁵ There are two main ways to categorise the studies: co-production and value-in-use (ViU).²⁶ Co-production is the process of businesses and consumers collaborating to understand, develop, and produce new goods and services.²⁷ When a product or service is utilised, experienced, and evaluated, value is co-created in ViU.²⁸

One of the premises of the service-dominant logic, which was established by Vargo and Lusch in 2004, was "the customer is always a co-producer". Confusion was caused by that definition. It was then modified to read, "the customer is always a co-creator of value," by.²⁹ This paved the way for differentiating between "co-production" and "co-creation." The first describes the process of developing a value proposition and NPD (new product development), which includes (design, definition, and production).³⁰ In the second, discusses how different players' behaviors can improve users' well-being, sometimes without the users' knowledge.³¹

Involving customers in co-production procedures is optional. Co-creation inevitably involves this. Although it's not always co-produced, value is always co-created.³² Consumers engage in relational exchanges and co-production as active participants and those items include service potentials

²⁵ Kumkum Bharti, Rajat Agrawal, and Vinay Sharma, 'Literature Review and Proposed Conceptual Framework' (2015) 57(4) *International Journal of Market Research* 571

²⁶ Kumar Rakesh Ranjan and Stuart Read, 'Value Co-Creation: Concept and Measurement' (2016) 44 *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 290

²⁷ Fernando Antonio Monteiro Christoph D'Andrea and others, 'Co-Creation: A B2C and B2B Comparative Analysis' (2019) 37(6) *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 674

²⁸ Kumar Rakesh Ranjan and Stuart Read, 'Value Co-Creation: Concept and Measurement' (2016) 44 *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 290

²⁹ Stephen L Vargo and Robert F Lusch, 'Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing' (2004) 68(1) *Journal of Marketing* 1

³⁰ Fernando Antonio Monteiro Christoph D'Andrea and others, 'Co-Creation: A B2C and B2B Comparative Analysis' (2019) 37(6) *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 674

³¹ Fernando Antonio Monteiro Christoph D'Andrea and others, 'Co-Creation: A B2C and B2B Comparative Analysis' (2019) 37(6) *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 674

³² Stephen L Vargo and Robert F Lusch, 'Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing' (2004) 68(1) *Journal of Marketing* 1

that become realised only when individuals utilise them.³³ Studies on tourism³⁴, fast-moving consumer goods³⁵, and healthcare were among the many that employed their methodology. Concurrently, companies were mobilising customers by incorporating their experiences into the business.³⁶ Consumers are now viewed as credible sources of capabilities and are moving from being value consumers to value makers. The market is evolving into a platform for dialogue and exchange among companies, consumer communities, and individuals as the emphasise changes to experiences.³⁷ It is this dialogue, access, transparency, and understanding of risk benefits that are crucial to the next practice of value co-creation.³⁸

Value was historically thought to be created only by organisations.³⁹ In that case, they manufacture their goods and market them using advertising to generate demand for what they have already produced. But in today's more advanced world, value is decided upon through negotiation between parties.⁴⁰ The advent of co-creation settings is expected to enhance customers' willingness to participate in the undertaking.⁴¹ The four pillars that Prahalad and Ramaswamy contend are necessary for co-creation are dialog, access, risk, and transparency (DART). Value creation depends on every point of contact between the business and the consumer; each one offers a chance to

³³ Stephen L Vargo and Robert F Lusch, 'Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing' (2004) 68(1) *Journal of Marketing* 1

³⁴ Woudi Von Solms and Rossouw Von Solms, 'Co-Creation: Tourism, Technology and Wellness' (2016 IST-Africa Week Conference, IEEE 2016)

³⁵ Tiziana Russo-Spena and Cristina Mele, "Five Co-s" in *Innovating: A Practice-Based View* (2012) 23(4) *Journal of Service Management* 527

³⁶ Coimbatore K Prahalad and Venkatram Ramaswamy, 'Co-Opting Customer Competence' (2000) 78(1) *Harvard Business Review* 79

³⁷ Coimbatore K Prahalad and Venkatram Ramaswamy, 'Co-Opting Customer Competence' (2000) 78(1) *Harvard Business Review* 79

