Research on Enhancing the Shaolin Temple Tourism Experience

Based on Value Co-Creation

Ma Yue[1], Ali Bin Azlan[1], Yan Yibing[2]

1 Graduate School of Management, Post Graduate Centre, Management and Science University, University Drive, Off Persiaran Olahraga, Section 13, 40100 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

2 School of Statistics and Mathematics, Henan Finance University, No. 22 Longzihu North Road, 450003 Zhengzhou, Henan, China.

Abstract

This study aims to enhance the tourism experience at Shaolin Temple through the application of value co-creation theory, which emphasizes interactive participation between tourists and destinations. Based on 2,910 online reviews collected from the Ctrip website from 2023 to 2024, the research employs ROST Content Mining tools for high-frequency word analysis, semantic network analysis, and sentiment analysis. Combined with value co-creation theory and a detailed examination of review content, the study explores the current state of tourist experiences at Shaolin Temple. Key issues identified include weakened scenic experiences, suboptimal elements and services, and insufficient depth in cultural experiences. In response, the study proposes practical pathways and strategies to optimize the tourism experience, such as establishing a diversified information interaction system, improving collaborative management mechanisms, and innovating cultural dissemination forms. Theoretically, the study enriches the applicability of value co-creation theory in cultural tourism, while practically providing actionable insights for enhancing tourist experiences and achieving sustainable development at Shaolin Temple and similar cultural heritage sites.

1. Introduction

Shaolin Temple, as a significant symbol of Chinese culture, is renowned worldwide for its profound Zen Buddhist culture and Shaolin martial arts. It is one of the birthplaces of Chinese Zen Buddhism and a landmark location of the "City of Kung Fu" (Zhouxiang, 2019). As a World Cultural Heritage site integrating religion, history, culture, and natural landscapes, Shaolin Temple attracts countless domestic and international visitors (Su et al., 2019). However, with the rapid development of the cultural tourism market, the tourism experience at Shaolin Temple has

not fully matched its world-class brand's cultural depth and historical value. On one hand, visitor enthusiasm for Shaolin Temple remains strong, drawing millions of visitors annually; on the other hand, feedback on its cultural content and tourism services reflects a series of issues that warrant serious attention.

The tourism experience at Shaolin Temple faces several issues: First, the content of cultural experiences tends to be superficial, with the deeper philosophical essence of Shaolin martial arts and Zen thought insufficiently interpreted, resulting in weakened visitor engagement and immersion in the culture (Hung et al., 2017). Secondly, the over-commercialization of the Shaolin Temple hinders visitors from developing emotional ties to its cultural heritage (Hung et al., 2017). Furthermore, a considerable volume of content on social media underscores the variability in service quality, where shortcomings in guided interpretation, visitor management, and infrastructure detrimentally affect the overall tourism experience at Shaolin Temple. Such challenges not only diminish visitor satisfaction but also limit the cultural impact and market competitiveness of the temple.

Therefore, based on the rapid development of international tourism in culture and fewer restrictions from the pandemic situation, the optimization of the tourist experience of Shaolin Temple is a highly important factor for improving its comprehensive value. In improving the experience related to tourism, most traditional methods are related to improvement in aspects of service quality and infrastructural construction. However, this question also has another solution from the new value co-creation theory. Value co-creation theory suggests that tourists are not passive consumers of value; instead, they are proactive contributors to the creation of value (Saha et al., 2022). From this perspective, the tourism experience is seen as a result of interactions between tourists and destinations. Tourists co-create valuable tourism with the destination through involvement in guided tours, cultural events, and even feedback (X. Liu et al., 2022). Interactions of such kind can significantly enhance visitor satisfaction, build loyalty, and reinforce cultural identity (Solakis et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2021; Y. Yang et al., 2023)while concurrently presenting new avenues for destinations to improve service quality and enhancing efficiency in the use of resources (Garanti, 2023; Li, 2023).

As a comprehensive cultural heritage site, optimizing the tourism experience at Shaolin Temple requires attention not only to visitors' basic needs (e.g., convenience and comfort) but also to fostering their deep engagement in cultural experiences. Visitors should be actively involved in the interpretation and dissemination of culture. For example, through highly interactive cultural activities, personalized service designs, and dynamic feedback mechanisms, the emotional connection between visitors and Shaolin culture can be continuously strengthened. This would simultaneously enhance the cultural value and tourism experience. Therefore, optimizing the Shaolin Temple tourism experience based on value co-creation theory to further highlight its cultural brand value and improve visitor satisfaction has become the central issue of this study. Based on the above background, this study focuses on the following questions:

(1) What is the current state of the Shaolin Temple tourism experience?

(2) What are the main challenges visitors face during their experiences at Shaolin Temple?

(3) How can the Shaolin Temple tourism experience be optimized using value co-creation theory to enhance its visitor experiences?

The primary aim of this study is to analyze the current state of visitor experiences at Shaolin Temple and propose practical pathways for optimizing its tourism experience based on the core principles of value co-creation theory. To achieve this goal, the study employs big data analysis of online reviews, using methods such as high-frequency word analysis, semantic network analysis, and sentiment analysis to systematically analyze visitors' core needs and experience

characteristics.

The academic value of this study lies in enriching the applicability of value co-creation theory in the field of cultural tourism and providing theoretical references for optimizing the tourism experiences of similar cultural heritage sites. Its practical significance is to offer specific strategies and management recommendations for Shaolin Temple and other cultural heritage sites, contributing to the sustainable development of cultural tourism.

