



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of Hotel Employees' Involvement on Enhancing Customer Experience: The Mediating Role of Customer Value Co-creation

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Aug 11, 2024	<p>The primary aim of this research was to investigate the effect that employee involvement (EI) in hotels has on the quality of the experience that guests have. In addition, the study aimed to investigate the potential mediating impact of customer value co-creation (CVC) on the relationship between employees' involvement and the customers experience (CE) in hotels located in Cairo. To ascertain the perspectives of the individuals who were selected to take part in the research about the elements of the study (EI, CVC, and CE) to achieve these objectives, a web-based questionnaire was developed and addressed to the senior manager/director in charge of environmental management in all four- and five-star hotels in Egypt. The total number of hotels in Cairo was 28. Only 397 forms were received and were valid for statistical analysis. A structural equation modeling (SEM) technique with maximum likelihood estimation was employed to test the study hypotheses. The findings of this study confirmed the significant direct and indirect effects (via Customer Value Co-creation) of hotel employees' involvement enhancing customer experience. In addition, it indicated the significant, partial mediating effect of customer value co-creation on the hotel employees' involvement – customer experience relationships. Furthermore, the study assured that customer value co-creation significantly enhances customer experience. Considering the significance of the findings, future research in other hotel industry settings can utilize this framework as a guide to examine these relationships.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

According to Hakanen and Roodt (2012), Individuals can maintain the highest level of involvement by investing their personal, emotional, physical, and social resources, while hotels can enhance employee involvement by favorably providing the right resources (Karatepe et al., 2020). Benabbas (2021) emphasized the significance of employees and emphasized that when they are fully engaged in their work, they can successfully apply their skills for the benefit of the organization. A growing number of businesses are shifting their attention to include their employees, who ultimately make up the entirety of their initial consumer base.

The customer is a partner in the process of value creation, and they make consistent contributions to the process. When it comes to the generation of value, customers actively cooperate with the company along the entirety of the service-value chain. From the very beginning of customer experience, the primary focus has been on ensuring that individuals have a pleasant experience when consuming and achieving flawless, exceptional, amazing, or essential experiences (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2016). The relevance of the customer experience is growing in a variety of situations, including business-to-business and public service contexts (Klaus, 2014a; Hardyman et al., 2015). According to Laming and Mason (2014) and McColl-Kennedy et al. (2015), managers are currently working to increase their understanding of the processes that are involved in the generation of value in order to bring about improvements in the experiences that customers have.

The various characteristics of employees' involvement and customer value co-creation activity have only been thoroughly explored by a limited number of studies up until this point, which has resulted in an inadequate understanding of the exact composition of both behaviors. Numerous studies make use of a multidimensional approach to investigate the behavior of customer value co-creation, which is thought to be composed of a variety of distinct components (for example, Bettencourt, 1997; Bove et al., 2008; Groth, 2005). An alternative study, on the other hand, suggests that there is a requirement to investigate the connection between the behavior of customer value co-creation and the outcomes that are produced as a consequence of this behavior, such as customer experience (Klaus, 2014b).

One of the reasons why it is important to research is because it highlights the impact that the engagement of hotel workers has on improving the experience that guests have. As a result, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the potential impact that customer value co-creation may have on the facilitation of the relationship between staff involvement and the experience that customers have in hotels located in Cairo. The constraints that were placed on the research can be broken down into two categories: those that were imposed by human factors and those that were imposed by time constraints.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Dimensional Preview of Employees' Involvement

According to Cotton (1993), employee involvement is the practice of actively engaging people in the process of leading and making decisions inside the company, regardless of their hierarchical position within the organization. The method that is being taken here understands that involving people who are directly affected by a decision may lead to more beneficial outcomes. According to Brown (1996), involvement refers to the attitude and psychological condition of an employee concerning their organization which serves as a professional environment. According to Agyeman (2012), employee involvement exists as a consequence of how an employee's professional job influences their appraisal and personal development.

The process of contributing to the development of a psychological sense of connection among the members of an organization is referred to as involvement. According to Judeh (2011), one approach that is utilized to accomplish this goal is to include employees in activities such as sharing information, engaging in decision-making, and working together to find solutions to existing problems. According to Khattak et al. (2013), the term "organizational involvement" refers to the extent to which an individual links themselves with and actively participates in a specific organization. Lawler et al. (1995) defined employee involvement as the situation in which individuals within an organization have the authority to take action and make decisions, possess the information and knowledge necessary to effectively use their power, and are sufficiently compensated for their contributions. In other words, employee involvement is a state in which individuals can effectively utilize their power. According to Kok et al. (2014), employee involvement is a separate form of

delegation that aims to overcome the communication gap between management and employees. This is accomplished by providing subordinates with greater control and autonomy.