³⁸ Coimbatore K Prahalad and Venkatram Ramaswamy, 'Co-Opting Customer Competence' (2000) 78(1) *Harvard Business Review* 79

³⁹ Fernando Antonio Monteiro Christoph D'Andrea and others, 'Co-Creation: A B2C and B2B Comparative Analysis' (2019) 37(6) *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 674

⁴⁰ Fernando Antonio Monteiro Christoph D'Andrea and others, 'Co-Creation: A B2C and B2B Comparative Analysis' (2019) 37(6) *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 674

⁴¹ Coimbatore K Prahalad and Venkatram Ramaswamy, 'Co-Opting Customer Competence' (2000) 78(1) *Harvard Business Review* 79

learn what needs to be created.⁴² Managers must choose whether to take advantage of these opportunities to learn more about the customers they serve and how to share the knowledge they gain throughout the organisation to foster innovation. Vendors frequently create solutions for particular customers, as seen in the software and automotive industries, when it comes to co-creation in B2B, which is linked to strategic partnerships.⁴³ Co-creation in B2C is more closely associated with customer involvement and relationship marketing.⁴⁴

The customer, technology, and service-driven viewpoints are notable beginning points for co-creation analysis.⁴⁵ This study adopts the same definition of co-creation as Prahalad and Ramaswamy. Suppliers perceive customers (both B2B and B2C) to possess skills that they can leverage to innovate. In light of this, co-creation is the process by which individuals work with a company to contribute concepts, resources, or even portions of the production process toward the creation of goods and services that they and other customers with comparable needs and desires can utilise. Obtaining new sources of competitive advantage necessitates excellent customer interactions that allow customers to co-create unique experiences with the company.⁴⁶ To create value, the customer and the business must collaborate (see Table 1).

Table 1: The concept of co-creation

WHAT CO-CREATION IS NOT	WHAT CO-CREATION IS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer focus • Customer is always right or the customer is king 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-creation is when a business and its consumer work together to create value. The company is not attempting to win over the consumer.

⁴² Fernando Antonio Monteiro Christoph D'Andrea and others, 'Co-Creation: A B2C and B2B Comparative Analysis' (2019) 37(6) Marketing Intelligence & Planning 674

⁴³ Thorsten Roser, Robert DeFillippi, and Alain Samson, 'Managing Your Co-Creation Mix: Co-Creation Ventures in Distinctive Contexts' (2013) 25(1) European Business Review 20

⁴⁴ Elina Jaakkola and Matthew Alexander, 'The Role of Customer Engagement Behavior in Value Co-Creation: A Service System Perspective' (2014) 17(3) Journal of Service Research 247

⁴⁵ Ricardo Martínez-Cañas and others, 'Consumer Participation in Co-Creation: An Enlightening Model of Causes and Effects Based on Ethical Values and Transcendent Motives' (2016) 7 Frontiers in Psychology 198069

⁴⁶ Coimbatore K Prahalad and Venkatram Ramaswamy, 'Co-Opting Customer Competence' (2000) 78(1) Harvard Business Review 79

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing excellent customer service or lavishing the customer with attention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • letting the customer help create the service experience such that it fits her needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass customisation of products to fit the supply chain of the sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative problem solving and problem definition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity transfer from the business to the customer, as in self-service. • The customer managing the product or co-designing the goods and services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crafting an encounter setting where customers may actively engage in conversation and co-create customized experiences; products might be the same (e.g. Lego Mindstorms), but customers can create unique experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product variety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience variety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Segment of one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of one
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meticulous Market research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-time experience with the company as customers do. • Continuous dialogue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staging experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-constructing personalized experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand-side innovation for new products and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating new co-creation experiences through innovative experience environments.