The structure of this paper is as follows: The first section is the introduction, which outlines the research background, questions, and significance. The second section discusses the theoretical foundation, explaining value co-creation theory and its application in tourism experience research. The third section outlines this research methodology and the method of data collection. The fourth section describes the results obtained through the multi-dimensional data analysis and proves the actual state of current situations in the experiences of the Shaolin Temple visitors. The fifth part is the discussion, with suggestions for the improvement of Shaolin Temple tourism based on value co-creation theory. Some limitations of this survey are reflected upon. The current research tries to propose some new insights and tools about the management and operation of the Shaolin Temple and generally about the cultural tourism destinations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept and Framework of Value Co-Creation

The term Value Co-creation was first coined by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004). It is an important part of the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) model, which focuses on how a company and its customers co-create value. This approach differs from the traditional value-creation approach, which makes the companies the only source of value and the customers just recipients of the same value (Saha et al., 2022). Regarding this perspective, the Value Co-creation theory considers consumers not passive but rather active participants in the process. According to Vargo and Lusch (2004), a consumer's actions, emotions, and reactions directly affect the realization of value. This is essentially an energetic process of value creation that is the result of shared resources and information between businesses and consumers. Interactions are not only relations between businesses and consumers but between consumers and alliances of many stakeholders (Ma et al., 2019). Interactions allow the consumers to feed their knowledge, experience, and emotions into the value creation process, allowing the possibility to enhance the final product or service experience.

In theoretical research, there is a widely accepted conceptual distinction of value co-creation into different dimensions, reflecting various roles that consumers play in the process. Behavioral participation can be considered the most direct reflection of value co-creation. By engaging in certain activities, such as using goods, giving feedback, or participating in the design, consumers directly take part in value-creation processes (Yi & Gong, 2013). This will contribute to enhancing product functionality and optimizing service procedures. Cognitive involvement is the mental involvement offered by customers through comprehension, analysis, and evaluation of products or services. For example, ideas from customers can enable firms to understand market needs and create newness (Payne et al., 2008). Lastly, citizenship behavior is the additional supportive actions of customers in the process of value co-creation. Additional supportive actions include actively promoting products, assisting other customers, and maintaining the corporate reputation. Such actions significantly enhance the brand reputation and community involvement in businesses while strengthening the trust bond that exists between consumers and corporations

(Yi & Gong, 2013; Gong & Yi, 2021).

The variable research on value co-creation includes drivers, process mechanisms, and outcome variables. The internal logic of value co-creation in different contexts is gradually revealed. (1) Driving factors include psychological motivations (satisfaction, trust and loyalty), interaction quality, community support, technological empowerment and so on (Assiouras et al., 2024; Barile et al., 2024; Rafi et al., 2023; Zadeh et al., 2023). Consumers' willingness to co-create is significantly stimulated by these factors. (2) Process mechanisms are centered on consumer participation behaviors and citizenship behaviors. Participation behaviors include using products and providing feedback. Citizenship behaviors involve actions like promoting products and helping others. Emotional connections and trust between consumers and businesses act as mediators in this process (Yi & Gong, 2013). (3) Outcome variables highlight the positive impacts of value co-creation. On one hand, Consumer loyalty and satisfaction are improved (Cossío-Silva et al., 2016; Woratschek et al., 2020). On the other hand, Brand equity, innovation capabilities, and market competitiveness are also enhanced (H. Liu et al., 2024; Ruangkanjanases et al., 2023; G. Yang, 2024). On a societal level, community engagement and collective cohesion are strengthened (Cannas, 2018; Ng et al., 2024).

The theory of value co-creation holds significant academic and practical implications. Theoretically, it extends the connotation of Service-Dominant Logic and deepens the understanding of the consumer role. In practical terms, value co-creation offers valid possibilities for organizations to enhance service procedures, improve customer satisfaction, and encourage innovation. Besides that, it provides theoretical frameworks and practical insights that can be applied in different fields, such as tourism, health, and education.

2.2 Application of Value Co-creation in Tourism and Its Impact on Tourist Experience

Tourism is considered one of the especially fitting contexts of the value co-creation process (Shaw et al., 2011). Lately, the notion of value co-creation has attracted much attention in tourism scholarship. Tourism value co-creation upsets the traditional distinctions between producer and consumer within the realm of tourism. The notion transforms tourists from being passive visitors or recipients to being active experiencers and creators (O'dell, 2007). Indeed, earlier studies have assessed their adoption in hotels, attractions, travel agents, and online intermediaries, their manifold applications both in natural and cultural tourism (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013; Font et al., 2021). The research focus has shifted from the importance of co-creation for tourist experiences and tourism enterprises to defining and measuring the concept of TVCC. Increasing attention has been given to its formation mechanisms and functioning processes. The scope of research has also expanded to include tourism service innovation and tourism business model innovation (Song et al., 2022).

The introduction of value co-creation provides a new perspective for studying tourist experiences. In the context of increasing attention to personalized needs and diversified behaviors, value co-creation is regarded as an important approach to improving the tourism experience (Sugathan & Ranjan, 2019). Its impact on tourist experiences is reflected in several aspects:

(1) Enhancing tourists' perceived Service quality. Enhancements in service quality are realized via the active involvement and feedback of tourists. Personalized requests and recommendations for enhancement made during the experience assist destinations in refining their service processes (John & Supramaniam, 2024). Engagements between tourists and service personnel enhance the pertinence and satisfaction associated with the service. Such favorable interactions allow destinations to perpetually refine their service offerings, ultimately resulting in a comprehensive

enhancement of service quality (Fortunato et al., 2024).

(2) It improves the tourists' feeling of involvement. Involvement is increased when tourists engage in interactive activities or customized experiences, thus becoming partners in the development of services and the creation of products. Participatory cultural activities, such as handicrafts or local cooking classes, for example, allow tourists to create meaningful connections with the places they visit (John & Supramaniam, 2024). Such involvement generates a sense of belonging and encourages positive feedback during the trip.

(3) Increased tourist satisfaction and loyalty: the emotional involvement and participatory approaches heighten tourists' dependence and attachment to certain destinations. Such closeness, initially grounded in the value co-creation approach, increases the overall satisfaction derived through experiencing tourism and causes revisit intentions (Shoukat & Ramkissoon, 2022). For instance, tourists who are part of community development projects or ecological conservation activities are often satisfied with the impacts their contributions have, which in turn adds to loyalty to the destination (J. Liu & Jo, 2020).

