Smart Sustainability in Hospitality: Leveraging AI and Co-Creation to Influence Guest Intentions to Use AI-Based Tools for Sustainable Behavior During Their Stay

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of AI-based sustainability service tools in the hospitality industry and explores how guest co-creation influences emotional service attachment, behavioral intention to use such tools, and intention to visit hotels that implement them. An empirical survey was conducted among a purposive sample of 259 young Dutch participants, selected for their familiarity with emerging technologies. The findings reveal that value co-creation significantly enhances consumer experiences, emotional attachment to the AI-based service, and both behavioral intention to use the tool and intention to visit the hotel offering it. Additionally, the study identifies a moderating effect of consumers' perceptions of AI service delivery on the relationship between value co-creation and behavioral intention to use the tool. Personal environmental values (PEV) were also found to moderate this relationship. These insights offer practical implications for hospitality managers seeking to leverage AI in sustainability marketing, improve guest engagement, and foster more sustainable guest behaviors during hotel stays

Key Words *Value Co-Creation, Artificial Intelligence, Sustainability, Hospitality Industry, Emotional Attachment, Behavioral Intention*

Track *Technological Human-Centered Innovations*

Focus of Paper *Empirical Academic Paper*

Introduction

Rapidly escalating global environmental threats are prompting businesses to adapt their operations to evolving regulations and ethical demands (De F Cavalcante et al., 2021). This is particularly pertinent in the hospitality industry, where significant resource consumption, waste generation, and transportation emissions create considerable environmental impacts (Sun, 2024). According to the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (2024), hospitality operations account for nearly 1% of global carbon emissions. To align with increasing consumer expectations for reduced carbon footprints, hospitality businesses are adopting sustainability-focused initiatives, including optimizing energy and water use and implementing zero-waste policies (Fauzi et al., 2022). Research has demonstrated that many consumers increasingly value sustainability and are willing to pay premium prices for hotels engaging in green initiatives (Pereira et al., 2021; Pahrudin, 2022). However, as environmentally friendly practices become standard industry requirements rather than unique differentiators, businesses face the challenge of maintaining engagement and sustaining a green competitive advantage (Breiby et al., 2020; Pereira et al., 2021).

Given the hospitality industry's highly competitive environment and low consumer switching costs, influencing guests' intention to visit (ITV) remains critical (Ganaie & Bhat, 2021). Studies indicate that rising consumer environmental awareness positively affects ITV towards hotels implementing green initiatives (Fauzi et al., 2022). Additionally, emotional engagement has emerged as a key factor influencing consumer attitudes towards sustainability (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021; Nyamekye et al., 2021; Fauzi et al., 2022). Recent studies underscore emotional attachment as essential for driving positive green behaviors within hospitality marketing (Zhang et al., 2023). Therefore, understanding how emotional service attachment can foster engagement in sustainability initiatives and influence ITV is vital.

Value Co-Creation (VCC), defined as collaborative interactions creating mutual value between businesses and consumers (Ranjan & Read, 2014; Elliot et al., 2023; Wahab, 2024), is widely recognized as an effective

engagement tool. VCC facilitates active guest participation, enhances emotional connection, and contributes to consumer-brand satisfaction (Wahab, 2024). Although VCC's impacts in hospitality are extensively documented, limited research examines how integrating VCC and sustainability initiatives through technological advancements like Artificial Intelligence (AI) can affect consumer behaviour intention to use those technology tools and to visiting the hotel that use those technologies.

Currently, approximately 85% of hospitality businesses integrate AI into service delivery to enhance personalized, immersive, and efficient experiences (Luo et al., 2024; Iglesias et al., 2018; Dang, 2023). However, literature presents conflicting outcomes; some studies assert that AI-driven VCC positively influences consumer behavior (Behera et al., 2024), while others indicate it may reduce engagement, depending on consumer perceptions of AI, characterized by either resistance or perceived convenience (Gursoy et al., 2019; Payne et al., 2021). Given these contradictory insights, consumer perceptions of AI in service delivery will be further explored in this study as a moderator.

Although extensive literature addresses VCC's effects on engagement and emotional attachment, and the role of AI within hospitality services, limited research combines these aspects specifically in the context of sustainability initiatives. This study addresses these gaps by examining the interaction between AI-driven VCC, emotional service attachment, and consumer behavioral outcomes regarding hotel visitation intentions and intentions to use sustainable AI-based service tools during their stay.

