Value
co-creation at
the dyadic level

Understanding perceived value as important factors for the successful implementation of value co-creation at the dyadic level

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Abstract

Purpose – The different dimensions and contexts within which value is co-created has generated varied views of how value is understood or formed. This study aims to examine employee-guest perceived value as important factors for the successful implementation of value co-creation (VCC).

Design/methodology/approach – The study employs an interpretive paradigm, using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation in a qualitative design to increase understanding of employee-guest perceived value to aid the implementation of VCC at the dyadic level.

Findings – Findings highlight eight value perceptions including value for money, hotel location, physical evidence, mutual respect, appreciation, safety & security, quality & varieties of food and technological characteristics of service as important factors for the successful implementation of VCC at the dyadic level.

Research limitations/implications – Generalisability of the findings is a limitation not only due to the smaller sample size but also due to industry-specific context. The study follows rigorous procedures to minimise biases, yet research limitation is acknowledged from the researcher's participation in the research process.

Practical implications – The notion that actor's assess value differently from the same service suggests that diverse service elements might be experienced differently. This study provides insights for hotel managers to recognise not only individuals' value preferences but also service types that reflect employee-guest collective service preferences for sustainability.

Originality/value – This study integrates and extends extant literature by examining employees' and guests' individual and collective views at distinct hotel contexts to gain useful insights into value and VCC. The study proposes a framework that hospitality firms can use to address service failure and competition-related issues.

Keywords Actors, Perceived value, Value co-creation, Ghana, Hotel industry, Hospitality sector

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In the last couple of decades, the value co-creation (VCC) concept has sparked much interest amongst researchers and practitioners. It is a process where parties interact and collaborate to create value for each other (Galvagno, Gummesson, Mele, Polese, & Dalli, 2014). Central to this concept is the notion of value.

Under the goods dominant logic (G-DL), value has mostly been discussed from a customer's perspective because firms create and pre-determine the potential value which is realised from a tangible good upon consumption. In addition, consumers and firms attribute value to a product based on the benefits and sacrifices or "what is received and what is given"

(Zeithaml, 1988, p. 14), often measured using quality and price dimensions of the product (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Kusumawati & Rahayu, 2020). The unidimensional approach to value determination (VD) projects customers as always being at the receiving end of a firm's offerings. This not only suggests employees' dominance to restrain customers' active participation during such encounters, but also how the value perspectives of customers, employees and their influence on service outcome has been ignored. However, evolution in marketing within the last two decades has broadened the scope of value creation (VC) and VD to include service dimensions of the firm's processes (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) where employees and customers can play active roles in the proposition and VD.

The service dominant logic (S-DL) perspective projects service as the core of marketing, the fundamental focus of economic exchange and the basis of value, while goods become channels for service provision (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This suggests that service is not only central to transactions (Wei, Bai, Li, & Wang, 2020) or the source of value in contemporary business practices (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018) but also enjoins firms and customers in an interactive process aimed at VCC (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). In this study, VCC is conceptualised as the joint use of actors' resources in an interactive and collaborative service process to benefit themselves and others through direct or indirect means. Consequently, VCC can be said to be successful when economic value (e.g., as in value for money) social value (e.g., interpersonal interactions), cultural value (e.g., food preference) and experience value (personalised service) are realised from value-in-use due to actors' individual and collective view on value (Perera, Albinsson, & Shows, 2017; Wang, Zhang, & Xu, 2022). For example, this can result from innovative processes such as information sharing (Adamik & Nowicki, 2018), interactive and collaborative efforts (Cheng & Jin, 2019), particularly from inside and outside the organisation to assist in creating value (Opata, Xiao, Nusenu, Tetteh, & Asante Boadi, 2021).

In VCC, actors might not only assume dialogical and reciprocal service processes (Payne, Peltier, & Barger, 2021) or employ collaborative and interactive roles for purposes of understanding individuals and collective value experiences but also highlights a service process where value is not created solely for the customer but for and by all parties in service (Neghina, Bloemer, van Birgelen, & Caniëls, 2017). It means that studying only customers' or employees' value might not present a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. However, to date, research on value has mostly focused on not only customers from the developed world (Gopaldas, Siebert, & Ertimur, 2022) but also the literature analysis shows that existing knowledge on perceived value in hotels from sub-Saharan Africa is sparse. A further context that must be considered is that of industry's dyadic perspective involving employees and guests at the micro level to understand not only the different perceptions of value (Neghina *et al.*, 2017) but also as a fruitful method to obtain accurate understanding into the phenomenon (McColl-Kennedy, Vargo, Dagger, Sweeney, & Kasteren, 2012). To this end, Neghina *et al.* (2017) suggest a study at the dyadic level becomes imperative, given that it can provide insights into service designs that satisfy actors' individual and collective value perception which is critical to VCC encounters.

Given these suggestions, this study examines employees' and guests' perceived value to understand how that might influence VCC in a hotel within Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the study examines value perceptions to understand how value associated with similar dimensions of service deliver value to guests and employees. Further, considering the complex nature of value and co-creation, coupled with the fact that value is uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (Vargo & Lusch, 2017), this study addresses marketing and service centric marketing, using a multidimensional approach to value assessment from employee-guest perspective for a holistic insight.