(4) Enriching cultural experiences. Value co-creation drives tourists to be more proactive and interactive, adding both depth and breadth to their cultural experiences. Immersive historical reenactments or cultural performances allow tourists to perceive the essence of the cultural destination inside and out (Arya et al., 2024). Such rich cultural experiences promote emotional resonance and create new forms of cultural dissemination.

In general, value co-creation provides an overall positive effect in multiple dimensions for tourists. It not only upgrades the quality of tourist experiences but also brings significant value in managing destinations and enhancing their services. Theoretically, the concept of value co-creation has developed the traditional perspective of tourism experience studies, considering tourists as active contributors rather than passive recipients. In practice, this theory may be used to explain how tourist-centered services and products could be developed and stimulate a shift from service-dominant approaches toward interaction-centered tourism development. This study is based on the above-mentioned theory and explores the application within Shaolin Temple's tourism experience with the aim of providing a theoretical basis for improvements in the experience of this cultural heritage location.

3. Methodology and Procedures

The main data source adopted in this study is online tourist reviews of Shaolin Temple. Data on the biggest online travel agency platform in China- Ctrip- were crawled through the Octoparse web scraping tool. Octoparse is defined as a visual web scraping tool that can efficiently extract textual data on targeted websites. Besides, flexible rule settings are allowed to meet particular research requirements. Specific fields to be scraped include the review content, posting timestamp, and rating. Comprehensive regulations on data export protocols were driven. The dataset consists of 3,400 reviews collected from 2023 to November 2024.

Only after the cleaning process, then, could one get access to quality, reliable data. Thereafter, by removing the repeated entries, stop words filtering, discarding invalid contents such as advertisements and nonsensical text, this resulted in the retention of 2,910 valid reviews, on which a solid basis of subsequent data analysis could be established.

The data processed was analyzed using ROST Content Mining 6.0. ROST CM is a targeted content mining tool for text analysis. It is applied to social media analysis, user behavior research, and market trend insight. Its functions include word frequency statistics, semantic network

construction, sentiment analysis, and text clustering (Di & Limei, 2021). In the current study, text mining was performed based on the following:

(1) Frequency Statistics and Focus Analysis: The keyword extraction with word ranking was carried out through word frequency statistics. These provided major focuses that tourists have and a core description of the Shaolin Temple. Taking the example of high-frequency words, they might focus on "kung fu performance," "Zen culture," and "beautiful environment," which reflects the paying of attention by tourists to some resources in the Shaolin Temple.

(2) Semantic Network Analysis: A co-occurrence matrix was constructed based on high-frequency words. Visualization methods were used to display the association structure and semantic network of keywords. This analysis revealed the thematic distribution and hierarchical structure among keywords. Connections such as "kung fu," "culture," and "experience" highlighted tourists' comprehensive perceptions across different dimensions.

(3) Sentiment Analysis and Experience Evaluation: Sentiment analysis, based on a Chinese sentiment lexicon, categorized the emotional tendencies of tourist reviews into positive, negative, and neutral types. Combining this with high-frequency word analysis, the relationship between sentiment tendencies and specific experience elements, such as service quality, facility convenience, and cultural activities, was explored. For example, positive sentiments might focus on "wonderful kung fu performances" and "beautiful natural scenery," while negative sentiments might address issues like "overcrowded tourists" or "high ticket prices."

Based on these text mining and analysis results, a value co-creation perspective was applied to analyze tourist experiences reflected in the reviews. Deep interpretation of the review content identified major problems and their causes in the tourist experience. These might include insufficient interaction between tourists and the attraction, lack of service details, or inadequate depth in cultural presentations. This analysis not only helps identify current shortcomings in the Shaolin Temple tourism experience but also provides directions for proposing strategies to optimize tourist experiences.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Visitor Perceptions Based on Review Texts
4.1.1 High-Frequency Word Analysis

Custom vocabulary entries were added to the segmentation dictionary in ROST Content Mining 6.0. Similar terms in the review text, such as "worthwhile," "worth visiting," and "worth a trip," were merged for consistency. After processing, the top 50 high-frequency words were extracted (see Table 4.1). Words such as adverbs, pronouns, and verbs that lacked analytical value were excluded. Only nouns and adjectives were retained for the final analysis. The frequency of each word reflects how often it appeared in visitor reviews, indicating the level of attention given to that element.

Table 4.1: Top 50 High-Frequency Words in Online Reviews of the Shaolin Temple

Serial number	Entry	Frequency	Serial number	Entry	Frequency
1	Shaolin Temple	1077	26	Landscape	114
2	Scenic Area	600	27	Entrance	112
3	Not Bad	555	28	Temple	104
4	Performance	477	29	Shaolin Kung Fu	100

5	Shaolin	344	30	Queuing	99
6	Worthwhile	321	31	History	95
7	Cableway	305	32	Chan Buddhism	92
8	Songshan	266	33	Millennium Ancient Temple	90
9	Martial Arts	246	34	Booklet	89
10	Sanhuangzhai	194	35	Parking	89
11	Parking Lot	185	36	Ticket	88
12	Place	183	37	Service	86
13	Attraction	178	38	Martial Monk	84
14	Tour Guide	165	39	Child	82
15	Scenery	151	40	Environment	81
16	Time	151	41	Too Crowded	78
17	Pagoda Forest	145	42	Experience	78
18	Interpretation	135	43	Management	78
19	Kung Fu	129	44	Culture	76
20	Cable Car	126	45	Remarkable	73
21	Tourist	123	46	Henan	72
22	Recommendation	121	47	Climbing	71
23	Commercialization	119	48	Electric Vehicle	70
24	Experience	117	49	Free	68
25	China	116	50	Shaoshi Mountain	68

Through the high-frequency word analysis of Shaolin Temple visitor reviews, this study identified the core elements of visitor experiences that receive the most attention. The results indicate that the most frequently mentioned words include "Shaolin Temple" (1,077 mentions), "Scenic Area" (600 mentions), "Not Bad" (555 mentions), "Performance" (477 mentions), and "Shaolin" (344 mentions). These findings reflect the high level of attention visitors pay to the overall experience and the cultural highlights of the Shaolin Temple. The main aspects of visitor experiences, based on the analysis, are summarized as follows:

(1) Focus on core culture and history. High-frequency words such as "Shaolin Temple," "Shaolin," "Kung Fu" (129 mentions), and "Chan Buddhism" (92 mentions) show that Shaolin martial arts and Zen culture, as the hallmark elements of the Shaolin Temple, are major attractions for visitors.