Source: Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004:p16)

Value creation depends on every point of contact between the business and the consumer; each one offers a chance to learn what needs to be created.⁴⁷ The four pillars that Prahalad and Ramaswamy contend are necessary for co-creation are dialog, access, risk, and transparency (DART).⁴⁸

2.2 Business-to-customer value co-creation

The process of creating economic value has changed over the past few decades from single firms' individual contributions to co-creating value and integrating customer knowledge into product development.⁴⁹ Firms are creating value through the use of engagement experiences between customers and firms. The new locus of value co-creation is interactions between firm

⁴⁷ Fernando Antonio Monteiro Christoph D'Andrea and others, 'Co-Creation: A B2C and B2B Comparative Analysis' (2019) 37(6) Marketing Intelligence & Planning 674

⁴⁸ Coimbatore K Prahalad and Venkatram Ramaswamy, 'Co-Opting Customer Competence' (2000) 78(1) Harvard Business Review 79

⁴⁹ Andreas Hein and others, 'Value Co-Creation Practices in Business-to-Business Platform Ecosystems' (2019) 29 Electronic Markets 503

stakeholders and customers; hence, firms need to be designed to revolve around these interactions to identify opportunities for customer-company co-creation.⁵⁰ The literature has addressed business co-creation in terms of fostering an environment that supports co-creation; as a result, to enhance the co-creation experience with customers, the company must also design better experiences for its employees.⁵¹ However, a great deal remains unclear about value co-creation—its effects and implications. There is little research on how customer feedback affects value co-creation. Specifically, less is known about how customer feedback can improve the value that businesses and their customers co-create, and by examining how much consumer feedback influences value co-creation with a particular focus on the travel and tourism sector, this study seeks to close that gap. In addressing this research gap, this study has employed the service-dominant logic practice theory. Never before has the customer been more important. The importance of the consumer in the value (co)-creation process is highlighted by service research, especially in solution business literature.⁵²

Consequently, the focus of marketing research has shifted from the goods-dominant paradigm to the increasingly prevalent service-dominant (S-D) logic.⁵³ The S-D logic has impacted research, leading to significant conceptual and empirical work that improves knowledge of service marketing and the solution business, even though researchers do not yet view it as a paradigm.⁵⁴ Existing research, however, mostly addresses the solution provider—a firm that customizes goods and/or services to meet the needs of customers—rather than the customer.^{55,56}

⁵⁰ Luu Trong Tuan and others, 'Customer Value Co-Creation in the Business-to-Business Tourism Context: The Roles of Corporate Social Responsibility and Customer Empowering Behaviors' (2019) 39 *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 137

⁵¹ Venkat Ramaswamy and Kerimcan Ozcan, 'Brand Value Co-Creation in a Digitalized World: An Integrative Framework and Research Implications' (2016) 33(1) *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 93

⁵² Jan Petri and Frank Jacob, 'The Customer as Enabler of Value (Co)-Creation in the Solution Business' (2016) 56 *Industrial Marketing Management* 63

⁵³ Elina Jaakkola and Matthew Alexander, 'The Role of Customer Engagement Behavior in Value Co-Creation: A Service System Perspective' (2014) 17(3) *Journal of Service Research* 247

⁵⁴ Neil Patel, 'The Benefits and Importance of Customer Satisfaction' (neilpatel.com, 2018) <https://neilpatel.com> accessed 25 August 2024

⁵⁵ Tiziana Russo-Spena and Cristina Mele, "'Five Co-s'" in *Innovating: A Practice-Based View* (2012) 23(4) *Journal of Service Management* 527

Before a customer utilizes or encounters a product or service, value does not exist. Value is "determined by the beneficiary" in this sense. The provider's first responsibility, according to this stream of literature, is to enable goods and services that have the potential to provide value.⁵⁷ In order to achieve the best possible trade-off between the customer's value-in-use and the necessary sacrifices, the prospective value is incorporated into the provider's value offer. Nonetheless, providers are not limited to the position of facilitator alone. Through active involvement and close interaction, they may integrate themselves into the customer's daily routines, participate in co-creation, and support the fulfilment of the value proposition.⁵⁸ The existing body of knowledge raises an argument that to fulfil the needs of the consumer and become a co-creator of value, the provider must have a thorough understanding of it.⁵⁹ This can be done through engaging with customers and allowing them to provide feedback regarding a service provision. The existing body of knowledge lacks information on the effectiveness of customer feedback and how it enhances value co-creation.