The study answers four questions to contribute to knowledge regarding employee-guest perceived value in a hotel context within sub-Saharan Africa: (a) *How do employees and guests*

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perceive value in a hotel context? (b) *How is value determined in a hotel service context?* (c) *How might perceived value influence co-creation interaction and outcome?* (d) H*ow can answers to these questions empirically advance insights to broaden understanding of the value concept for successful co-creation encounters.*

Firstly, this study integrates and extends extant literature by examining employees' and guests' individual and collective views at distinct hotel contexts to gain useful insights into value and VCC. Secondly, the study provides managerial implications by outlining hotel location, physical environment, mutual respect, appreciation, safety and security, quality, varieties of food and technological characteristics of service as factors that do not only deliver value to employee-guestbut also the level of congruence of these factors can positively influence VCC interaction and outcome. Thirdly, the study's comprehensive framework not only provides salient insights to guide the implementation of mutually beneficial encounters involving employees and guests but also illustrates how hotel managers can use the framework to address issues related to service failure. Fourthly, this research is believed to be a novel work conceptualising value in the hotel industry from an employee-guest perspective within Sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, rather than drawing on studies from developed economies, hotels in Africa can now use this study's findings to manage employees' and guests' as key segments for competition and sustainability.

This paper is structured as follows. First, the paper addresses the need to conceptualise value and VCC so that co-creation processes can be understood. Next, is the presentation of the study's methodology, followed by the findings, discussion and conclusions with theoretical and practical implications for researchers and practitioners within the hotel industry.

Theoretical framework
Conceptualising value in services marketing
Studies show that perceived value can stem from individuals' desire for efficient, rational and task-oriented efforts relevant to service processes (Shamim, Ahn, Khan, Shah, & Abid, 2022), service usage (Babin & James, 2010) or service experience (So, Kim, & Oh, 2021). Holbrook (2006) shows that the economic, social, hedonic and altruistic components of perceived value significantly influence customers product (goods and service) choice. A number of authors have provided conceptualisations of value and these are described in Table 1. These studies not only highlight how actor's determine value differently (Gallarza & Saura, 2020) or consider the relevance of an exchange in delivering value (Solakis, Pena-Vinces, & Lopez-Bonilla, 2022) but also provide insights into how firms can create an enabling environment to facilitate actor's creation of unique value or experiences. This suggests that actor's not only construct value within varying contexts (Gopaldas *et al.*, 2022) considering that experiences are personal (Kahraman & Cifci, 2023) but also, no matter who is involved in service the centrality must be something of value (Prebensen & Xie, 2017), which ultimately becomes the basis for service exchange.

Extant literature extends the understanding of value from customers to other actors (Blocker, 2011), given that a beneficiary of service can be an individual, household, firm, customer, employee or nation (Chandler & Vargo, 2011). This means that while recognising that understanding customer's value perception may be significant to firms, it is also important to gain insights into other actor's value perception, especially how employee's assess value from the same or similar service. However, previous studies have mostly focused on service and for that matter VCC from customers and how they could be exposed to unique experiences (Johnson & Neuhofer, 2017; Solakis *et al.*, 2022; Stavrianea & Kamenidou, 2022). Thus, losing sight of other actors such as employees' goal for creating value that reflects their own and others experiences as shown in Table 1.

Author(s) and year	Definition	Construct(s)	Research design	Study context
Boksberger and Melsen (2011, p. 230	"A preferential judgement of either a single transaction or an ultimate end-state."	service quality and customer satisfaction	conceptual	Service industry
Blocker (2011, p. 534	"Actor's perceived trade-off between benefits and sacrifices within relationships."	Offer quality, personal interaction, service support, and provider know-how	survey	Cross-cultural business markets
Holbrook (2006, p. 715)	"The interactive relativistic preferences shape the essence of the consumption experiences that underlie the creation of all customer value"	Extrinsic versus Intrinsic, Self -versus other – oriented, Active versus Reactive	participant observation	Photo-based consumption experiences on the Brule River
Woodall (2003, p. 21)	"Personal perception of advantage arising out of a customer's association with an organization's offering"	monetary, functional, emotional, prestige/reputational and symbolic/self-expressive	Conceptual	Rationalise, clarify and classify extant ideas
Flint, Woodruff, and Gardial (2002, p. 103)	"Judgments or assessments of what a customer perceives he or she has received from a seller in a specific purchase or use situation"	Customer Desired Value Change (CDVC) form and intensity, tension management and action/interaction strategies	Grounded theory	Business-to-business context
Sweeney and Soutar (2001)	"Value is the ratio or trade-off between quality and price"	quality, price, emotional value and social value	Mail survey	Furniture, car stereo
Zeithaml (1988, p. 14)	"Overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given"	quality, price	In-depth interviews	Beverages

Table 1.
Definition of value

Source(s): Table by author

Value and VCC

Studies show that actors' are not only interested in service use per se (Kim, Shin, & So, 2022) but also their participation in the service experience is critical for value to be realised (Han, Jiang, Tang, Raab, & Krishen, 2022). Under the SDL, participation in service is not viewed from the perspective of co-production where consumers act as passive agents but rather as active agents (Terblanche, 2014) in creating their own experiences. This does not only highlight the idea that "value is co-created by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary" (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, p. 240) or participation in service process may vary within different contexts (Prebensen and Xie, 2017) but also suggests that the integration of actors' resources in service may change based on their expected value or experiences.

Under the evolved logic for marketing, service may be defined as "the application of resources for the benefit of oneself or another" (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, p. 56). While this definition highlights the prominence of actors' resource capabilities in service encounters, the emergence of service presents a need to advance knowledge about the logic behind marketing's evolution, which emphasises value and VCC as central to successful service

delivery (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). In addition, the interdependent nature of value and VCC has challenged researchers and practitioners to understand how service dimensions facilitate key actors' voluntary participation (Shamim *et al.*, 2022), especially how employees and customers employ co-creation to create unique experiences such as improved food quality and variety for mutual benefit. This hinges on understanding not only the assessment of value which is context-specific and experience-driven (Solakis *et al.*, 2022) or VD which is largely influenced by actors' value perceptions (VP) (Gallarza & Saura, 2020) but also given that it is the expected value which draws actors together in service (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2012; Yeboah, Ibrahim, & Agyapong, 2022), it is imperative to understand how successful VCC occurs at different stages of the service process. This suggests that understanding of actor's willingness to commit resources to service process through dyadic interaction and collaboration becomes necessary towards the realisation of value.