Moreover, despite sustainability becoming standard practice, hospitality businesses continue facing challenges effectively motivating guests towards sustained green behaviors, partly due to the persistent attitude-behavior gap or inadequate engagement initiatives (Borges-Tiago et al., 2024; Alnawas et al., 2024). Additionally, consumer decisions often remain influenced by factors like price, location, and convenience, suggesting sustainability alone may not fully drive ITV (Masiero et al., 2019). Therefore, the study also investigates the moderating influence of Personal Environmental Values (PEV) in this context (Becerra et al., 2022).

Given these identified gaps, this research investigates the following main question:

"How does value co-creation influence intentions to visit and behavioral intentions to use AI-based sustainability tools in hospitality? Exploring roles of emotional service attachment, perceptions of AI service delivery, and personal environmental values."

By providing insights into these relationships, this research aims to assist hospitality managers in optimizing AI-enhanced sustainability marketing strategies, thereby achieving a competitive advantage within an industry increasingly driven by environmental concerns.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature review within the hospitality context, and the examined effects of Value Co-Creation with AI-based sustainability tools on consumer behavior, the hypotheses of this study were developed as follows:

H1: Value co-creation has a positive relation with intentions to visit hotels adopting AI-based sustainability service tools

H2: Value co-creation has a positive relation with behavioral intentions to use AI-based sustainability service tools

H3: Value co-creation behavior has a positive relation with emotional service attachment to AI-based services

H4: Emotional service attachment to AI-based services has a positive relation with intentions to visit hotels adopting AI-based sustainability service tools

H5: Emotional service attachment to AI-based services has a positive relation with behavioral intentions to use AI-based sustainability service tools

H6 (a-b): Emotional attachment positively mediates the relationship between value co-creation and a) intentions to visit hotels that adopt AI-based sustainability service tools and b) behavioral intentions to use AI-based sustainability service tools

H7 (a-c): Personal Environmental Values moderates the relationship between value co-creation and a) intentions to visit hotels that adopt AI-based sustainability tools, b) behavioral intentions to use AI-based sustainability service tools and c) emotional service attachment to AI-based services

H8 (a-c): Perceptions of AI service delivery moderates the relationship between co-creation and a) intentions to visit hotels that adopt AI-based sustainability tools, b) behavioral intentions to use AI-based sustainability service tools and c) emotional service attachment to AI-based services.

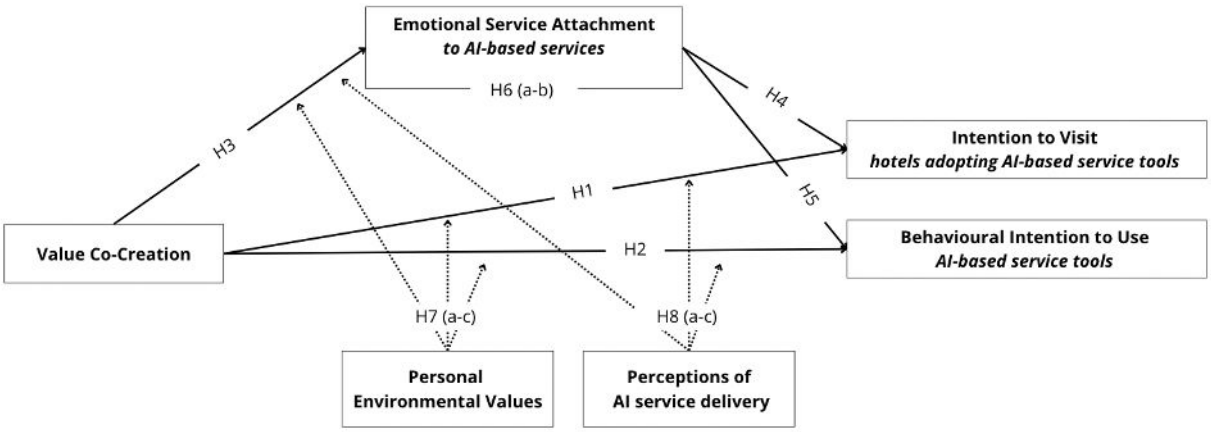

Figure1. Research model

Methodology

Sampling and Data Collection

In this study, a purposive sampling strategy was employed, targeting younger participants residing in the Netherlands. This demographic was chosen due to their higher familiarity and comfort with emerging technologies, including AI applications in areas such as shopping, education, gaming, and communication. The aim was to collect relevant and insightful data on the use of AI to promote sustainability practices during hotel stays (Guarte & Barrios, 2006; Hofmann et al., 2024; Petrescu et al., 2024).