Customers are today more aware, connected, and empowered than they were a few years ago as a result of technology developments. Consumers can co-create value with firms through technological advancements which allows them to gain access to new tools that enable them to co-create value.⁶⁰ Online environments are frequently the site of growing application of technological breakthroughs and customer engagement.⁶¹ Customer access to new tools that facilitate co-creation with businesses is made possible by internet technologies. Co-creation has been approached from the perspective of the customer, taking into account their roles in the co-creation process; what drives them to participate, the stages they go through

⁵⁶ Jan Petri and Frank Jacob, 'The Customer as Enabler of Value (Co)-Creation in the Solution Business' (2016) 56 *Industrial Marketing Management* 63

⁵⁷ Fernando Antonio Monteiro Christoph D'Andrea and others, 'Co-Creation: A B2C and B2B Comparative Analysis' (2019) 37(6) *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 674

⁵⁸ Neil Patel, 'The Benefits and Importance of Customer Satisfaction' (neilpatel.com, 2018) <https://neilpatel.com> accessed 25 August 2024

⁵⁹ Jan Petri and Frank Jacob, 'The Customer as Enabler of Value (Co)-Creation in the Solution Business' (2016) 56 *Industrial Marketing Management* 63

⁶⁰ Kumar Rakesh Ranjan and Stuart Read, 'Value Co-Creation: Concept and Measurement' (2016) 44 *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 290

⁶¹ Mengdi Zhang and others, 'Optimal Collaborative Transportation Service Trading in B2B E-Commerce Logistics' (2017) 55(18) *International Journal of Production Research* 5485

when they do so, and their participation styles.⁶² Customers may participate in customer service, marketing and sales, and the deployment of new products as partial employees.⁶³ Customers can also be included through self-service technologies, through unique experiences with the company, by participating in a process to solve their problems, and by co-creating the final product.⁶⁴ Their study explored how brand value co-creation is enacted through brand engagement platforms, embodied in brand experience domains, and emergent from brand capability ecosystems, valorising outcomes with stakeholder individuals. The level of customer participation in co-creation varies based on the customer's knowledge and abilities as well as the task's complexity.⁶⁵ The ability to co-create new goods, experiences, and services is made possible by the new digital means of communication.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method was used in the present study. The purposive sample approach was used to gather data qualitatively. The researcher used purposeful sampling because it is an approach that yields more accurate study results and better insights by allowing the collection of qualitative responses.⁶⁶ The game and nature reserves in Mpumalanga were the focus of the research. There are 23 game and nature reserves in Mpumalanga and this study targeted the guests that visited these reserves. Because the 23 targeted game and nature reserves were preselected, purposive sampling was an appropriate approach to apply because it entails recruiting participants based on preselected criteria pertinent to the study's objectives and research questions. Face-to-face interviews were used to gather data. The sample size for the guests is 20, as the researcher observed that the same themes were recurring after the point of saturation was reached at respondent 20.

⁶² Kumar Rakesh Ranjan and Stuart Read, 'Value Co-Creation: Concept and Measurement' (2016) 44 *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 290

⁶³ Kumar Rakesh Ranjan and Stuart Read, 'Value Co-Creation: Concept and Measurement' (2016) 44 *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 290

⁶⁴ Venkat Ramaswamy and Francis J Gouillart, *The Power of Co-Creation: Build It with Them to Boost Growth, Productivity, and Profits* (Simon and Schuster 2010)

⁶⁵ Coimbatore K Prahalad and Venkatram Ramaswamy, 'Co-Opting Customer Competence' (2000) 78(1) *Harvard Business Review* 79

⁶⁶ L Gaille, 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Convenience Sampling' (Vittana) <https://vittana.org/15-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-convenience-sampling> accessed 25 August 2024