Further, considering that firms continue to face challenges with transitioning from a product-centric to service-centric marketing (Heinonen, Campbell, & Ferguson, 2019), authors call for further studies that not only pay attention to what value means to individuals (Kim *et al.*, 2022) or varying contexts of VCC (So *et al.*, 2021) but also gaining insights into the collective meaning of value from service can facilitate full transition to service.

Actors' value formation through service and co-creation

Within contemporary marketing literature, value is largely understood to stem from different service dimensions through value-in-use or value-in-context (Font, English, Gkritzali, & Tian, 2021). While this view expands the scope of value to include service experience (Kusumawati & Rahayu, 2020), the experiential perspective of value tends to compound the complexity associated with VD (Cheng & Jin, 2019). Value may result from increased satisfaction (Wei *et al.*, 2020), and the literature is clear on, for example, the sacrifices and benefits related to the low price paid and the high-quality service received (Gallarza & Saura, 2020), employee-guest social connections (Gassmann, Nunkoo, Tiberius, & Kraus, 2020), beneficial co-creation processes (So *et al.*, 2021), innovative service consumption (Johnson & Neuhofer, 2017), problem-solving features of service (Zhang *et al.*, 2019), service quality (Kumar, Govindarajo, & Khen, 2019) or destination image (Ahn, Lee, Back, & Schmitt, 2019).

Understanding of the cultural differences and their impact on marketing has also been suggested (Hofstede, 1980). Positing that culture (e.g., values, norms, beliefs, language, tradition) is an important factor that not only shapes employees' and customers' behaviours within certain contexts but also their collective decisions, Hofstede urges practitioners to be aware of the influence of cultural differences on individuals or collective preferences in the workplace, especially employee VP and customers responses according to their culture. This implies that value might not only be perceived differently based on different frames or cultural background but also the point-of-view adopted by an individual within certain contexts.

Service is largely experiential in nature (Prebensen & Xie, 2017). Previous works on experiential value suggest emotions, contextual, symbolic (Ahn *et al.*, 2019) social environment (Han *et al.*, 2022) and non-utilitarian dimensions of consumption are important to VD (Arnould, 2007). The idea of experiential value suggests that firms can be exposed to diverse strategies to optimise benefits when facilitating service that favour different stakeholders, different times, motivations and contexts. However, in doing so, previous studies show that employee-guest joint service can be employed to enable the identification and delivery on each other's interest (Harkison, 2018; Han *et al.*, 2022).

Different dimensions and contexts within which value is co-created has generated varying views of how it is understood or formed. Chathoth, Ungson, Harrington, and Chan (2016) studied consumer engagement to understand how co-creation processes occur in service

encounters. The study found that the consumer engagement process involves different sub-processes and reciprocal roles reflecting consumers' interactive experiences within online brand communities, and VCC among community participants. Merz, Zarantonello, and Grappi (2018) examined how customers value the co-creation process. The findings reveal that customers' co-creation of value is a multidimensional construct consisting of two higher-order factors and seven dimensions: customer-owned resources (including brand knowledge, brand skills, brand creativity and brand connectedness dimensions) and customer motivation (comprising brand passion, brand trust, and brand commitment dimensions). Essentially, these studies emphasise how and why customers contribute to a firm's value proposition to derive expected outcome or co-created value (CCV). However, while these studies do not provide insights into the service processes and outcomes that deliver value to employees and guests and how that might contribute to the development of VCC encounters in a hotel context, this study provides such salient insights from employees' and guests' perspectives to increase knowledge.

This study draws from axiom 3 of the S-DL perspective for marketing which posits that "all economic and social actors are resource integrators" (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, p. 240) to emphasise the need for joint use of employees' and guests' resources in an interactive and collaborative service process to benefit themselves and others through direct or indirect means. This suggests that the integration of actors' resources, both operant (e.g., skills) and operand (e.g., tangible assets) become critical to the realisation of co-created value (CCV) (see Figures 1 and 2). In this regard, co-creation interaction, which is considered core to service experience can be initiated by the firm or the customer, both materially and symbolically to increase satisfaction, sustainable growth or for competitive advantage (Galvano et al., 2014; Prebensen & Xie, 2017; Tuan & Rajagopal, 2019; Wei et al., 2020).

In addition, the view that co-creation activities are undertaken by parties to contribute to the value that emerges for one or both parties, highlights the need for actors' individual and collective creativity in the service process to generate value (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). This means that during co-creation encounters actors have control over creating not only their unique experiences through value-in-use (Medberg & Grönroos, 2020) but can also influence service outcomes at different stages of the service process including micro, meso and macro
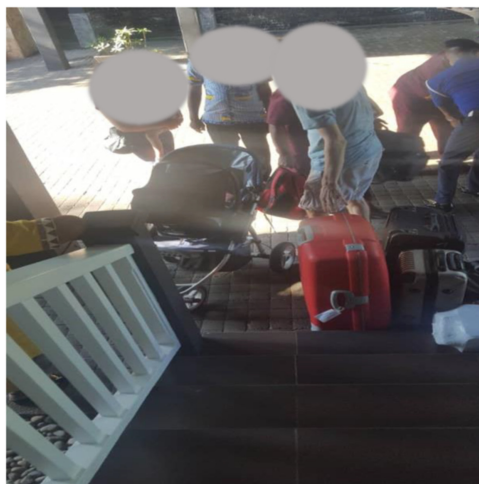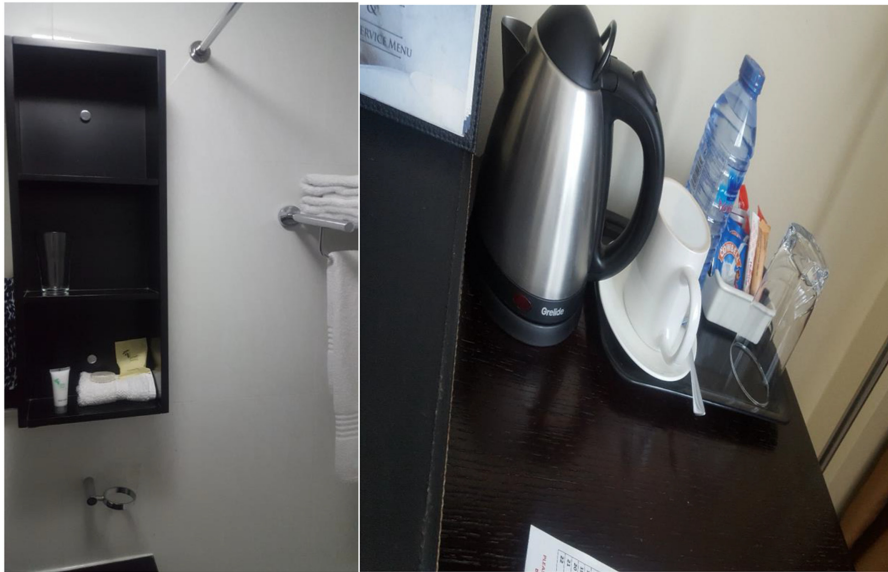