The term "employee involvement" is defined by Lawler et al. (1992) as the extent to which workers believe they are in a position of power, have access to information, and are compensated based on their individual or collective accomplishments within the organization. In other words, the term refers to the degree to which workers believe they are in a position of power. Based on this description, it is clear that the system of rewards and the sharing of information are essential components in the process of creating and enhancing a sense of engagement and inclusion among employees. This is evident from the fact that the system of incentives is a critical component. Those who are close to a problem or opportunity are in the best position to make well-informed assessments regarding how to improve it, particularly if they influence the process of improvement. This is because they are in the best position to make decisions that are based on accurate information (Muindi, 2011).

The three-dimensional model of involvement that Meyer and Allen (1997, page 93) presented describes organizational involvement as a psychological state that comprises affective, calculative, and normative components. Organizational involvement is defined as a psychological state. Whether or not an individual chooses to continue working for the business is impacted by this state. According to Allen and Meyer (1990), the term "organizational involvement" refers to a mental state that exemplifies an employee's identification with a particular organization and influences the activities that those employees take while they are on the job. Characteristics that are emotional, uninterrupted, and prescriptive are included in the components.

A framework known as the Three-Component Model (TCM) is utilized by the writers to provide a succinct summary of this subject (Meyer and Allen, 1997, page 93). The term "affective involvement" is used in this paradigm to describe the emotional attachment, affiliation, and commitment that an employee has to the business, as well as their strong desire to continue working for the company and in their current role. The reason that employees who have a high level of emotional attachment to the company continue to work for the company is because they have an internal drive to continue doing so (Obiekwe and Zeb-Obipi, 2018). The term "calculated involvement" or "continued involvement" refers to the financial obligations and costs that are connected with quitting the aforementioned company (Preuss and Lautsch, 2002). Sofijanová and Zabijákin-Chatleska (2013) defined calculated involvement, which describes the situation in which individuals choose to remain in an organization because they believe they will be able to gain from their continued presence there, whereas leaving the group will result in a loss. When it comes to their work ethic, employees who exhibit a strong work ethic indicate a significant level of unwavering dedication. On the other hand, by Mayer et al. (1993), employees who have a high sense of normative commitment believe that it is their responsibility to continue working for the organization at which they are employed.

2.2. Customers' Experience in Hotel Industry

To secure long-term profitability and survival, management places a high focus on improving the customer experience. Customers are viewed as significant stakeholders for every organization. Customer experience has shown to be of great importance to both businesses and academics. Ensuring outstanding service quality and maintaining customer satisfaction is a major challenge for management in all organizations, including hotels (Desalegn, 2016). To boost sales and maximize profitability, the hotel administration views improving the guest experience as a critical objective (Taha, 2019). In the context of hotels, the word "employee involvement" refers to the active participation of members of the organization in the decision-making and problem-solving processes that take place at higher levels of the hotel and enhances customers' experience (Kumari and Kumari, 2014).

H1: Employee's involvement statistically impacts on the hotels' customer experience

Businesses can evaluate the success of their present management practices and identify certain areas in need of improvement by evaluating the customer experience. Measuring customer experience is important for businesses because it allows them to assess how satisfied their customers are and offer helpful suggestions for raising customer satisfaction levels, which in turn encourages recurring business (Minh et al., 2015). According to Rajendran et al. (2018), businesses evaluate and manage customer experience to raise revenue, expand market share, and improve customer retention rates. Marketing managers in hotel businesses should have a deep awareness of the factors that affect customers' experiences to enhance their ability to meet market demand. This entails creating and offering customized promos that correspond with customer preferences. According to Flores et al. (2020), the main factor determining loyalty is often thought to be the customer experience. Through customer experience surveys, customers can assist management in identifying areas where service needs to be improved (Ismail and Yunan, 2016; Nunkoo et al., 2020).

By evaluating the factors that impact repurchases behavior, management can enhance the particular components of customer satisfaction and services that are strongly associated with repurchase, ultimately promoting loyalty (Rashid, 2015). In addition to providing a steady stream of revenue, devoted consumers also act as a communication link between the business and networks of friends, family, and prospective clients (Iqbal, 2018). Mohamad (2017) asserts that price sensitivity is lower in loyal customers than in non-loyal ones. Companies have realized how important customer retention is to their overall operational performance, especially those in the hotel sector. It is widely recognized that devoted customers visit stores more frequently and spend more money than untrustworthy ones (Myo et al., 2019).

Three primary dimensions of consumer loyalty in the service sector were examined by Saura et al. (2008): behavioral, cognitive, and attitude loyalty. Saleem and Raja (2014) went on to clarify that attitudinal loyalty encompasses a variety of traits, including plans to make purchases, communicating discontent, and disseminating information through word of mouth. The degree to which consumers are swayed by price fluctuations, their brand loyalty, and their likelihood of coming back or making more purchases is known as behavioral loyalty (Hashem and Ali, 2019). Similarity, a preference for service providers, and the belief that these businesses offer the best and most effective answers to customers' needs are the cognitive characteristics that this study examines (Restuputri and Indriani, 2021; Bushara et al., 2023; Elsaed et al., 2023).