A total of 400 participants were initially recruited through the School of Business and Economics at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, via the SBE Behavior Lab. Participants received course credits in exchange for their participation. To ensure data quality, attention-check questions were included in the survey. As a result, 82 responses were excluded due to either failing these checks or incomplete submissions. From the remaining 318 responses, a further screening was conducted to exclude participants without prior experience interacting with AI tools. This final filtering resulted in a refined sample of 259 valid respondents.

To collect the data, an online survey was conducted. At the beginning of the survey, participants received an introductory context explaining the nature of AI-based sustainability service tools used in hotels. This introduction included visual examples demonstrating how these AI-based tools are implemented in hotel applications, illustrating their functionality during hotel stays and clarifying how they help enhance sustainable activities. Additionally, the introduction explained how guests typically interact with these tools to ensure clarity for participants. A screening question was included at the start of the survey to verify whether participants had previous experience interacting with AI-based tools. Participants lacking such experience were excluded to

improve data quality and ensure the study included only respondents with experiences with AI-based service delivery tools.

Research Measurements

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected, all measurement instruments used in this study were adapted from previously validated scales published in reputable, peer-reviewed journals. The selected items were carefully reviewed and tailored to fit the specific context of this research, focusing on AI-based sustainability service tools within the hospitality industry. All constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), in line with the original studies and recognized as a reliable and consistent method for capturing attitudinal responses.

The construct measuring Perceptions of AI Service was adapted from Payne et al. (2021) and included three items. Personal Environmental Values construct was measured using seven items adapted from Becerra et al. (2022), reflecting individuals' environmentally conscious values and beliefs.

Value Co-Creation was measured using six items adapted from two widely recognized studies; Yi and Gong (2012) and Gao et al. (2022). To measure Emotional Service Attachment construct, five items were adapted from the work of Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim (2008), originally developed to evaluate emotional bonds between consumers and products, which was modified here to suit our study context.

The construct of Behavioral Intention to Use was measured using three items adapted from Davis (1989) and Teo (2011), both rooted in the Technology Acceptance Model, focusing on consumers' willingness to adopt new technologies. Lastly, Intention to Visit was measured using three items adapted from the study by Fauzi et al. (2022), which explored consumer intentions to engage with sustainable hospitality offerings.

Analysis Methods

This study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a variance-based approach particularly well-suited for predictive and exploratory research designs. The primary objective of PLS-SEM is to maximize the explained variance of endogenous constructs, aligning with the explanatory focus of the present study. As highlighted by Sarstedt et al. (2020), PLS-SEM is especially effective when the research involves complex models that include both mediation and moderation effects.

Compared to covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM), PLS-SEM offers greater flexibility and practicality for studies with relatively small sample sizes or when data do not meet the strict assumptions of normality (Hair et al., 2019; Mkedder et al., 2021). Furthermore, it enables the simultaneous estimation of both measurement and structural models while accounting for measurement error, thus offering a more comprehensive assessment of model relationships than traditional regression-based methods such as the PROCESS macro (Mkedder & Özata, 2024).

Given that this research investigates both direct and indirect relationships—specifically mediation and moderation effects, PLS-SEM was deemed the most appropriate analytical technique. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4, a robust software tool designed to support advanced modeling and bootstrapping procedures for hypothesis testing.

Results

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated to ensure the reliability and validity of the proposed constructs. As shown in Table 1, the internal consistency of the constructs was deemed satisfactory. This is supported by composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha values, all of which exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, item loadings were examined, with a recommended cutoff value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, all items met or exceeded this threshold, except for one item under the construct

Personal Environmental Values, which showed a loading of 0.678. While this falls slightly below the preferred benchmark, such deviations are not uncommon in social science research (Hair et al., 2021; Mkedder & Bakır, 2023). According to Hair et al. (Hair et al., 2021), items with loadings below 0.50 should be eliminated, while those between 0.50 and 0.70 may be retained if they contribute meaningfully to the construct's internal consistency and convergent validity. Given that the overall reliability and validity metrics remained acceptable, the item was retained in the model.

Furthermore, convergent validity was supported by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, all of which surpassed the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50 (Hofmann et al., 2024). These results collectively confirm that the model demonstrates adequate indicator reliability and convergent validity.

To assess discriminant validity, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was applied, which offers a more rigorous test compared to traditional methods. The threshold for acceptable discriminant validity is typically set at 0.85(Henseler et al., 2016; Mkedder, 2025). As indicated in Table 1, all HTMT values fell below this threshold, confirming that discriminant validity was established across all construct pairs (Hofmann et al., 2024; Mkedder et al., 2024). Table 1 provides a detailed summary of the constructs' reliability and discriminant validity based on the HTMT analysis.