Figure 1.
Employee-guest participation in VCC process during hotel arrival

Source(s): Figure by author

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Source(s): Figure by author

Figure 2.
Hotel service amenities
and objects to facilitate
employees' and guests'
participation in VCC

levels of interactions. Thus, it can be argued that studying service at the micro level can form the basis for understanding not only actor's alternative service choice to generate value (Neghina *et al.*, 2017) but also can provide insights into the factors for successful VCC in a hotel context.

Methodology

With the view that reality is subjective and socially constructed (Mertens, 2015), this study uses qualitative method to address the research topic. As with all qualitative studies, establishing an agenda for the assessment of subjectivity can present opportunity for participants to share their real-world experiences (see Table 2). Thus, the combination of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observations enhances richness of the data (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2012). Consequently, much as in-depth interviews unravels new areas of participants' perceived value; focus group discussions provides insights into participant's subjective/inter-subjective value, while observation facilitate effective means for taking extensive field notes towards obtaining rich insights into the research topic. The study employs purposive sampling to enable the inclusion of respondents (employees and guests) of interest for gathering manageable and relevant amount of data to address the purpose of study (Patton, 2002). Respondents' selection includes senior and middle level managers, supervisors, front-desk staff, chefs, waiters, porters, drivers and both business and leisure guests aged 18+ to understand value as factors necessary for successful VCC at the micro level. As part of the selection criteria, participants with more than one year interaction at the micro level of a hotel service were chosen.

The interview protocol drew from extant literature to guide data collection (see Füller, 2010; Roberts, Hughes, & Kertbo, 2014). Guidelines established by Flick (2014) were used for data reliability and validity. Pre-testing of data collection instrument used students that were once guests or employees in the UK, from 20th July to 10thAugust, 2017, followed by another

Guests/ Employees	Guests and employees from different hotels					
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6
Male business Guest	Justice MBG -1 Daniel MBG -2 Kwame MB G-3 Bilo MBG -4	Philip MBG-3 David MBG-4	Mike MBG-1 Mark-MBG-2 Drew Bain MBG-3 Mensah MBG-4	Conrad MBG-1 Euclid MBG-2 John MBG-3 Danny MBG-4	Nadeja MBG-1 Vasu-MBG-2 Mohammed MBG-3	George MBG-1 Eben MBG-2 Ebenezer MBG-3
Female business Guest	Abigail FBG-1	Ann FBG-1	Alice FBG-1 Louisa FGB-2		Carmen FBG-1 Emily FBG-2	Leticia FLG-1
Male Leisure Guest		Nii MLG-1 Asare MLG-2 Fumba MLG -3				Ebenezer MLG-1 Kojo MLG - 2
Female Leisure Guest						
Male Supervisor	Alex MS-1		Emmanuel MS-1		Emmanuel MS-1	
Female supervisor	Florence FS-1	Martha FS-1	Dina-FS-1		Heartwell FS-1 Zetu FS-2 Rita FS-3	Mildred-FS1 Elsie -FS2
Male Waiter	Isaac MW-1	Samuel MW -1		Ephraim MW-1		
Female Waiter		Ruth MW-1				Matilda FW-1
Porter				Kwasi MP		
Male Manager	Martin MM-1	Sackey MM-1	Ben MM-1 Solomon MM-2	Alex MM-1	Amudzi MM-1 Laryea MM-2	Frank MM-1 Eric MM- 2 Omari MM-3
Female Manager	Phoebe FM-1	Afia FM-1	Princess FM-1 Madelene FM-2			Ursula MM-1

Note(s): In this study, MBG, MLG, FBG, MW, FM, MM and FS represent the male business guest (MBG), male leisure guest (MLG), female business guest (FBG), male waiter (MW), female manager (FM), male manager (MM) and female supervisor (FS), respectively. H1 and H2 represent 5-star, H3 and H4 are 4-star, while H5 and H6 represent 3-star hotels
Source(s): Table by author

test between 5th and 10th December, 2017, on employees and guests that were not part of the main study in Ghana. The study started with in-depth interviews on 10th January to March 22nd, 2018. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions employed the same protocol. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions used 32 employees and 32 guests. However, observations covered participants interaction during arrival, front-desk function, bar/restaurant service, room service, pool-side service and co-creation processes. Photographs were also taken for contextual understanding of the study topic.