(2) Interest in historical heritage and unique landscapes.Words like "Pagoda Forest" (145 mentions) and "Millennium Ancient Temple" (90 mentions) further indicate visitors' fascination with the temple's rich historical heritage and distinctive scenery.

(3) Facilities and service quality. Infrastructure within the scenic area is another key topic in visitor reviews. High-frequency words such as "Cable Car" (126 mentions), "Parking Lot" (185 mentions), and "Electric Vehicle" (70 mentions) suggest significant attention is given to the availability and quality of facilities.

(4) Importance of guided services. Words like "Tour Guide" (165 mentions), "Interpretation" (135 mentions), and "Service" (86 mentions) highlight visitors' expectations regarding guided services and overall hospitality.

(5) Prominence of Shaolin Kung Fu performances. The frequent appearance of "Performance" (477 mentions) and "Shaolin Kung Fu" (100 mentions) emphasizes the importance of martial arts performances as a vital part of the visitor experience. These performances are highly praised and reflect visitors' interest in this dynamic form of cultural display.

(6) Concerns about overcrowding and queues. Certain high-frequency words, such as "Queuing" (99 mentions) and "Too Crowded" (78 mentions), reveal dissatisfaction with overcrowding and long waits during peak times, which negatively impact the visitor experience.

In summary, the high-frequency word analysis sheds light on the core elements and focus areas of visitor experiences at the Shaolin Temple while also highlighting certain shortcomings. These findings provide valuable insights for subsequent research on optimizing the visitor experience.

4.1.2 Semantic Network Analysis

With ROST Content Mining, semantic network analysis was carried out on the frequent terms appearing in the visitors' reviews, proposing a semantic network representation of the tourism experience at Shaolin Temple. The semantic network representation visually shows the degree of connectivity and structural connection among these high-frequency terms, hence underlining intrinsic links and core aspects of elements associated with visitor experiences.

This research shows that the "Shaolin Temple" is the central node in the network, associated with other important concepts of "Kung Fu," "Performance," "Chan Buddhism," and "The Millennium Ancient Temple." The fact that basic cultural aspects of the Shaolin Temple, such as kung fu performances and Zen principles, are the central part of the experiences for tourists turns them into major contributors to the satisfaction of visitors and into reasons for the great appeal of the temple in the sphere of cultural tourism.

Natural landscape and site amenity-related keywords like "Scenic Area," "Cable Car," "Sanhuangzhai," "Songshan," and "Climbing" are all closely related to each other. This reflects the high degree of attention paid by tourists to the surrounding natural environment and additional attractions, signifying the distinctive ability of the Shaolin Temple to integrate cultural and natural experience.

Other highly connected keywords in the service and management dimension include "Tour Guide," "Interpretation," "Service," and "Management." This sub-network emphasizes that visitors have high expectations for service quality, guided interpretation, and management standards- all factors impinging directly on visitor satisfaction and, indeed, their experience.

Other important semantic network terms representing negative experiences include "Queuing," "Too Crowded," and "Commercialization." These terms reflect a very clear dissatisfaction by visitors about overcrowding, long waiting time, and commercialization. Such issues influence not only the overall satisfaction level but also indicate specific areas in which the management at the site has to be enhanced.

In conclusion, the ultimate analysis of the semantic network reveals the complex, multi-dimensional nature of visitor experiences in the Shaolin Temple: cultural encounters, natural environment, and service quality and negative factors, which reveal the interaction between different components. These results provide important empirical evidence and a theoretical viewpoint that could contribute to the optimization of site management and the improvement of visitors' experiences.
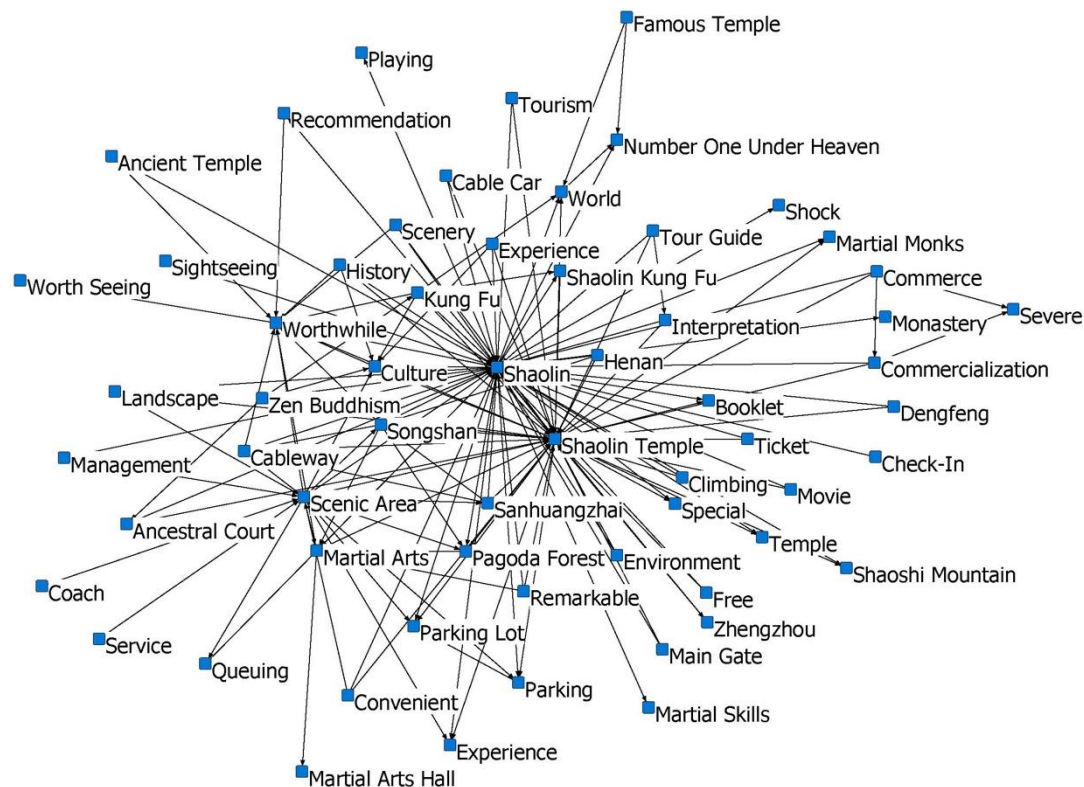
Figure 4.1: Semantic Network Analysis of Online Reviews for the Shaolin Temple