2.3. Customer value co-creation behavior and its dimensions

The behavior of consumers in the process of co-creating value, together with the many facets of that behavior, is the subject of interesting discussion (Hsu, 2016). A preliminary investigation has determined that there are two distinct forms of customer value co-creation behavior (Stokburger-Sauer, 2016). Bove et al. (2008), Groth (2005), Yi and Gong (2013), and Yi et al., (2011) are the sources that are highlighted in this article. The empirical study that has been conducted reveals that there are distinct variances in the patterns of in-role and extra-role activities and that these behaviors are influenced by a variety of reasons and results (Groth, 2005; Yi et al., 2011).

Based on the findings of Fang et al. (2008) study, customer value co-creation activity is characterized as a multidimensional term that has various parts. It is made up of two primary variables, each of which consists of several characteristics. Customer citizenship behavior and customer involvement behavior are the two aspects that are being discussed. According to the findings of this research, the activity of customers who participate may be broken down into four distinct categories: information retrieval, information distribution, responsible behavior, and personal involvement. According to the findings of Yi and Gong (2013) study, customer civic action is defined as including feedback, advocacy, support, and tolerance responsibilities. The results of Rosenbaum and Massiahi (2007)

study point to the utilization of a third-order factor model in conjunction with a hierarchical conceptualization. The conventional management literature, which differentiates between employee activity that occurs in the context of their position and behavior that occurs outside of their role, is similar to this typology.

H2: Employee's involvement statistically impacts on the hotels' customer value co-creation

Customers who take part in the delivery of services should exhibit behaviors that are comparable to those of staff members, such as actively seeking and exchanging information, acting responsibly, and engaging in interpersonal interaction. According to the findings of Yi et al., (2011) study, these characteristics are categorized as customer co-creation behaviors. Customers require knowledge to carry out the actions that they have planned to take for the process of value co-creation to be successfully carried out. Furthermore, the staff is unable to begin operating or carrying out their responsibilities if they do not have the necessary input from the customers (Bove et al., 2008). Customers can ensure that the service they receive from employees is tailored to their specific requirements if they can effectively communicate information to employees. Customers are required to demonstrate collaboration by adhering to laws and policies and accepting direction from staff members to achieve successful value co-creation with employees (Stokburger-Sauer, 2016).

To achieve successful value co-creation, contextual performance comprises acts that are both deliberate and optional but are not required for the fulfillment of the goal. Customers do not need to exhibit behaviors such as providing feedback, advocating for the service, offering assistance, or being tolerant for service co-creation to be successful (Yi et al., 2011). Customers are the ones who are affected by the actions of employees, and the company stands to gain a great deal from the reviews and recommendations of customers regarding improved service (Groth, 2005).

It is generally accepted that providing feedback to customers is a voluntary activity that is not required for efficient service delivery, even though it can provide useful insights. Word-of-mouth advertising that is positive is a reliable indicator of customer loyalty and brings about a significant improvement in the process of constructing a positive reputation for a company. In addition to this, it makes it easier to promote the products and services offered by the firm, improves evaluations of the quality of the service, and expands the customer base. Customers can demonstrate empathy towards other customers by actively participating in beneficial behaviors (Groth 2005; Yi and Gong 2013). A sense of social obligation is demonstrated by customers when they recall their challenging situations and offer assistance to other customers who are experiencing challenges that are comparable to their own. A customer's level of tolerance can be defined as the extent to which they are willing to be patient in situations when the service they receive does not live up to their expectations for quality service. This could be the case in situations where there are delays or shortages of equipment (Hsu, 2016).

H3: Customer value co-creation statistically impacts on their experience

2.4. The Relationship between employees' involvement, customer value co-creation behavior and customer experience in hotels

To effectively co-create value, consumers are required to demonstrate certain behaviors, the first of which is customer involvement conduct. This category pertains to the essential behavior that customers must display (Khan and Hussainy 2017). The second category is customer citizenship behavior, which refers to actions taken voluntarily by customers that go above the basic standards for value co-creation and give remarkable value to the organization. On the other hand, the process of value co-creation does not require this behavior to be performed (Kamboj and Gupta, 2018).

Customers actively participate in creating a personalized service experience through sharing information, suggestions, and preferences as well as through cooperating with employees and other

customers to get optimal value of services (Chiu et al., 2017). Value co-creation refers to customers' involvement in designing and customizing service experiences to better suit their personal needs and preferences (Chiu et al., 2017; Lei et al., 2020).

value co-creation in hospitality enterprises involves engaging employees and guests in the creation and delivery of a service through sharing resources that enable them to co-design, select, and modify various attributes of the service experience to better suit their desires (Kamboj & Gupta, 2018; Assiouras et al., 2019; Lei et al., 2020). For instance, a hotel guest can customize his or her accommodation experience before or upon arrival by requesting specific features such as room type, view, amenities, and meals. Also, the hotel can use a customer preference database to suggest certain services or improvements that guests might be interested in (Chathoth et al., 2016). In the same vein, restaurants allow their customers to co-create various elements of the dining experience such as selecting tables, customizing backgrounds, and viewing projected images of food items before ordering which improves their experiences (Zhang et al., 2018).