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	Guest attributes	Frequency (n)
Gender	Male	25
	Female	7
Age	21-30	6
	31-40	11
	41-50	8
	51-60	6
	More than 60	1
Nationality	American	2
	Belgians	2
	Beninois	2
	Greece	1
	Srilankans	2
	Zimbabwean	1
	Canadian	1
	Ivorians	2
	Kenyan	1
	Lebanese	2
	Indian	1
	Liiberian	1
	Ghanaians	14

Table 3.
Breakdown of guests'
attributes

Source(s): Table by author

	Employees attributes	Frequency (n)
Gender	Males	17
	Females	15
Age	18+	
Nationality	Ghanaians	
Job position	Managers	13
	Supervisors	6
	Waiters	12
	Porter	1

Table 4.
Breakdown of
employees' attributes

Source(s): Table by author

Study context
Ghana becomes the study context because it is among the two countries within Sub-
Saharan Africa that attract most international tourist arrivals, amounting to US $44.9mn
(Dogru, McGinley, & Kim, 2020). Studying Ghana's hospitality industry is appropriate not
only because it attracts different people from the globe that may have varied value
expectations but also for driving economic growth and increased job creation (Preko, 2020).
In Ghana, hospitality is the 4th income-generating sector to GDP after gold, cocoa and oil
(Ampofo, 2020). Nonetheless, the sector continues to witness a combination of challenges
stemming from global competition and high rate of employee turnover (Shao *et al.*, 2020).
This study helps practitioners to better address these challenges by examining perceived
value to understand how that might influence VCC implementation in a hotel for success.
From the Greater Accra region of Ghana, two hotels each are selected from 3-, 4- and 5-star
categories.

Data analysis
This paper examines perceived value to understand how that can affect the successful implementation of VCC at the dyadic level within Sub-Saharan Africa. The study employs an interpretive paradigm to gather participants views (Patton, 2002) due to the complexities surrounding the research topic (Adamik & Nowicki, 2018; Sarasvuo, Rindell, & Kovalchuk, 2022). This study uses qualitative research questions of "how" to gather individuals and collective responses for a holistic view of the research topic (Merriam, 2009). It means that data analysis follows employee-guest dyadic perspective as effective means for gaining a better understanding of the research phenomena (Gopaldas *et al.*, 2022). Qualitative data analysis process is not rigid, yet it is systematic and comprehensive (Patton, 2002). Thus, this study draws from the six-step thematic analysis framework (Clarke & Braun, 2014) to identify emerging themes about the research topic.

First, as part of the initial process, data is read repeatedly by the researcher for understanding and transcription. Second, using NVivo 11 software, common patterns from data are coded under nodes that are later merged to develop larger themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Third, data from in-depth interviews and group discussions are combined and analysed, both within and across. Fourth, in-depth interviews and group discussions data are compared with observation for closeness and disparities for further grouping under main and sub-themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Fifth, data refinement and development are considered for forming theme limits as well as sub-themes for validation on the basis of consistency, then compared to reach the same conclusions. The sixth step is the final activity due to data saturation and sufficiency for guiding decisions related to enacting closure for relevant evidence (Patton, 2002). At this stage, further collection of evidence provides little in terms of further themes or insights (Ando, Cousins, & Young, 2014). Emerging themes on employee-guest VP, drivers of VCC, motivation and personal characteristics are coded separately, results compared and contrasted to achieve clear patterns. The data reveals that VCC interactions occur among guest's and employees throughout their encounter and occasionally between guests, co-guests and employees during social gatherings such as birthdays. Interactive activities mostly centre on value-based services, which this study groups under two main categories of value as in value for money and total experience as shown in Figure 3.
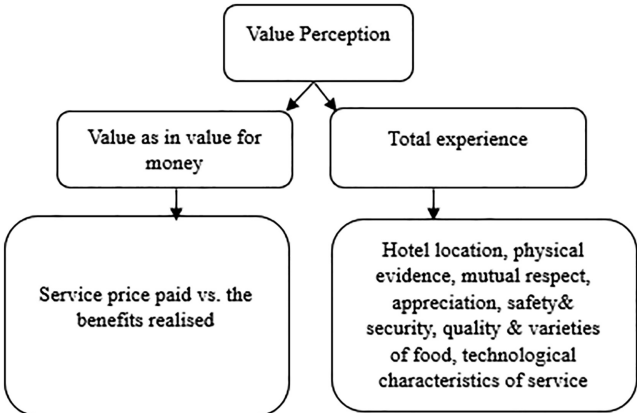
Source(s): Figure by author

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Findings

This study's findings suggest distinct hotel services not only facilitate VCC but also contribute to the realisation of employee-guest value. It means that employee's and guest's are likely to evaluate differently the value of a hotel service (Gallarza & Saura, 2020). However, in this study, some views are unique to specific participants, while others are shared across to suggest divergences and convergences in VPs among employee's and guest's. We draw on these views to illustrate our themes on what value means to employees and guests by paying attention to value for money, then to value as total experience, arising from hotel location, physical evidence, mutual respect, appreciation, safety and security, quality and varieties of food and technological characteristics of service.

Convergences on value as in value for money: employee-guest perspective

This study suggests that understanding of VCC cannot be complete without insights into employees' and guests' VPs on value for money. One of the shared perceptions among participants is mutual benefit realised from monies paid or received for service. However, for analytical and reporting purposes, this section focuses on guests' and employees' meaning of value for money. For example, the business guest from a 5-star hotel reports:

My perception about value. . . if l pay for a hotel service, l need something in return. . .good sleep, good reception, serene environment, a place to socialise or smoke. **MBG1-H1**.

A male leisure guest narrates:

Your true value is based upon what you paid and the experience that you get. . . the general atmosphere, how people greet you by mentioning your name, hotel ambience, interactions with other guests, plantain chips served on all menus **MLG-H2**.