Table 1: Targeted game and nature reserves

Game and Nature Reserves in Mpumalanga
1. Sabi sands game reserve
2. Sebaka Game reserve
3. Blyde River Nature Reserve
4. Dullstroom Nature Reserve
5. Gustav Klingbiel Nature Reserve
6. Kruger National Park
7. Ligwalagwala Conservancy
8. Loskop Dam Nature Reserve
9. Marieskop Nature Reserve
10. Manyeleti Game reserve
11. Mkhombo Nature Reserve
12. Mount Sheba Nature Reserve
13. Mountainlands Nature Reserve
14. Mthethomusha Game Reserve
15. Nkomazi Game Reserve
16. Nooitgedacht Dam Nature Reserve
17. Mjejane Private Game Reserve
18. Londolozi Game Reserve
19. Saragossa Game Reserve
20. Songimvelo Game Reserve
21. Steenkampsberg Nature Reserve
22. Lionspruit Game Reserve
23. Verloren Vallei (lost valley) Nature Reserve

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Research objective

To assess the extent to which customer feedback contributes to value co-creation in the tourism industry.

To address this objective the guests were asked four questions. The first question required guests to outline the measures they take as consumers to ensure that they receive the best and most memorable service experiences.

The second question asked the guests if the targeted firms allowed them to make suggestions and comments about the services they offer. The third question asked the guests if firms fully disclose information that might help to improve the outcome of their service experience. Lastly, the guests were asked whether they communicate views and suggestions to service providers regarding ways in which their service experience can be improved.

Question 1: What measures do you take as a consumer to ensure that you have the best and memorable service experience?

In the first question, the guests were asked to comment about the measures they take to ensure that they have the best and memorable experiences. Table 2 below depicts the themes that emerged when the respondents were asked to outline the measures they take to ensure the delivery of the best and most memorable service experiences.

Table 2: Emerged themes based on the measures taken by consumers to ensure the best and memorable service experience.

Themes	Number of respondents
Active dialogue	5
Active engagement	2
Online dialogue	7
Collaborating	6

Table 2 depicts the themes that emerged from the responses of the guests regarding the measures they take to ensure that they have the best and most memorable experiences. The themes are further elaborated upon below:

Theme 1: Active dialogue

As illustrated in Table 2 above, n=5 (25%) guests indicated that they participate in an active dialogue with firms to ensure the provision of memorable service experiences. One of the guests further detailed that “To guarantee a fantastic customer experience, I engage in an active dialogue with the game reserve.” Other guest asserted that they participate in an active dialogue with the firms in order to co-design the service experience according to their expectations.

Theme 2: Active engagement

As depicted in Table 2 above, n=2 (10%) guests asserted that they actively engage with firms to ensure the creation of memorable experiences. One of the guests further elaborated that “I actively engage with businesses about the

measures that can be taken in order to provide the best service experience.” Similarly, another guest added that “I discuss how to get the most value from firms.”

Theme 3: Online Dialogue

As illustrated in Table 2 above, n=7 (35%) guests indicated that they participate in an online dialogue with firms to ensure the provision of memorable service experiences. One guest further echoed “I usually communicate with the company via the internet about my expectations for service.” Similarly, another guest added that “I participate on an online dialogue to communicate my expectations regarding the service in advance.”

Theme 4: Collaborating

As illustrated in Table 2 above, n=6 (30%) guests indicated that they collaborate with firms to ensure the provision of memorable service experiences. One guest further detailed that “I have worked with a nature reserve to identify opportunities for creating value for the company as a service provider and for myself as a customer.”

These findings suggest that a greater portion of the consumer participates in dialogues with firms to ensure the provision of memorable service experiences. Moreover, the findings also suggest that consumers also collaborate with firms to ensure the provision of the best quality service experiences and customer satisfaction.

Question 2: Do dominant firms allow you to make suggestions and comments about the services they offer?

In this question, the guests were invited to provide their views concerning the behaviour of the targeted firms in terms of allowing comments and suggestions from customers about the service they offer. The themes that emerged from the responses of the guests are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Emerged themes based on whether dominant firms allow comments and suggestions from consumers after a service provision.