In light of this, it is of the utmost importance for academics to make use of a variety of scales to evaluate the employees' involvement behavior of customer value co-creation and customer experience.

H4: Customer value co-creation mediates the impact of employees' involvement on customer experience.

To fully comprehend the mechanisms underlying this link in the context of the hotel sector, more research is required. The study's theoretical framework is shown in Figure 1.

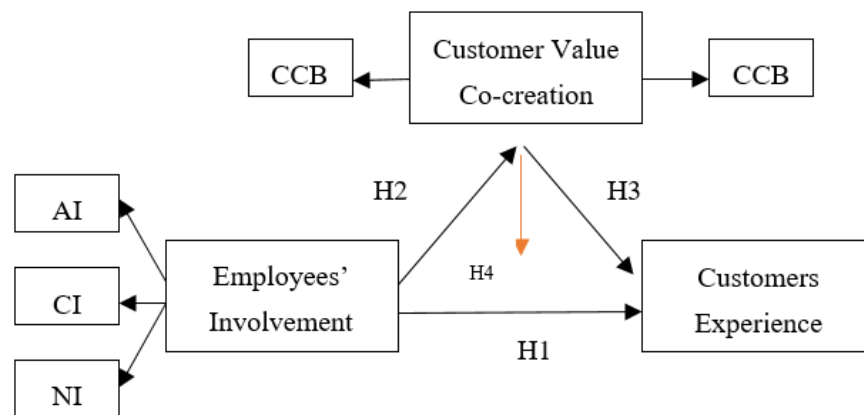


Figure 1: The conceptual model for research

Note: AI=Affective Involvement, CI=Calculated Involvement, NI=Normative Involvement, CCB=Customer Citizenship Behavior, CPB= Customer Participation Behavior.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Sample and Procedures

The primary purpose of this research study is to analyze the relationship between Hotel Employees' involvement and the customer experience in a selection of four- and five-star hotels in Cairo. This study also investigates the potential mediating function of customer value co-creation in this relationship. To achieve this aim, a questionnaire was designed, sent, and distributed to the chosen employees to gauge their perceptions of the study's components (hotel employees' involvement, customer experience, and customer value co-creation).

The appropriate sample size was determined using the guidelines provided by Hair et al (2014). They submitted recommendations to determine the optimal sample size, by counting the number of variables being tested. A ratio of 1:10 (variable to sample) is minimally sufficient. Due to the high number of variables (21 in total), a minimum of 210 participants was required for this research. Our research has a sufficient sample size of 397 people. More than three-quarters of the examined individuals (78.6%) were male (N = 312) and 21.4% were females (N = 85), based on the valid replies collected from the studied participants (397). Regarding age, the largest group (44%, N = 175) consisted of those less than 20 years. The participants' educational level was reported as 67.3% (N = 267) were Bachelor's degrees.

It was emphasized to the participants that their participation in the research was entirely optional. They were asked to sign a consent form before participating in the research. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire independently, as CMVs are possible. The participants were assured that their information would be kept private and would be used exclusively for the study, which helped lower the risk of CMV. Since there was no "wrong" or "right" answer, participants were asked to be completely candid. Moreover, CMV was discovered using a standard and straightforward statistical method (Harman's single-factor test). The data were gathered from December 7, 2023, to January 21, 2024, a period of almost a month.

2.2. Measures and Instrument Development

To carry out this research, data were collected through a questionnaire that participants primarily completed themselves. After reviewing the existing literature, we identified reliable scales that have been used repeatedly. Using these scales, we created a standard questionnaire with Four parts. The first part of the questionnaire dealt with the participants' basic demographic information, such as their age, educational level, and gender.

The second part on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), refers the participants' answers about employees' involvement, which include three sub-dimensions (affective involvement, calculated involvement, and Normative Involvement". The first affective involvement" include (1) I really feel as if the hotel problems are my own" Q1A1", (2) the hotel has a great deal of personal meaning for me" Q1A2", (3) I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this hotel" Q1A3". The second "Calculated Involvement" includes the following items", (1) Staying with the hotel is a matter of necessity as much as desire" Q1B1", (2) I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving the hotel" Q1B2", (3) It would be hard for me to leave the hotel, even if I wanted to" Q1B3". The third" Normative Involvement" included, (1) I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain" Q1C1", (2) I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization" Q1C2", (3) I think that employees these days rarely move from company to another" Q1C3". This measure was adapted and used by (Allen and Meyer 1990; Mayer et al. 1993; Meyer and Allen 1997, Benabbas 2021).

The Second dimension" Customer Value Co-creation" included two sub-dimensions. The first sub-dimension "Customer Participation Behavior" included the following items, (1) Customers ask for information on what the hotel services offer" Q2A1", (2) Customers clearly explain what they wanted the employee to do" Q2A2", and (3) Customers follow the employees' directives or orders" Q2A3". The second sub-dimension "Customer Citizenship Behavior" included the following: (1) If customers have a useful idea on how to improve service, they let the employee know" Q2B1", (2) Customers help other customers if they seem to have problems" Q2B2", (3) If the employee makes a mistake during service delivery, the customers would be willing to be patient" Q2B3". This measure was adapted and used by (Bove et al. 2008; Groth, 2005; Yi and Gong, 2013; and Yi et al., 2011).