A male waiter reveals:

Value, l will say is something that somebody expects to get from what he has paid for. . .the warm smile, good reception, friendly atmosphere, good customer service **MW-H4**. Value is personal, has diverse contextual meanings and determined differently within different contexts (Holbrook, 2006). However, in this study, commonalities in participant's comparative price-service analysis related to value is core. For example, linking perceived value to the service price is not only considered important to guest's from 5-star hotels, it is also the shared view by the employee that the value from a hotel service matches with the money paid for its consumption.

Divergences on value as in value for money: employee's and guest's perspective

Contrary to the above, findings reveal that employee's and guest's hold divergent views on value as in value for money. This becomes clearer because guest's and employee's assessment of the monetary appeal of the same hotel service tend to differ. A female manager from a 5-star hotel mentions:

From the client's perspective it is value for money paid for discounted accommodation, timely pickup, drop off at the airport, warm reception and then in the service provider's perspective it is the revenue from increased room sales, sales from drinkables, food, onsite and offsites events. **FM-H1**.

A male manager from a different 5-star hotel shares:

Value in a hotel setting are those attributes from a service. . ., nice workers, cool and quiet place, varieties of meals to choose from will make a guest be willing to pay money **MM-H2**.

A male business guest from 3-star hotel reveals:

Value from a hotel service should reflect in not only the money l pay and the benefits l generate from consumption, but also constant interactions, phone calls, employees' presence during weddings, birthdays, funerals are important to my service choice **MBG1-H3**.

A female business guest observes:

Consistency in the hotel's service delivery in every aspect, importantly employees' efforts, time and competence are of value to me **FBG-H2**.

The above findings suggest that value for money is not only realised whenever service benefits match the price paid or the revenue which accrues to the hotel but also constant interactions are critical factors to service choice. In essence, employee's and guest's perception of value for money highlights utilitarian and functional value, such that service is delivered to meet not only guest's expectations but also with an aim to satisfying guest's well-being and for self-fulfilment (Holbrook, 2006). In this case, self-fulfilment is applicable to the guest, employee and the firm. Nonetheless, the findings suggest that value delivery from a hotel service continues to pose challenges. A male manager observes:

l will say we are lagging. Employees still believe that they are doing the guest a favour by serving them, they are more into the money than providing that quality service **MM1-H5**.

Contrary to the previous views by participants on value as in value for money, the above quote suggests employee's from the hotel industry are pre-occupied with money(profit) from service instead of providing guest's with quality service. This might not only raise concerns for hotel managers understanding of actor's divergencies on value to forestall value co-destruction (Farquhar & Robson, 2017; Keeling, Laing, & de Ruyter, 2019) but also providing insights into the complex nature of value regarding "the relativistic preferences that shape the essence of the consumption experiences" (Holbrook, 2006, p. 715) becomes necessary, given that it might support the successful implementation of VCC which is mutually beneficial.

Convergences on value as total experience: employee-guest perspective

The previous section suggests that notwithstanding the convergences and divergences of participants' views on value as in value for money, they consider it critical to service participation. However, as noticeable from previous quotes about how employees and guests understand value, value for money is not the only way in which value is assessed. This is to say that employee's and guest's also report that varied non-monetary dimensions of value including hotel location, physical evidence, mutual respect, appreciation, safety & security, quality & varieties of food and technological characteristics of service are critical to the realisation of total experience. A female guest reveals:

But most importantly what one looks at is the total experience. . ., how people greet you and attend to you bring about the value. **FLG - H6**.

A female waiter narrates:

Money does not always give value. But it is part of it, the total experience is just indescribable. **FW-H2**.

The above findings suggest that hotel service involves different actor influential factors that are often subjective. However, despite the subjective nature of value, the above views show that actor's associate value with the total service experience, which in this case is mostly context-based with different meanings. Consequently, while the leisure guest associates experiential value to the smiles, greetings and the attention received from employees, the waiter's meaning of value emerges from social interactions with other people. To this end, while the context-specific nature of value underlies service as the fundamental basis for exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), this study suggests that actor's in hotel service develop their own methods for assessing value, using diverse and context-specific variables to make an overall evaluation of value from the service including the following.

Hotel location

Employee's and guest's mention that hotel location is critical to value realisation because it contributes directly to the delivery of a memorable experience. However, because experience

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is relative, employee's and guest's give different views on how hotel location delivers value. A male guest reveals:

The hotel should be located in a very serene environment. Not too many traffic to disturb whatever business transaction, it should be at a central location of the city. **MBG3-H2**.

A male supervisor shares:

The hotel location should be near to the airport and to the central business site. **MS-H5**. The extant literature presents different value dimensions, of which value as an interactive relativistic preference experience has been highlighted (Holbrook, 2006; Maté-Sánchez-Val & Teruel-Gutierrez, 2022). However, the above quotes suggest that the location of a hotel influences value delivery and service participation, especially on the part of the guest. Thus, becoming imperative for hotel managers to understand how the service elements constituting total experience, especially service location could be harnessed for successful encounters.

Physical features

The critical role of a hotel's physical environment towards value realisation is recognised (Viciunaite & Alfnes, 2020). However, given that this study examines value from employee-guest perspective to understand how that might influence successful co-creation, it is important to highlight how these actors perceive value from a hotel's physical environment as shown below. A male guest and a male employee observe:

What l consider value is that the hotel provides comfortable environment so l can sleep at night using the physical facilities. **MBG1-H4**.

l can look at value from the environment, the physical things that l see, the building, the room, the bed, the television **MM3**- **H3**.

Although the above views are similar, employee's suggest that value from the hotel environment is about the physical appeal while the guest's value concerns how the environment functions to generate value through in-use. Consequently, although the same word is used, the different meanings provide the basis for understanding employees' and guests' VP regarding a hotel's physical features to know how service could be designed and delivered to satisfy their unique experiences.

Mutual respect

The findings show that mutual respect is not only key to employee-guest realisation of experiential value but also promotes successful service interactions. A female business guest notes:

So, for me value is addressing fellow actors with respect and they addressing you back with respect. **FBG2-H3**.