Themes	Number of respondents
Surveys	10
Social media platforms	8
Websites analytics	2

Table 3 depicts the themes that emerged from the responses of the guests regarding whether the targeted firms allow consumers to make suggestions and comments about the services they offer. The emerged themes are further elaborated upon below:

Theme 1: Surveys

As illustrated in Table 3 above, n=10 (50%) guests asserted that dominant firms allow comments and suggestions from consumers through the use of surveys. One guest further echoed “Some reserves utilize emails surveys to collect information on customer feedback and they usually ask for suggestions for better service provision on those surveys.” Similarly, another respondent stated, “I normally make my suggestions and comments on the surveys that are normally sent by the reserves to rate the service provided.” Additionally, another guest further detailed by stating that “Organisations use surveys to gather suggestions and comments on the service they provide, and those comments are used by the firms to attract new customers.”

Theme 2: Social media platforms

As illustrated in Table 3 above, n=8 (40%) guests alluded that dominant firms allow comments and suggestions from consumers through the use of social media platforms. One guest further detailed that “Game resorts allow us to provide suggestions, they have developed a process for collecting and acting on customer suggestions through digital platforms.” Similarly, another guest added that “Companies now make use of social media platforms to obtain feedback on the service provided, they also ask for suggestions on those platforms.”

Theme 3: Website analytics

As illustrated in Table 3 above, n=2 (10%) guests indicated that dominant firms allow comments and suggestions from consumers through the use of website analytics. One guest further detailed that “businesses use website analytics to gather feedback and constructive suggestions from consumers to better the service they provide.” When probed further, the guest asserted that the game resort indicated on their survey and website that the purpose of issuing surveys is to improve service quality, where management analyses the results and makes necessary changes.

These findings suggest that the targeted firms do allow consumers to make suggestions and comments about the services they offer. Furthermore, the findings also suggest that firms utilise surveys to gather those comments and suggestions.

Question 3: Do firms fully disclose information that might be helpful to improve the outcomes of the service experience?

In this question, the guests were asked if firms fully disclose the information that might be helpful to improve the outcome of the service experience. Table 4 below depicts the responses from the guests.

Table 4: Responses on whether firms disclose helpful information to improve the outcome of the service experience

Responses from the respondents	Number of respondents
Yes	15
No	5

Table 4 above depicts the responses from the guests regarding the firm's disclosure of the information to help improve the outcome of the service experience. From a total of $n=20$ guests, $n=15$ (75%) guests indicated that yes based on their experiences the firms they have received services from fully disclosed information which was helpful to improve the outcomes of the service experience. One of the respondents further elaborated "I have heard an experience with a nature reserve where the reserve went as far as suggesting outfits so that I was comfortable to enjoy the experience." Moreover, the findings from Table 4 also reveal that $n=5$ (25%) guests responded with no.

These findings suggest that based on their experiences, a greater proportion of consumers have been exposed to firms that disclose information that is helpful in improving the outcomes of the consumer's service experiences.

Question 4: Do consumers communicate their views and suggestions to service providers regarding ways to improve the service experience?

In this question, the guests were asked if they communicate their views and suggestions to service providers regarding ways in which the service experience can be improved. The below table 5 depicts the responses from the guests.

Table 5: Responses on whether consumers communicate views and suggestions to service providers to improve the service experience

Responses from the respondents	Number of respondents
Yes	17
No	3

Table 5 above depicts the responses from the guests regarding the question of whether they communicate their views and suggestions to service providers for the improvement of the service experience. From a total of n=20 guests, n=17 (85%) indicated that yes, they do offer views and suggestions to firms for the improvement of the service, n=3 (15%) guests responded with no. One of the guests further detailed that “I communicate my views and suggestions to organisations because that results in customer satisfaction.” Similarly, another guest added “I offer suggestions to firms for improving the service experience because this helps in improving the service experience and it adds value to us as consumers.” Moreover, one guest stated that “when a service provider requests for my views and suggestions, that gives me an indication of the fact that they value my opinions, I communicate my views and suggestions for that reason.”