4.1.3 Sentiment Analysis

Table 2 presents the results on sentiment analysis of comments left by tourists for experiences within Shaolin Temple tourism, whereby the majority are positive, a few neutral, and a small number negative. The data show that there were 1,657 positive reviews, accounting for 56.94% of the total reviews. Among the positive reviews, 27.97% reflected mild positive sentiment, 15.36% reflected moderate positive sentiment, and 13.61% reflected strong positive sentiment. These results suggest that the majority of visitors held a favorable view of their experiences at the Shaolin Temple, particularly in relation to its cultural heritage, natural landscapes, and martial arts performances.

However, 42.03% of the reviews exhibited negative sentiment, reflecting significant dissatisfaction among visitors. Of these, 37.29% reflected mild negative sentiment, 2.75% reflected moderate negative sentiment, and 1.99% reflected strong negative sentiment. Further analysis of the review texts identified three main sources of negative emotions:

Mismatched Demand and Supply: Issues such as unclear information regarding performance schedules led to unmet visitor expectations.

Subpar Service and Elemental Experiences: Problems included inadequate interpretive services, unprofessional attitudes of staff, and excessively long wait times.

Lack of Cultural Atmosphere: The over-commercialization of the site diminished the immersive cultural experience.

Table 4.2: Top 50 High-Frequency Words in Online Reviews of the Shaolin Temple

Emotion Category	Frequency	Proportion (%)	Intensity	Frequency	Proportion (%)
			General	814	27.97
Positive Emotion	1657	56.94	Moderate	447	15.36
			High	396	13.61
Neutral Emotion	30	1.03		30	1.03

			General	1085	37.29
Negative Emotion	1223	42.03	Moderate	80	2.75
			High	58	1.99
Total	2910	100		2910	100

4.2 Visitor Experience Analysis from the Perspective of Value Co-Creation

Table 4.3 categorizes the high-frequency words from online reviews of the Shaolin Temple into different experience types. Combined with specific review content, the issues affecting visitor experiences are analyzed through the lens of value co-creation.

Table 4.3: Categorization of High-Frequency Words in Shaolin Temple Visitor Experiences

Experience Type	High-Frequency Words
Scenic Experience	Shaolin Temple (1077), Scenic Area (600), Songshan Mountain (266), Sanhuangzhai (194), Attractions (178), Scenery (151), Pagoda Forest (145), Millennium Ancient Temple (90), Shocking (63), Sightseeing (50), Buddhism (48), Famous Temple (39), Magnificent (35)
Element Experience	Cableway (305), Parking Lot (185), Place (183), Time (151), Entrance (112), Queuing (99), History (95), Tickets (88), Parking (89), Environment (81), Too Crowded (78), Playing (72), Climbing (71), Electric Vehicle (70)
Service Experience	Commercialization (119), Suggestions (103), Parking Service (89), Service (86), Management (78), Free (68), Mountain Service (58), Satisfaction (50), Show (49), Scenic Area Service (47), Staff (47)
Cultural Experience	Performance (477), China (116), Shaolin Kung Fu (100), Chan Buddhism (92), Martial Monk (84), Culture (76), Remarkable (73), Buddhism (48), Long History (33), Architecture (32)
Overall Experience	Worthwile (321), Recommendation (121), Living Up to Reputation (49)

4.2.1 Weakening of Scenic Experience

As the birthplace of Chinese Zen Buddhism and a sacred site for martial arts, the Shaolin Temple attracts numerous visitors with its unique cultural significance and natural landscapes. However, visitor feedback reveals gaps in aligning supply with demand. For instance, guided services primarily focus on recounting historical events, lacking in-depth interpretation of the philosophy behind Shaolin martial arts and Zen thought. This fails to meet the higher-level needs of culture-seeking tourists. While martial arts performances are highly popular, issues such as unclear scheduling and inadequate communication of performance details leave some visitors unable to attend, diminishing their overall experience.

From the perspective of value co-creation, the Shaolin Temple lacks sufficient interaction in capturing visitor needs and designing supply accordingly. Visitors, as central participants in the experience, are not involved in the planning stage to express their demands, exacerbating mismatches between supply and demand. Furthermore, the scenic area does not provide timely dynamic information (e.g., weather changes or performance cancellations), resulting in a gap between visitor expectations and actual experiences. This lack of interaction not only weakens the scenic experience but also limits the optimal utilization of the site's resources.

4.2.2 Subpar Element and Service Experiences

The quality of services provided by staff, including tour guides, security personnel, and ticketing staff, significantly affects the overall visitor experience at the Shaolin Temple. Some visitors reported cold or unenthusiastic attitudes among staff members, especially during peak seasons, where large crowds exacerbate the problem. Additionally, infrastructure issues are frequently mentioned, such as an insufficient number of restrooms, congestion during peak times, and outdated facilities that are not well-maintained, all of which hinder the convenience of the visitor experience.