A male manager from the same hotel reports:

We are trying to render a service to make guests happy, in return, the best they can do is to accord us that respect, but some guests sometimes think we are like the maids or houseboys in their house. **MM-H2**.

Co-creation stresses the importance of service design and delivery that benefits all actors (Payne *et al.*, 2021). This is highlighted by the above views which not only depict the importance of mutual respect, but also suggest that the lack of respect among actors might become a barrier to successful VCC interactions. Yet, practitioners and researchers seem to have ignored the obvious impact of guests' attitude (Gallarza & Saura, 2020), such as disrespect for employees, which might affect staff's willingness to participate in VCC with guest's.

Appreciation

Employee's and guest's consider appreciation as critical to hotel service experience because it facilitates the development of stronger relationships and increased service participation

(Liu, Ting, & Ringle, 2021). However, in this study, participants express different views on appreciation. Whereas a manager's view on appreciation concerns co-actors respect for his views the waiter expresses a dissenting view by saying appreciation in the form of "tips" is very important to VCC participation. The guest expresses a similar view with the waiter except that it is conditional. A male manager notes:

I Consider appreciation, which is co-actors respect for my views as important to every interaction and for that matter to my total experience as a hotel employee. **MM1-H2**.

A male waiter asserts:

l could not agree with my manager more also on the respect of views, let me say that one thing of value is the tips as a form of appreciation is important. **MW-H2**.

The guest observes:

Value is when l feel that my total experience exceeds what l paid for, that is where you give a big "tip" to the waiter as a form of appreciation **MBG1-H2**.

The above quotes suggest understanding of employee-guest value can facilitate successful VCC interactions. As shown in Figure 1, the images from observation provide a better understanding of what value means to guests and employees and how such actors can access each other's resources such as towels, kettle, teacup, beverages, etc. in the guest's room towards VCC. Accordingly, this becomes possible through information seeking, sharing and helping (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2012) either on arrival or departure to not only facilitate the creation of individual and collective experiences but also enhance the dyadic level interactions to deliver value through value-in-use or value-in context (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Yet, understanding co-actor's service expectations regarding the giving or receiving of "gifts" or "tips", under what conditions, how and when might raise concerns, because the giving of gifts is a voluntary action that guest's undertake when delighted with the service.

Safety and security

The findings support the argument that service choice is based on the extent to which it fulfills social and environmental experience (Han *et al.*, 2022). In this study, employee's and guest's highlight safe and secured service environment as critical to the realisation of total hotel experience. A female business guest observes:

The most important thing is the safety and security within the hotel facility and the community within which it operates. **FBG2-H3**.

A male business guest from another hotel mentions:

I derive value from safety and security of the hotel **MBG1-H6**.

Another male business guest from another hotel echoes:

Security was all over the place. You cannot enter the premises without being checked. . .; they search cars and individuals to know what they are carrying. **MBG3-H1**.

The above views not only help to clarify the importance of hotel safety and security to actors but also show how hotel service has moved beyond the provision of leisure to include experience environment that promotes secured interactions. Consequently, hotels might want to leverage on the provision of safety and security to not only attract but also to retain employees and guests for competitive reasons.

Quality and varieties of food

Valuable experiences are also linked to a hotel's ability to offer quality and varieties of food. This supports the notion that hotel industry is experience-driven and individuals can be part of service process to create their unique experiences (Kim *et al.*, 2022). Accordingly, such service attributes not only influence guest's hotel selection or long stay but also key to their re-purchase intentions (Han *et al.*, 2022). A female leisure guest and male business guest from the same hotel share:

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My perception of value or how l measure value when l come to any hotel are two folds. One is about the quality of the food. **FLG - H6**.

l need to see quality food and the good value of their food varieties. **MBG2-H6**.

The above views indicate that guest's value expectations related to food quality and variety are diverse, and so are the experiences to highlight the view that value is relative and context specific (Holbrook, 2006). An example is actors' cultural background (Hofstede, 1980), which this study suggests influences their food choice. Consequently, guests' and employees' emphasis on the quality and variety of food not only point to new ways of differentiating a hotel from its competitors, but also broadens the understanding of value as embedding in only tangible products to include intangible experiences.

Technological characteristics of service
The findings not only align with the work of Shiwen, Kwon, and Ahn (2022) on how important technology-enabled service is to employee-guest service participation but also highlight how technology connects actors in service exchanges for value to be co-created (Akaka and Vargo, 2014). The quotes below provide examples of how technology-related service influences participation and the value realised. A male business guest shares:

What l like here is the service technology. So anytime l am coming here l am so happy. . ., l pile all my job. . .so l can stay longer and finish with all my job. **MBG3-H3**.

Male managers from different hotels narrate:

Especially, 90% of the people say we need wi-fi. Even though that is expensive, we have no choice but to invest in it. **MM2-H3**.

Now the guest who comes around, it is not about luxury. The internet should work for them to do business, it is their number one priority. **MM-H4**.

The findings bring to the fore actors, especially guest's growing interest in the technological characteristics of service. Importantly, the relevance of technology in supporting open access to information, service processes (Stoten, Oliver, O'brien, & Swain, 2018) as well as employee performance and the firm's revenue generation are recognised (Shiwen *et al.*, 2022). Yet, this study highlights the technological element of service (Wi-fi, internet service) as critical component of hotel service because it impacts positively on not only the service exchange but also creates conducive environment for configuring the hotel's resources such as knowledge and skills to create mutually beneficial experiences.