These findings suggest that a greater portion of consumers do communicate their views and suggestions to service providers regarding ways in which they can improve their service experiences.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The findings from this current study revealed that one of the measures taken by consumers in ensuring the best and memorable service experiences includes actively engaging with firms regarding their service provision. Existing research supports these conclusions, arguing that over the past few decades, the creation of economic value has moved from the individual contributions of single enterprises to the co-creation of value and the integration of customer knowledge in product development.⁶⁷ Moreover, the findings from this current study are corroborated by previous research which demonstrated that customer interaction and engagement in the value co-creation process leads to an overall individualised customer experience.^{68,69,70}

⁶⁷ Andreas Hein and others, ‘Value Co-Creation Practices in Business-to-Business Platform Ecosystems’ (2019) 29 *Electronic Markets* 503

⁶⁸ Coimbatore K Prahalad and Venkatram Ramaswamy, ‘Co-Opting Customer Competence’ (2000) 78(1) *Harvard Business Review* 79

Furthermore, existing research also demonstrates that consumers today have shifted from being unaware to being aware of everything that happens around them, they participate in dialogues with firms.⁷¹ This dialogue, accessibility, transparency, and comprehension of risks and advantages are crucial to the next step in value co-creation.⁷²

Additionally, the findings from this study also demonstrated that consumers also collaborate with firms to ensure the provision of best quality service experiences and customer satisfaction. Existing research supports these conclusions by showing how the customer's position in the industry system has changed from one of isolation, ignorance, and passivity to one of connection, knowledge, and activity.^{73 74} Confirming the findings from this current study, the findings from a study conducted by Martínez-Cañas et al. in 2016, revealed that collaborations that companies have with consumers in terms of product and process innovation have made it easy for organisations to create value for their consumers.⁷⁵ Comparably, research by Gligor and Maloni also shows that companies depend more and more on consumer participation in the value co-creation process to improve customer satisfaction and gain a competitive edge.⁷⁶ These findings corroborate the findings demonstrated by this current study.

⁶⁹ Emma Komulainen and others, 'The Effect of Personality on Daily Life Emotional Processes' (2014) 9(10) *PloS One* e110907

⁷⁰ David M Gligor and Michael J Maloni, 'More Is Not Always Better: The Impact of Value Co-Creation Fit on B2B and B2C Customer Satisfaction' (2022) 43(2) *Journal of Business Logistics* 209

⁷¹ Nicky Terblanche, 'Knowledge Sharing in the Organizational Context: Using Social Network Analysis as a Coaching Tool' (2014) 12(2) *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring* 146

⁷² Diva Novitasari, Ida Aryati, and Ratna Damayanti, 'Analysis E Marketing, Product Innovation, and Brand Image on Purchase Decisions Janji Jiwa Coffee in Surakarta' (2021) 4(4) *Jurnal Mantik* 2495

⁷³ Nicky Terblanche, 'Knowledge Sharing in the Organizational Context: Using Social Network Analysis as a Coaching Tool' (2014) 12(2) *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring* 146

⁷⁴ Andreas Hein and others, 'Value Co-Creation Practices in Business-to-Business Platform Ecosystems' (2019) 29 *Electronic Markets* 503

⁷⁵ Ricardo Martínez-Cañas and others, 'Consumer Participation in Co-Creation: An Enlightening Model of Causes and Effects Based on Ethical Values and Transcendent Motives' (2016) 7 *Frontiers in Psychology* 198069

⁷⁶ David M Gligor and Michael J Maloni, 'More Is Not Always Better: The Impact of Value Co-Creation Fit on B2B and B2C Customer Satisfaction' (2022) 43(2) *Journal of Business Logistics* 209

The findings from this present study also revealed that firms do allow consumers to make suggestions and comments about the services they offer. In accordance with the findings from this current study, the findings from a study conducted by Chuang, revealed that to achieve value co-creation, customer feedback such as preferences and opinions about products and services must be encouraged by firms.⁷⁷ Moreover, the author further narrated that it is important for firms to take note of the efficiency gains such as allowing customers to communicate their demands or reducing customer service costs because these create value for both the firm and the consumers.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the findings also demonstrated that firms mostly utilise surveys to gather comments and suggestions from consumers. The findings revealed by this current study are in accordance with the findings from a study conducted by Hasson, Piorkowski & McCulloh, which revealed that the most popular method of gathering consumer input is through customer satisfaction surveys.⁷⁹ In addition, the findings from this study also revealed that firms also use social media platforms to allow consumers to make suggestions and comments about the services they offer. The results of Hasson et al., showed that the rapid expansion of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok gives businesses the chance to continuously collect and analyse consumer feedback with the aim of identifying and resolving issues, and support these findings.⁸⁰