The third dimension includes six items as follows; (1) Customers prefer the treatment with the hotel than the other hotels" Q3A1", (2) Customers speak positively about their experience" Q3A2", (3)

Customers recommend their friends and relatives try the hotel services" Q3A3", (4) The service provided exactly reflects the customers need" Q3A4", (5) Customers said positive things about the hotel and the employee to others" Q3A5", (6) Customers found the employees friendly" Q3A6". This measure was adapted and used by (Ismail and Yunan, 2016; Nunkoo et al., 2020; Restuputri and Indriani, 2021; Elsaed et al., 2023).

Five hospitality and marketing academics assessed the contents and questionnaire and offered comments to authenticate the questionnaire's validity, ensuring that the research instrument quantitatively quantified the constructs designed for measuring the study's variables. Further, a pilot study was conducted on 50 hotel employees (who were not included in the primary sample of the study) to test the feasibility of the questionnaire by determining whether it was appropriate and coherent and whether the questions were easily understood, well defined, and presented consistently. After receiving feedback from the test subjects, a few modifications were made to the wording of the questionnaire. Some items were also reordered and rearranged. The Cronbach's alpha for the research dimension scale was 0.906, indicating a very high level of internal consistency.

2.3. Data Analysis Tools

SPSS, version 24, and Amos, version 24, were used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and frequency were utilized to represent respondents' demographics as well as to verify the study's research components. Harman's single-factor test revealed the presence of Common Method Variance (CMV). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Cronbach's alpha were used to verify the validity and reliability of the measuring instruments. Convergent validity was confirmed by computing the average variance extracted (AVE) and the composite reliability (CR). Fornell-Larcker criteria for discriminant validity and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) were investigated. After generating several hypotheses about the study's variables, we used structural equation modeling (SEM) with the help of the bootstrapping strategy to determine their direction and interrelationships.

3. RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Based on the valid responses of 397 participants, the mean values for all research study variables were as follows; participants exhibited agreement on most of the examined issues, with a mean score of (employees' involvement = 4.00- 0.89; affective involvement=4.20-.80; calculated involvement=4.02-0.96; normative involvement=3.78-1.09; customer value co-creation =4.38-.60; customer participation behavior=4.41-.69; customer citizenship behavior=4.35-.68; and customer experience =4.15-.56.

2.2. Measurement Model Evaluation

Table 1. Confirmatory factor analysis characteristics and reliability.

Variables		Sup- Variables	Codes in Fig.3	Code	Factor Loading	Estimate ¹	Theta	Sum (estimate)	Sum (estimate) ²	¹ CR	AVE ²	MSV ³	SQRT (AVE)	SQRT (MSV)
Independent variable	Hotel Employees' involvement	Affective Involvement	A11	Q1 A1	0.755	0.570	0.429	6.857	47.018	0.926	0.583	0.251	0.764	0.50
			A12	Q1 A2	0.739	0.546	0.453							
			A13	Q1 A3	0.636	0.404	0.595							
		Calculated Involvement	CI1	Q1 B1	0.867	0.751	0.248							
			CI2	Q1 B2	0.755	0.570	0.429							
			CI3	Q1 B3	0.75	0.562	0.437							
		Normative Involvement	NI1	Q1 C1	0.778	0.605	0.394							
			NI2	Q1 C2	0.799	0.638	0.361							
			NI3	Q1C3	0.778	0.605	0.394							
Mediating variable	Customer Value Co-creation	Customer Participation Behavior	CPB 1	Q2 A1	0.633	0.400	0.599	3.893	15.155	0.814	0.422	0.544	0.650	0.73
			CPB 2	Q2 A2	0.579	0.335	0.664							
			CPB 3	Q2 A3	0.653	0.426	0.573							
		Customer Citizenship Behavior	CCB 1	Q2 B1	0.729	0.531	0.468							
			CCB 2	Q2 B2	0.634	0.401	0.598							
			CCB 3	Q2 B3	0.665	0.442	0.557							
Dependent variable	Customer Experience	CE1	Q3 A1	0.765	0.585 ₂	0.414	2.943	8.6612	0.691	0.356	0.010	0.597	0.10	
		CE2	Q3 A2	0.863	0.744	0.255								
		CE3	Q3 A3	0.848	0.719 ₁	0.280								
		CE4	Q3 A4	0.252	0.063	0.936								
		CE5	Q3 A5	0.163	0.026	0.973								
		CE6	Q3 A6	0.052	0.002	0.997								

As previously mentioned, a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the information. Consequently, Harman's single factor test (Rodríguez-Ardura and Meseguer-Artola, 2020) identified a common variance/bias (CMV) method. It was shown that all variables (more than 50%) of the variation, indicate that the CMV is not indicative of a problem. A maximum probability CFA was used to determine the stability and accuracy of the study's constructs. Table 1 shows that all values of the

¹ CR = Composite Reliability

² AVE = Average Variance Extracted,

³ MSV = Maximum shared variance

latent variable CR and Cronbach's alpha are above the cutoff value of 0.70 (Rodríguez-Ardura and Meseguer-Artola, 2020), indicating adequate internal consistency.