Discussion and implications
Discussion
Value has remained a focal topic of study for several years. However, considering that it might not only be assessed and defined differently within different contexts (Kim *et al.*, 2022) but also complex (Gallarza & Saura, 2020), the value concept continues to receive research attention. Yet, authors suggest the need for further studies to broaden insights about the dynamics surrounding value from co-creation to forestall value co-destruction (Echeverri & Skålén, 2021; Farquhar & Robson, 2017). Drawing from SDL as the theoretical foundation, this study examines employee-guest perceived value as factors that can aid the successful implementation of VCC in the hotel industry at the dyadic level. The findings not only suggest value is subjectively determined (Holbrook, 2006) but also reveal employee-guest collective meaning of value from distinct and same hotel service. This suggests that while hotel service might be similar, context-specific value, both collective and individual might result from service-use to employees and guests (Gopaldas *et al.*, 2022; Perera *et al.*, 2017). This is highlighted by the findings: value as in value for money as well as total experience resulting from hotel location, physical evidence, mutual respect, appreciation, safety and security,

quality and varieties of food, technological characteristics of service. Importantly, the findings show that the presence or absence of the above factors might not only play a significant role in influencing guests' and employees' participation in a hotel service but also might predict their subsequent VCC encounter behaviours. In addition, while existing literature's emphasis on value has mostly focused on the guest (Prebensen & Xie, 2017; Gallarza & Saura, 2020), this study's findings suggest that understanding VP can be useful for practitioners, considering that employee's and guest's varying value expectations in the form of value as in value for money and total experience have the potential to influence not only service encounter interaction but also the outcome of service. Thus, while hotel managers strive to provide service elements that generate value to guests, equal attention must be placed on service elements that the employee-guest consider important in their assessment of value to facilitate successful VCC encounters in a hotel context.

Theoretical implications

The theoretical implications of perceived value from a hotel service as identified in this study are threefold. Firstly, the findings show that a multi-dimensional approach to the study of employee-guest value provides better insights than does a unidimensional approach of "value as in for money", both individually and collectively. However, in this context, while previous studies mostly focused on the guest (Prebensen & Xie, 2017; Ahn et al., 2019) and for that matter their subjective views on value from developed economies, this study broadens understanding of employee-guest value in a hotel setting, both subjectively and collectively from a developing nation. This suggests that rather than drawing from existing literature that has mostly come from the developed markets, hotels within sub-Saharan Africa now have opportunity to use this study's findings for a positive service outcome.

Secondly, perceived value moves beyond simple trade-off between quality and price (Zeithaml, 1988) to include the outcome of the overall service evaluations in the form of total experience resulting from hotel location, physical evidence, mutual respect, appreciation, safety and security, quality and varieties of food and technological characteristics of service. Theoretically, this increases knowledge on not only value from total experience and how employee-guest can use service within different contexts to create unique experiences but also enlarges extant literature about the factors that enable co-creating mutually beneficial service based on actors shared understanding of value in a hotel setting.

Thirdly, individual and collective views on value suggest that co-creation might not necessarily suggest actors generate value from the same service (Yeboah et al., 2022). Yet, given that actors value expectations (individual and collective) draw them together in service suggests a need to understand the service dimensions that deliver value which is ultimately the basis for exchange (Wei et al., 2020). This study not only shows when employees' and guests' are willing to participate in a hotel service but also provides information on when these actors can integrate resources towards mutually beneficial service encounter. Theoretically, this builds on existing literature because it outlines the necessary factors for the successful implementation of VCC at the dyadic level.

Practical implications

Value for money is already known but co-creation through paying attention to guest's and employee's views on what makes their hotel experiences valuable is something more important, but yet, not known. This study sets the agenda for hotel managers to employ service processes that pay particular attention to the value preferences of employee's and guest's, given that these actors expectations would have to be managed for gaining sustainable competitive advantage. This suggests that rather than being overly concerned about the delivery of service that meets guests' expectation, the hotel can now leverage on this

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study's findings to deliver service based on the expectations of both employees' and guests' for sustainability and competition. In addition, this study reveals that gaining insights into employees' and guests' VPs from different hotels is particularly necessary, considering that firms might have to give special attention to these value expectations for purposes of service improvement or competition. In essence, this study highlights the need for a shift from service standardisation based on hotel categorisation or star rating to personalisation that reflects individuals value experiences. Consequently, hotel management can use this as a strategy to facilitate employee-guest active (joint) participation in future encounters with the hope to realise similar experience.

Further, the notion that employees' and guests' assess value differently from the same service suggests that diverse service elements might be experienced differently by individuals. Although these actors may encounter similar service processes, they may choose to participate to integrate resources to achieve expected value. As earlier highlighted, to achieve this, hotel management might have to engage employees' and guests' in constant interactions through face-to face, chats or online platforms for feedbacks, comments, suggestions and criticism. Furthermore, this study sets the agenda for hotels to employ not only service processes that pay particular attention to the value preferences of employees or guests but also develops a framework of VP that enables mutually beneficial VCC encounters.

Limitations and directions for future research
Generalisability of the findings is a limitation due to not only the smaller sample size but also industry-specific context. Although rigorous procedures were followed to minimise biases, research limitation is acknowledged because the researcher participated in the research process. This study offers considerable insights into employees' and guests' VPs in a hotel setting, yet another limitation is acknowledged from the selection of study participants from Accra, Ghana's national capital, which might have constrained the comprehensive view of the hotel industry. Thus, future studies, using participants from different subject area, might generate different results on VPs and how that might affect VCC interactions and outcome.

Limitations may also result from the relatively smaller sample size due to the qualitative nature of the study. Future studies could push knowledge forward in this same direction using more employees and guests from different contexts. In addition, the use of qualitative method involving participants from the hotel industry suggests that the true potential of VCC has not been fully explored and that there exist more areas for further studies. Therefore, this study proposes an agenda for future quantitative method involving employees, guests and other stakeholders' VPs from different service settings for further insights. In particular, the study identifies potential areas of research related to appreciation, mutual respect and technological characteristics of service, using survey research.

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