Furthermore, the findings from this study also revealed that firms also use social media platforms to allow consumers to make suggestions and comments about the services they offer. The results of this study align with those of an OECD study from 2020, which found that millennials are digital

⁷⁷ Shu-Hui Chuang, 'Facilitating the Chain of Market Orientation to Value Co-Creation: The Mediating Role of E-Marketing Adoption' (2018) 7 *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 39

⁷⁸ Shu-Hui Chuang, 'Facilitating the Chain of Market Orientation to Value Co-Creation: The Mediating Role of E-Marketing Adoption' (2018) 7 *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 39

⁷⁹ Sharon Grubner Hasson, John Piorkowski, and Ian McCulloh, 'Social Media as a Main Source of Customer Feedback: Alternative to Customer Satisfaction Surveys' (2019 *IEEE/ACM International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining*, 2019)

⁸⁰ Sharon Grubner Hasson, John Piorkowski, and Ian McCulloh, 'Social Media as a Main Source of Customer Feedback: Alternative to Customer Satisfaction Surveys' (2019 *IEEE/ACM International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining*, 2019)

natives who have grown up with instantaneous and direct access to information made possible by digital technology. As such, their expectations and usage patterns of technology will continue to shape the way tourism services are provided.

The findings from this current study further revealed that based on their experiences, a greater proportion of consumers have been exposed to firms that disclose information that is helpful in improving the outcomes of the consumer's service experiences. These findings are in accordance with the findings of Gligor and Maloni (2022), who revealed that organisations increasingly rely on customer involvement in the value co-creation process to enhance customer satisfaction and create a competitive advantage.⁸¹ Similarly, a study conducted by Patel, (2018) also discovered that getting input from clients enables businesses to enhance the quality of services they offer and fosters the development of customer experiences that are memorable.⁸²

The findings above answered the research question which sought to determine the extent to which customer feedback contribute to value co-creation in the tourism industry. These findings conclude that customer feedback has a positive contribution to the co-creation of value in the tourism industry.

6. CONCLUSION

This current study found that one of the measures taken by consumers to ensure best and memorable service experiences includes actively engaging with firms regarding their service provision. This study therefore concludes that firms and consumers must actively engage in dialogues, to enhance the co-creation of value between both firms and consumers. Moreover, this study found that the targeted firms do allow their consumers to make suggestions and comments about the services they offer. This study also concludes that service providers should allow consumers to make suggestions regarding a service provision because this enhances value co-creation. Furthermore, the findings from this study also demonstrated that consumers also collaborate with firms to ensure the provision of the best quality service experiences and customer satisfaction. Consequently, this study concludes that to improve

⁸¹ David M Gligor and Michael J Maloni, 'More Is Not Always Better: The Impact of Value Co-Creation Fit on B2B and B2C Customer Satisfaction' (2022) 43(2) *Journal of Business Logistics* 209

⁸² Neil Patel, 'The Benefits and Importance of Customer Satisfaction' (neilpatel.com, 2018) <https://neilpatel.com> accessed 25 August 2024

customer satisfaction firms must collaborate with their consumers regarding service provision. From the results, it was apparent that customer feedback such as preferences and opinions about products and services enhances value co-creation. Subsequently, this study concludes that firms must encourage customer feedback to enhance value co-creation. The existing body of knowledge has revealed that in order to fulfil the needs of the consumer and become a co-creator of value, the service providers must have a thorough understanding of their consumers. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by revealing that through customer feedback, firms can easily understand the needs of their consumers and that enhances value co-creation.

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8. INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

9. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.