The construct validity was also researched using convergent and discriminant validities (Chin, Gopal, and Salisbury, 1997). An average variance extracted (AVE) of over 0.50 and a factor loading of at least 0.50 are necessary for convergent validity (Duckworth and Kern, 2011). All the study objects had factor loadings that were more than 0, 50, indicating that convergent validity was obtained. According to the Fornell–Larcker criteria, the square root of the AVE of each construct must be more significant than its correlation with another construct for it to have discriminant validity. The information in Table 3 serves as an example of how the correlations between the constructs are less significant than the AVE's square root of all the constructs.

3.3. Measurement Model

A common method variance/bias may exist since the data were gathered by an online questionnaire. Therefore, three approaches were employed to reduce the probability of CMV: anonymity, confidentiality, and honesty (Nancarrow et al., 2001). The researchers informed participants that all information and responses would remain confidential and anonymous and would be used only for research purposes. When anonymity is assured, it is less likely that response bias will be detected (Randall and Fernandes, 1991). Participants were asked to answer all questions honestly, with no true or false answers. A decrease in response bias becomes more observable when honesty is assured (Phillips and Clancy, 1972). In addition, Harman's single-factor test (a well-known statistical test) was used for the detection of CMV. According to the findings of the exploratory factor analysis, 42.3% of the variance can be explained by one factor. CMV may be a problem when one factor explains the majority of variance and exceeds the threshold value of 50%. As a result, CMV did not pose a significant problem for this study (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Table 2. Constructs' correlation and discriminant validity based on Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Construct	HEI	CVC	CE
1. Hotel Employees' involvement	0.764		
2. Customer Value Co-creation	0.507	0.650	
3. Customer Experience	0.559	0.816	0.597

Note: The square root of the research constructs used by AVE is shown by bold diagonal numbers.

Additionally, in line with (Henseler, Ringle, Sarstedt, 2015), the heterotrait monotrait correlation ratio (HTMT) was used to assess the discriminant validity of the model. According to the authors, discriminant validity is impaired when the HTMT value is more than 0.85. Following the findings in Table 5, all HTMT values were below 0.85, demonstrating the presence of discriminant validity across all pairs of latent components.

Table 3. Discriminant validity via HTMT.

Construct	HEI	CVC	CE
Hotel Employees' involvement			
Customer Value Co-creation	.376		
Customer Experience	.049	.911	

Note: HTMT should be less than 0.85 as per Henseler et al. (2015).

The total (direct and indirect) effect of hotel employees' involvement in Customer Value Co-creation is .376. That is, due to both direct (unmediated) and indirect (mediated) effects of Hotel Employees' Involvement on Customer Value Co-creation, when hotel employees' involvement goes up by 1,

Customer Value Co-creation goes up by 0.376. The direct (unmediated) effect of Hotel Employees involvement in Customer Experience is 0.049. That is, due to the direct (unmediated) effect of Hotel Employees involvement on Customer Experience, when Hotel Employees involvement goes up by 1, Customer Experience goes up by 0.049. This is in addition to any indirect (mediated) effect that Hotel Employees' Involvement may have on Customer Experience. The direct (unmediated) effect of Customer Value Co-creation on Customer Experience is .911. That is, due to the direct (unmediated) effect of Customer Value Co-creation on Customer Experience, when Customer Value Co-creation goes up by 1, Customer Experience goes up by 0.911. This is in addition to any indirect (mediated) effect that Customer Value Co-creation may have on Customer Experience.

The statistics in Table 1 about the fit of the study's model show that it was satisfactory: $\chi^2/df = 2.270$, $p < 0.001$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.955, normed fit index (NFI) = 0.922, incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.955, the Tucker-Lewis coefficient (TLI) = 0.947, root mean square residual (RMR) = 0.051 and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.057.

3.4. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results

The purpose of using SEM was to trace the flow of the research and identify its causal relationships. Table 6 demonstrates that the study model fits the data well, as indicated by Hair et al (2014). Values including CFI = 0.955, NFI = 0.922, IFI = 0.955, TLI = 0.947, RMR = 0.051, RMSEA = 0.057, and $\chi^2/df = 2.270$ $p < 0.001$ were the goodness-of-fit indices.