From a value co-creation perspective, the Shaolin Temple's service management fails to emphasize visitor participation. Visitors, as potential collaborators in value creation, lack accessible channels to provide feedback or suggestions to management. Furthermore, complaints are often processed slowly or even overlooked. This one-way service model prevents visitors from actively participating in monitoring and optimizing site management, thereby limiting the potential for co-creating improved service quality between visitors and the scenic area.

4.2.3 Lack of Emotional Resonance in Cultural Experiences

The cultural experiences at the Shaolin Temple mainly rely on martial arts performances, Zen meditation activities, and the dissemination of Buddhist culture. However, the cultural atmosphere often fails to meet visitor expectations. Some visitors noted that the martial arts performances leaned heavily toward commercialization, prioritizing visual appeal over deep interpretation of the essence of Shaolin culture. Elements such as the philosophical ideas, spiritual depth, and historical evolution of Shaolin martial arts were insufficiently presented, reducing the impact of cultural communication. Additionally, interactive experiences such as Zen meditation courses and tea culture activities are limited, resulting in a lack of visitor engagement and immersion in Shaolin culture.

From the perspective of value co-creation, the Shaolin Temple has not effectively stimulated visitors' emotional investment or active participation in cultural dissemination. Visitors, as key participants in cultural experiences, are often passive recipients of information rather than active contributors to cultural activities. The absence of interaction and emotional connection limits the unique cultural appeal of the Shaolin Temple, resulting in a lack of cultural identity and emotional resonance. This superficial cultural presentation not only restricts visitor satisfaction but also diminishes the potential for co-creating cultural value in heritage preservation and innovation.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

5.1 Practical Strategies for Enhancing Shaolin Temple Visitor Experiences Based on Value Co-Creation

From the perspective of value co-creation, several issues are identified in tourists' experiences at Shaolin Temple. These include insufficient depth of experience, suboptimal facilities and services, and weak cultural-emotional connections. Addressing these problems and enhancing the tourism experience is a shared goal for both the destination and tourists. Both parties can form a community of shared interests, leveraging collaborative efforts to create greater experiential value. Based on the above analysis, practical pathways for improving the Shaolin Temple tourism experience through a value co-creation model are proposed, as shown in Figure 5.1 Three feasible optimization strategies for Shaolin Temple's value co-creation are proposed based on the
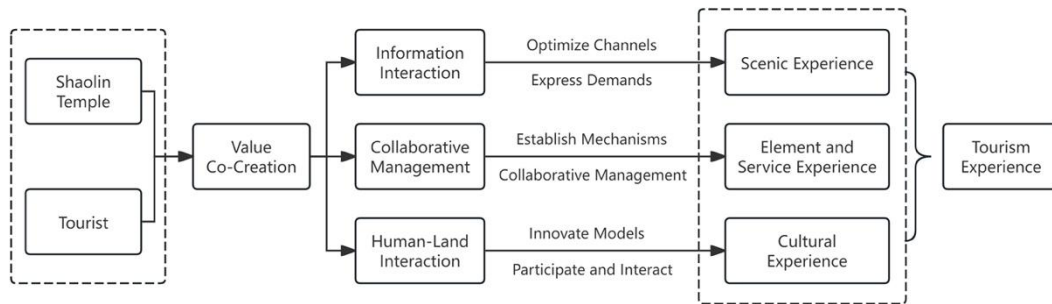
pathways illustrated in the figure.

Figure 5.1: Pathways for Enhancing Tourism Experience Through the Value Co-creation

5.1.1 Establishing a Multi-Channel Information Interaction System to Deepen Scenic Experiences

To address the weakening of scenic experiences at the Shaolin Temple, optimizing information interaction is an essential strategy for achieving value co-creation. The site needs a dynamic and precise information interaction system that enables quick responses to visitor needs through multi-channel information dissemination. Official websites, mobile applications, and social media platforms should play a central role in providing real-time updates and customized information, such as martial arts performance schedules, crowd distribution, and weather changes. These measures would help visitors better plan their trips. Such transparency and real-time interaction not only alleviate mismatches between supply and demand but also enhance visitor engagement and interactivity during their visits.

The interaction system also needs to report the needs of the visitors and suggestions; it needs to consider visitors as collaborators in this process of co-creation of experiences. Resources can be modified adaptively according to analysis and evaluation from visitor behavioral data: make family-oriented pathways, improve accessibility, and add climbing supports to meet every visitor's needs. In addition to these, interaction platforms should be provided on which the opinion of visitors is sought from the very outset of considerations on how to design the routes and improvements in service. This would be a common cause of optimizing demand and supply: the scenic experience would improve, with resources being optimally allocated.

5.1.2 Improving Collaborative Service Management Mechanisms to Optimize Service and Elemental Experiences

Service and elemental experience issues in the Shaolin Temple arise because visitors are not actively involved in the management, thus the one-sided service process. Meanwhile, the satisfaction of the visitors has been curtailed due to insufficient co-management. It is thus important that scenic areas advocate for deep participation of the visitors' involvement in service management based on the value co-creation perspective, hence attaining continuous service quality improvement.

An effective feedback and response system has to be developed first. The site shall create a mechanism for the mobile application and on-site devices for the real-time issuance of problems to be experienced by the visitors with regard to the services being offered. A dedicated team must manage visitor requests, while improvements are made transparent through a feedback mechanism showing clear improvements. The Visitor's satisfaction approach goes further to strengthen them as co-creators in the quality of service provision. It may be possible in peak seasons to engage visitors themselves in the delivery of services, guiding other visitors, or giving

tourist consultations under a visitor volunteer program. This will help reduce the working stress of employees and engage more visitors with in-depth and participatory experiences. Finally, there is a need for transparency in service processes, including the price of the paid services, to protect the right of visitors to know and to choose. The standardized and transparent management procedures will tend to be more trusted and cooperated with by the site and its visitors.