Table 1. Assessment of reliability and discriminant validity

Construct	loading	α	CR	AVE	VCC	ITV	BIU	ESA	PAI	PEV
VCC	[0.721, 0.888]	0.874	0.861	0.675						
ITV	[0.769, 0.883]	0.798	0.880	0.711	0.685					
BIU	[0.727, 0.891]	0.755	0.887	0.528	0.552	0.710				
ESA	[0.767, 0.864]	0.856	0.896	0.633	0.454	0.452	0.539			
PAI	[0.843, 0.931]	0.924	0.906	0.617	0.254	0.327	0.214	0.245		
PEV	[0.678, 0.792]	0.851	0.946	0.813	0.530	0.552	0.667	0.663	0.403	

Note. N=259, VCC: Value Co-Creation, ITV: Intention to Visit, BIU: Behavioral Intention to Use, ESA: Emotional Service Attachment, PAI: Perceptions of AI Service Delivery, PEV: Personal Environmental Values

Structural Model Assessment

Following the establishment of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed to evaluate the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. The analysis began with a multicollinearity check among the exogenous variables using Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs). As reported in Table 2, VIF values ranged from 1.334 to 1.545, remaining well below the critical threshold of 5.0, thereby indicating the absence of multicollinearity issues that could distort path coefficient estimates (Hair et al., 2022).

To assess the model's explanatory power, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used. The findings revealed that the exogenous constructs explained 40.9% of the variance in Intention to Visit ($R^2 = 0.409$), 38.8% in Behavioral Intention to Use ($R^2 = 0.388$), and 35.3% in Emotional Service Attachment ($R^2 = 0.353$), reflecting a moderate level of predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2021).

For hypothesis testing, a bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was employed, ensuring robust estimation of standard errors and confidence intervals. The results are summarized in Table 2, covering direct, mediating, and moderating effects.

Regarding the direct paths, Value Co-Creation was found to have a significant positive effect on both Intention to Visit ($\beta = 0.453$, $p < 0.01$) and Behavioral Intention to Use AI-based service tools ($\beta = 0.223$, $p < 0.01$), thus supporting hypotheses H1 and H2. Similarly, Emotional Service Attachment significantly influenced Behavioral Intention to Use ($\beta = 0.154$, $p < 0.01$), confirming H5. However, its effect on Intention to Visit was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.070$, $p = 0.249$), leading to the rejection of H4. Additionally, Value Co-Creation positively impacted Emotional Service Attachment ($\beta = 0.163$, $p < 0.01$), providing support for H3.

To explore mediation, the indirect effect of Value Co-Creation on Behavioral Intention to Use, via Emotional Service Attachment, was examined. The results indicated a significant mediating effect ($\beta = 0.075$, 95% CI [LL = 0.004, UL = 0.062]), thereby supporting H6b, while H6a was not supported. Finally, the moderating roles of

Perceptions of AI and Personal Environmental Values were tested. The results revealed that both variables moderated the relationship between Value Co-Creation and Behavioral Intention to Use ($\beta = 0.115$, $p < 0.01$ and $\beta = 0.161$, $p < 0.01$, respectively), thereby confirming H7b and H8b. However, no significant moderating effects were observed on the other relationship, leading to the rejection of H7a, H7c, H8a, and H8c. Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the hypothesis testing results, encompassing direct, mediating, and moderating relationships within the proposed model.

Table2. Assessment of the structural model

Total Direct effect							
Path	**Std *β***	***t*-value**	***p*-value**	**95% CI**	**Decision**	**R^2**	**VIF**
H1. VCC → ITV	0.453	8.697	0.000	[0.344, 0.550]	Accept	0.409	1.334
H2. VCC → BIU	0.223	4.429	0.000	[0.124, 0.322]	Accept	0.388	1.334
H3. VCC → ESA	0.163	2.995	0.003	[0.050, 0.264]	Accept	0.353	1.292
H4. ESA → ITV	0.070	1.152	0.249	[-0.049, 0.190]	Reject		1.545
H5. ESA → BIU	0.154	2.391	0.017	[0.029, 0.284]	Accept		1.545
Mediation Effect							
H6a. VCC → ESA → ITV	0.011	0.997	0.319	[-0.006, 0.041]	Reject		1.165
H6b. VCC → ESA → BIU	0.075	2.324	0.020	[0.004, 0.062]	Accept		1.165
Moderation effect							
H7a. VCC x PEV → ITV	-0.035	0.672	0.502	[-0.139, 0.066]	Reject		1.128
H7b. VCC x PEV → BIU	0.161	3.016	0.003	[0.062, 0.269]	Accept		1.128
H7c. VCC x PEV → ESA	-0.055	0.914	0.361	[-0.173, 0.063]	Reject		1.128
H8a. VCC x PAI → ITV	0.018	0.383	0.702	[0.032, 0.315]	Reject		1.146
H8b. VCC x PAI → BIU	0.115	2.013	0.044	[0.185, 0.477]	Accept		1.146
H8c. VCC x PAI → ESA	-0.004	0.066	0.947	[0.378, 0.588]	Reject		1.142