The direct impact of Hotel Employees' involvement on Customer Experience and Customer Value Co-creation is detailed in Table 6, and its indirect impact on Customer Experience is clarified in Figure 2. The results from this research provide support for H1, suggesting Hotel Employees' involvement has a significant positive impact on Customer Experience ($\beta = .049$, C.R.=1.046 t-value = .295, $p < 0.001$). As a result, we refuse H1. To the same extent, Hotel Employees' involvement has a substantial effect on Customer Value Co-creation ($\beta = .376$, C.R.=7.725, t-value = 0.000 $p < 0.001$). As a result, we accept H2. Additionally, the third hypothesis, which postulates that Customer Value Co-creation has an impact on Customer Experience ($\beta = .911$, C.R.=8.784, t-value = 0.000, $p < 0.001$), As a result, we accept H3. The potential role of Customer Value Co-creation in the relationship between the Hotel Employees' involvement and Customer Experience was investigated. A bootstrapping method was used to verify this indirect relationship. Table 4 shows that there was a positive and statistically significant indirect effect of Hotel Employees' involvement on the Customer Experience via Customer Value Co-creation ($\beta = 0.360$, C.R.=4.357, t-value = 0.00, $p < 0.001$). As a result, we accept H4. A path analysis was performed utilizing partial and full mediation proposals from Kelloway (1995), and Zhao et al. (2010), to examine the arbitrating influence of Customer Value Co-creation in the relationship between Hotel Employees' involvement and Customer Experience. This demonstrated that complete mediation can be established only when the indirect effects are substantial while direct effects are not; partial mediation can be proved only when both channels are substantial. Results from the SEM indicate that the Customer Value Co-creation acts as a partial mediator of the connection between Hotel Employees' involvement and the Customer Experience.

Table 4. Structural parameter estimates.

Hypothesized Path		Standardized Path Coefficients	C.R	t-Value	Results
Direct Path					
H1:	Hotel Employees' involvement → Customer Experience	.049	1.046	.295	Refused

H2:	Hotel Employees' involvement → Customer Value Co-creation	.376	7.725	***	Accepted
H3:	Customer Value Co-creation → Customer Experience	.911	8.784	***	Accepted
Indirect path					
H4:	Hotel Employees' involvement → Customer Value Co-creation → Customer Experience	0.360	4.357	***	Accepted

Note: Model fit; $\chi^2/DF = 2.270p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.955; NFI = 0.922; IFI = 0.955; TLI = 0.947; RMR= 0.051; RMSEA = 0.057. *** P < 0.001.

Standard Loading, (CFA)= standardized factor loading; CR= composite reliability; AVE= average variance extracted std. loading; composite reliability model fits the data: $\chi^2/df = 2.270$; $p < 0.001$; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.955; normed fit index (NFI) = 0.922; incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.955; the Tucker–Lewis coefficient (TLI) = 0.947; root mean square residual (RMR) = 0.051; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.057.

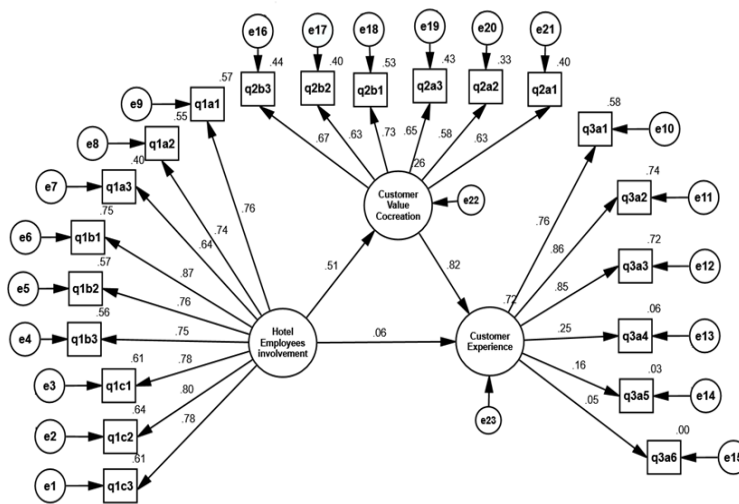


Figure 2: Research conceptual model standardized estimates

4. DISCUSSION

The main aim of this research is to empirically examine the impact of Hotel Employees' involvement on Customer Experience in a sample of four- and five-star hotels in Egypt, in addition to investigating the potential mediating effect of Customer Value Co-creation on this relationship. Based on the results of the hypotheses that were tested in this research, the following significant conclusions can be drawn. First, the findings of the SEM showed that Hotel Employees' involvement didn't have a significant, positive impact on customer Experience in the investigated hotels. According to the findings of this research, it is concluded that Hotel Employees' involvement didn't play a significant role in customer Experience. This result is in contrast with Kumari and Kumari (2014) findings that employee involvement contributes to the active decision-making and problem-solving processes that take place at higher levels of the hotel which directly affect the customers' experience.

Second, in the context of the Hotel Employees' involvement–Customer Value Co-creation relationship, this study's findings revealed that Hotel Employees' involvement significantly

contributes to Customer Value Co-creation in the hotel sector context. The results agreed with Rosenbaum and Massiahi (2007) that customers' co-creation behavior and the employees' involvement behavior are the two aspects that are being discussed in the conventional management literature, which differentiates between employee activity that occurs in the context of their position and behavior that occurs outside of their role, is similar to this typology that customers who take part in the delivery of services should exhibit behaviors that are comparable to those of staff members, such as actively seeking and exchanging information, acting responsibly, and engaging in interpersonal interaction.