5.1.3 Innovating Cultural Dissemination to Enhance Emotional Resonance in Cultural Experiences

This may be explained by a single way of Shaolin Temple's cultural experience dissemination and less interaction between the culture and the tourist. The development of new methods for the dissemination of Shaolin culture should, first of all, aim at creating emotions' interaction between tourists and Shaolin culture and increasing value co-creation efficiency in the process of cultural communication.

Develop an immersive cultural dissemination: there should be a cultural area in the Shaolin Temple that reproduces the traditional atmosphere of a marketplace, showing the relevant handicrafts, the culture of tea, and vegetarian foods linked with Shaolin martial arts and Zen Buddhism. These would include watching and imitating some basic movements in martial arts, tasting vegetarian dishes, and making souvenirs related to Shaolin culture. While doing so, it replaced one-way dissemination with meaningful interactive ones where visitors could deeply enjoy the appeals of Shaolin culture.

Surprise performances may include interactive scenes with non-player characters (NPCs), like "a monk's daily training" or "a Zen tea ceremony," in which the visitor can participate naturally in cultural experiences. It will enhance the interactions that raise the participation of visitors, making them more emotionally touched. Moreover, theme festivals or cultural ceremonies, organized in periodic intervals, will also trigger emotional involvement by visitors, hence enhancing the depth and richness of cultural transmission. These innovative and interactive approaches not only sharpen the experiences of culture but also develop the roles of visitors as co-creators in the promotion of Shaolin culture, thus deepening the collaboration between the site and its visitors.

5.2 Research Limitations

While discussing the systematic analysis of the current Shaolin Temple tourism experience and putting forward the optimization strategy based on co-create value theory, this paper still has its own limitations.

First, there are one or two issues of representativeness associated with the sources used. This study is heavily reliant on material sourced from online reviews; this usually reflects the opinions of a certain segment, such as clients of online tourism websites. This may not represent the experiences of all visitors, with the experience expressed reflecting just those few visitors who are more likely to voice an opinion in an online mode. Contextual and emotive factors, in many cases, determine the review contents, which in turn make the judgment biased and limited in its objectivity.

Besides that, the present study has methodological limitations. This study will use high-frequency word analysis, semantic network analysis, and sentiment analysis to extract the characteristics of experience from review data. However, the method above overly depends on quantity statistics and fails to represent the semantic meaning and contextual-subtle meaning hidden behind reviews. For example, abstract feelings such as emotional resonance and value recognition in cultural contexts are difficult to measure by this approach.

Again, the results of the semantic network and sentiment analyses can be Graniey, given that

these are the algorithms of the tools that affect the preciseness of the results. Limitations of this research will definitely involve aspects of time and space. The main data will be part of online reviews from 2019 to 2023, and these cannot really represent long-lasting patterns related to the experiences of visitors. Furthermore, this study focuses on the Shaolin Temple as a single case study, and the proposed optimization strategies may be influenced by its unique cultural and management context, making direct application to other destinations challenging. Future research could adopt a multi-case comparative approach and extend the time span to further validate and refine the conclusions. These limitations provide critical reflections on the findings and recommendations of this study while pointing out directions for improvement in future research.

References

1. Arya, V., Sahni, S., Oukhayi, B., & Auruskeviciene, V. (2024). Visitors' attraction and co-creation at World Expo — a qualitative study unveiling visitors' delight and engagement with immersive technology. Tourism Recreation Research, 1 — 23. https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2024.2352211

2. Assiouras, I., Vallström, N., Skourtis, G., & Buhalis, D. (2024). Exploring how interaction leads to value co-creation, value co-destruction, and value no-creation during service mega-disruptions. Current Issues in Tourism, 27(20), 3231 — 3248. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2023.2259055

3. Barile, S., Bassano, C., Piciocchi, P., Saviano, M., & Spohrer, J. C. (2024). Empowering value co-creation in the digital age. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 39(6), 1130—1143. https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-12-2019-0553

4. Cannas, R. (2018). Diverse Economies of Collective Value Co-creation: The Open Monuments Event. Tourism Planning & Development, 15(5), 535 — 550. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2018.1505651

5. Cossío-Silva, F.-J., Revilla-Camacho, M.-Á., Vega-Vázquez, M., & Palacios-Florencio, B. (2016). Value co-creation and customer loyalty. Journal of Business Research, 69(5), 1621—1625. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.10.028

6. Di, W., & Limei, Y. (2021). Sentiment Analysis of Online Comments through Semantic Networks and ROST Text Mining Software. 2021 IEEE Conference on Telecommunications, Optics and Computer Science (TOCS), 869 — 872. https://doi.org/10.1109/TOCS53301.2021.9688923

7. FitzPatrick, M., Davey, J., Muller, L., & Davey, H. (2013). Value-creating assets in tourism management: Applying marketing's service-dominant logic in the hotel industry. Tourism Management, 36, 86—98. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.11.009

8. Font, X., English, R., Gkritzali, A., & Tian, W. (2021). Value co-creation in sustainable tourism: A service-dominant logic approach. TOURISM MANAGEMENT, 82. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104200

9. Fortunato, L. F. N., Sarfati, G., & Dallabrida, Y. M. (2024). Value co-creation for memorable touristic experiences: Experimental evidence of the effects on consumer satisfaction and purchase intention. Revista Turismo Em Análise, 35, 38 — 60. https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1984-4867.v35p38-60

10. Garanti, Z. (2023). Value co-creation in smart tourism destinations. WORLDWIDE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM THEMES, 15(5), 468－475. https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-06-2023-0070

11. Gong, T., & Yi, Y. (2021). A review of customer citizenship behaviors in the service context. The Service Industries Journal, 41(3－4), 169－199. https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2019.1680641