Discussion:

This study explored how Value Co-Creation (VCC) influences consumer intentions related to hotels using AI-based sustainability tools. The findings confirm previous studies, showing that VCC positively affects both consumers' intention to visit hotels (ITV) and their behavioral intentions to use (BIU) AI-based sustainability service tools (Tunde-Ajayi, 2021; Jeffry et al., 2023; Morosan & Dursun-Cengizci, 2023). Guests are attracted by the interactive and personalized experiences provided by AI, which helps hotels stand out in a competitive market (Morosan & Dursun-Cengizci, 2023).

The results also support literature indicating VCC strengthens emotional service attachment (ESA), reflecting that collaborative interactions foster stronger emotional connections to services (Rosadi et al., 2022; Hermann & Puntoni, 2024). Interestingly, ESA significantly influenced only BIU, not ITV, which suggests that emotional attachment is more closely tied to the AI-based service itself rather than the hotel brand. This differs from prior research (Morosan & Dursun-Cengizci, 2023) that found emotional attachment boosted visitation intentions. Therefore, hotels might need additional brand-oriented strategies alongside AI-based tools to drive actual visits.

Regarding mediation, ESA mediated the relationship between VCC and BIU but not between VCC and ITV. This indicates emotional attachment effectively drives technology adoption behaviors but may not be enough to influence broader consumer behaviors like hotel visits (Choi & Lee, 2025).

Consumer perceptions of AI service delivery moderated the effect of VCC only on BIU, aligning with previous findings that positive attitudes toward AI encourage greater engagement and tool adoption (Gerlich, 2023; Prentice et al., 2020). However, perceptions did not impact the relationships between VCC and ITV or ESA, suggesting consumers' attitudes toward AI primarily shape specific technology adoption rather than broader emotional or hotel visitation decisions.

Interestingly, Personal Environmental Values (PEV) only moderated the VCC-BIU relationship. Contrary to prior literature (Fauzi et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020), PEV did not significantly influence the relationship between VCC and intentions to visit hotels or emotional attachments. This result might imply environmentally conscious consumers focus specifically on actions directly impacting sustainability, such as using AI-based sustainability tools, rather than making broader hospitality choices based solely on environmental considerations.

Finally, drawing from Echeverri and Skålén's (2021) discussion of Value Co-Destruction, our findings highlight the critical importance of effectively designed and seamlessly integrated AI-based tools to sustain positive co-creation outcomes and avoid negative consumer experiences.

Implications

This research provides practical insights for hospitality managers aiming to enhance their sustainability marketing strategies through the use of technologies such as AI. In an industry where sustainability is becoming increasingly essential, leveraging AI can help businesses gain and maintain a competitive advantage. The study demonstrates how VCC positively influences guests' intentions to visit hotels that actively involve them in AI-based sustainability service tools. It also shows that VCC significantly drives behavioral intention to use such tools, reinforcing the importance of collaborative and interactive service design.

As the hospitality industry becomes more AI-driven, these insights can help managers design more personalized and engaging guest experiences. By understanding how emotional attachment and consumer perceptions of AI service delivery influence behavior, hospitality businesses can better segment their markets and tailor sustainability efforts more effectively.

To further illustrate practical applications, hotel managers can implement specific AI-driven sustainability tools. For example, AI-based energy management systems, such as smart HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) solutions, enable hotels to optimize energy use in real-time based on guest occupancy and weather conditions, significantly reducing environmental impact while enhancing guest comfort. Additionally, hotels might introduce AI-powered mobile apps designed to provide personalized sustainability nudges directly to guests. These apps could suggest water conservation practices, offer rewards for energy-saving behaviors, or recommend sustainable dining options tailored to guests' past preferences and interactions. Integrating such innovative AI-based tools can tangibly demonstrate hotels' sustainability commitments, enriching guest experiences and fostering deeper engagement in sustainable behaviors during their stay.

Overall, the findings highlight how VCC and AI-based sustainability tools can be strategically combined to maximize guest engagement and boost sustainability impact. This enables hospitality brands to not only meet evolving environmental expectations but also strengthen their market position in a competitive landscape.

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