Third, this study demonstrated that Customer Value Co-creation has a significant positive impact on Customer Experience. Hsu (2016) agreed that a sense of co-creation is demonstrated by customers when they recall their challenging situations and offer assistance to other customers who are experiencing challenges that are comparable to their own based on their experiences. Last, in the context of the mediating effect of Customer Value Co-creation on Hotel Employees' involvement and Customer Experience, this study indicated that Customer Value Co-creation has a significant, partial effect on the relationship between the two constructs, confirming that Customer Value Co-creation increases with Hotel Employees' involvement, which consequently contributes to improving the Customer Experience among hotel customers. This result was supported by (Chiu et al., 2017) who found that customers actively participate in creating a personalized service experience through sharing information, suggestions, and preferences as well as through cooperating with employees and other customers to get optimal value of services. In the same vein, restaurants allow their customers to co-create various elements of the dining experience such as selecting tables, customizing backgrounds, and viewing projected images of food items before ordering which improves their experiences (Zhang et al., 2018).

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This study began by examining how hotel employees' involvement influences customer experience. This research confirms the significant influence of hotel employees' involvement in the hotels in the study sample on customer experience. Likewise, we confirmed the indirect influence of hotel employees' involvement in the organization on customer experience through the use of customer value co-creation. While customer value co-creation had a perfect mediating effect, the results showed that it only partially moderated the relationship between hotel employees' involvement and customer experience. This research found a clear relationship between hotel employees' involvement and both customer experience and customer value co-creation. These results verify the main influence of hotel employees' involvement in activating and on enhancing customer experience of customer value co-creation.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

Several theoretical implications can be drawn from this study. First, the findings of the study contribute significantly to the literature on Hotel Employees' involvement, Customer Experience, and Customer Value Co-creation in the hotel sector context by providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Hotel Employees' involvement on Customer Value Co-creation and Customer Experience. The study emphasized the significant direct impact of Hotel Employees' involvement on Customer Experience. Second, the findings of the study demonstrated the significant role of Hotel Employees' involvement in Enhancing Customer Value Co-creation among hotel customers. Third, the study revealed the significant role of Customer Value Co-creation in enhancing Customer Experience among hotel customers. The study found that Hotel Employees' who are more involved in Enhancing Customer Experience related to Customer Value Co-creation. Fourth, the study's findings confirmed the significant mediating role of Customer Value Co-creation in the relationship

between Hotel Employees' involvement and Customer Experience. To the best of the authors' knowledge, it is the first empirical investigation that examined the intervening role of Customer Value Co-creation in this relationship, particularly in the hotel industry context in a developing country (such as Egypt). As a fifth contribution, a new theoretical framework including Hotel Employees' involvement, Customer Experience, and Customer Value Co-creation has been developed and validated in the hotel industry setting. Considering the significance of the findings, future research in other hotel industry settings can use this framework as a guide to examine these relationships. Sixth, these findings can be a valuable base to help hotel researchers better understand the mechanisms influencing the increase in Customer Experience toward Customer Value Co-creation in the context of the hotel sector.

5.3. Practical Implications

There are further practical implications for hotel employees, particularly in Egyptian hotels, that should be considered. The findings of the study confirmed the significant direct and indirect effects (via Customer Value Co-creation) of Hotel Employees' involvement in Enhancing Customer Experience. In addition, it indicated the significant, partial mediating effect of Customer Value Co-creation on the Hotel Employees' involvement – Customer Experience relationships. Furthermore, the study assured that Customer Value Co-creation significantly enhances Customer Experience.

5.4. Limitations and Further Research

This study had several limitations. It was limited to the followers of ten hotels in Egypt (Sonesta Hotel Tower & Casino Cairo, the Nile Ritz Carlton Cairo; Sofitel Elgezirah Hotel; Sheraton Cairo Hotel; Cairo Marriott Hotel; Concorde el Salam Hotel Cairo; Conrad Cairo Hotel; Fairmont Nile city hotel; four seasons Cairo hotel; holiday inn Cairo Maadi and safir Cairo hotel). using hotel employees' involvement, customer experience, and customer value co-creation. The results of this study may not apply to other countries, organizations, cultures, or work settings. Therefore, it is necessary to reassess and verify the findings of this study in different hotel industry contexts to gain a better understanding of the topic. Second, the study conducted only looked at the potential of Customer Value Co-creation to act as a mediator in the relationship between Hotel Employees' involvement and Customer Experience. It is suggested that further research should be done to explore other possible mechanisms (mediators), such as Organizational commitment and customer satisfaction. The demographics of the participants surveyed in this study such as age, gender, and educational level. Future research might investigate the potential moderating impact of these factors in these relationships. Lastly, in our research, we used Hotel Employees' involvement as a single-dimensional construct and did not examine its associated three dimensions separately. Further research should be conducted to include all three dimensions to determine which one is the most predictive in this relationship. This could provide valuable insight into the role of each one in these relationships.

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