12. Hung, K., Yang, X., Wassler, P., Wang, D., Lin, P., & Liu, Z. (2017). Contesting the Commercialization and Sanctity of Religious Tourism in the Shaolin Monastery, China. International Journal of Tourism Research, 19(2), 145－159. https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2093

13. John, S., & Supramaniam, S. (2024). Value co-creation research in tourism and hospitality management: A systematic literature review. JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT, 58, 96－114. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2023.11.008

14. Li, J. (2023). Improving the Quality and Efficiency of Tourism Public Services Based on Value Co-creation in the Context of Smart City. Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Public Management, Digital Economy and Internet Technology, ICPDI 2023, September 1－3, 2023, Chongqing, China. Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Public Management, Digital Economy and Internet Technology, ICPDI 2023, September 1－3, 2023, Chongqing, China, Chongqing, People's Republic of China. https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.1-9-2023.2338808

15. Liu, H., Choi, C. S., & Kim, K. H. (2024). Roles of value co-creation on social platforms in driving participating businesses' sustainable competitive advantage and performance. Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics. https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-01-2024-0007

16. Liu, J., & Jo, W. (2020). Value co-creation behaviors and hotel loyalty program member satisfaction based on engagement and involvement: Moderating effect of company support. JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT, 43, 23－31. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.02.002

17. Liu, X., Zeng, Y., He, J., & Li, Z. (2022). Value cocreation research in tourism and hospitality: A comparative bibliometric analysis. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT, 34(2), 663－686. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2021-0666

18. Ma, Y., Rong, K., Luo, Y., Wang, Y., Mangalagiu, D., & Thornton, T. F. (2019). Value Co-creation for sustainable consumption and production in the sharing economy in China. Journal of Cleaner Production, 208, 1148－1158. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.10.135

19. Ng, P., Zhu, S., Li, Y., & Van Ameijde, J. (2024). Digitally gamified co-creation: Enhancing community engagement in urban design through a participant-centric framework. Design Science, 10, e17. https://doi.org/10.1017/dsj.2024.17

20. O'dell, T. (2007). Tourist Experiences and Academic Junctures. Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 7(1), 34－45. https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250701224001

21. Payne, A. F., Storbacka, K., & Frow, P. (2008). Managing the co-creation of value. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 36(1), 83－96. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-007-0070-0

22. Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 18(3), 5－14. https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.20015

23. Rafi, A., Rehman, M. A., Sharif, S., & Lodhi, R. N. (2023). The role of social media marketing and social support in developing value co-creation intentions: A Couchsurfing community perspective. Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication. https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-02-2023-0059

24. Ruangkanjanases, A., Khan, A., Sivarak, O., Rahardja, U., Chien, S.-W., & Chen, S.-C. (2023). The Magic of Brand Experience: A Value Co-creation Perspective of Brand Equity on Short-form Video Platforms. Emerging Science Journal, 7(5), 1588－1601. https://doi.org/10.28991/ESJ-2023-07-05-09

25. Saha, V., Goyal, P., & Jebarajakirthy, C. (2022). Value co-creation: A review of literature and future research agenda. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 37(3), 612－628. https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-01-2020-0017

26. Shaw, G., Bailey, A., & Williams, A. (2011). Aspects of service-dominant logic and its implications for tourism management: Examples from the hotel industry. Tourism Management, 32(2), 207－214. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.05.020

27. Shoukat, M. H., & Ramkissoon, H. (2022). Customer delight, engagement, experience, value co-creation, place identity, and revisit intention: A new conceptual framework. Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 31(6), 757 － 775. https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2022.2062692

28. Solakis, K., Peña-Vinces, J., & Lopez-Bonilla, J. (2022). Value co-creation and perceived value: A customer perspective in the hospitality context. EUROPEAN RESEARCH ON MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS ECONOMICS, 28(1). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iedeen.2021.100175

29. Song, X., Liang, X., Zhang, X., & Liu, W. (2022). Tourism Value Co-creation：Literature Review and Future Prospects. Tourism Science, 36(3), 36 － 57. https://doi.org/10.16323/j.cnki.lykx.2022.03.002

30. Su, X., Song, C., & Sigley, G. (2019). The Uses of Reconstructing Heritage in China: Tourism, Heritage Authorization, and Spatial Transformation of the Shaolin Temple. Sustainability, 11(2), 411. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11020411

31. Sugathan, P., & Ranjan, K. R. (2019). Co-creating the tourism experience. Journal of Business Research, 100, 207－217. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.03.032

32. Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing. Journal of Marketing, 68(1), 1－17. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.68.1.1.24036

33. Woratschek, H., Horbel, C., & Popp, B. (2020). Determining customer satisfaction and loyalty from a value co-creation perspective. The Service Industries Journal, 40(11－12), 777－799. https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2019.1606213

34. Xu, F., Tan, J., Lu, L., Li, S., & Qin, L. (2021). How Does Value Co-Creation Behavior Affect Destination Loyalty? A Role Switching Perspective. Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research, 16(5), 1805－1826. https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer16050101

35. Yang, G. (2024). Knowledge Element Relationship and Value Co-Creation in the Innovation Ecosystem. Sustainability, 16(10), 4273. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16104273

36. Yang, Y., Liu, S., & Song, X. (2023). The Co-creation of Museum Experience Value From the Perspective of Visitor Motivation. Sage Open, 13(4), 21582440231202118. https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231202118

37. Yi, Y., & Gong, T. (2013). Customer value co-creation behavior: Scale development and validation. Journal of Business Research, 66(9), 1279 － 1284. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2012.02.026

38. Zadeh, A. H., Farhang, M., Zolfagharian, M., & Hofacker, C. F. (2023). Predicting value cocreation behavior in social media via integrating uses and gratifications paradigm and theory of planned behavior. Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, 17(2), 195 － 214. https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-10-2020-0209

39. Zhouxiang, L. (2019). A History of Shaolin: Buddhism, Kung Fu and Identity (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429261626