Towards co-created food wellbeing: Culinary consumption, braggart word-of-mouth, and the role of participative codesign, service provider support, and C2C interactions

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Abstract

This study investigates whether the antecedents of co-creation influence braggart word-of-mouth (WoM) in a participative leisure context, theorising the concept of co-created food wellbeing and highlighting implications for interactive experience co-design.

A sequential mixed-method approach was employed to test a theoretical model; 25 in-depth interviews with cooking class participants were conducted, followed by a post-experience survey (n=575).

Qualitative results suggest braggart WoM is rooted in active consumer participation in co-designing leisure experiences. The structural model confirms that participation in value co-creating activities (i.e., co-design, customer-to-customer (C2C) interaction), alongside perceived support from service providers, increases consumer perceptions of co-creation and stimulates braggart WoM. Degree of co-creation and support from peers mediate some relationships.

Limited by cross-sectional data from one experiential consumption format, the results nevertheless demonstrate the role of active participation in co-design and C2C interactions during value co-creation. This implies that co-created and co-designed leisure experiences can intensify post-consumption behaviours and potentially enhance food wellbeing.

The results highlight that integrating customer participation into service design, while also developing opportunities for peer support on-site, can stimulate braggart WoM.

Extends burgeoning literature on co-creation and co-design in leisure services. By encouraging active customer participation while providing support and facilitating C2C interactions, service providers can enhance value co-creation, influencing customer experiences and food wellbeing. Accordinly, the concept of co-created food wellbeing is introduced.

Keywords: Co-creation, customer-to-customer interactions, service design, braggart WoM, culinary leisure experiences, co-created food wellbeing

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates whether the antecedents of co-creation influence braggart word-of-mouth (WoM) in a participative leisure context, theorising the concept of co-created food wellbeing and highlighting implications for interactive experience co-design.

Design/methodology/approach: A sequential mixed-method approach was employed to test a theoretical model; 25 in-depth interviews with cooking class participants were conducted, followed by a post-experience survey (n=575).

Findings: Qualitative results suggest braggart WoM is rooted in active consumer participation in co-designing leisure experiences. The structural model confirms that participation in value co-creating activities (i.e., co-design, customer-to-customer (C2C) interaction), alongside perceived support from service providers, increases consumer perceptions of co-creation and stimulates braggart WoM. Degree of co-creation and support from peers mediate some relationships.

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Practical implications: The results highlight that integrating customer participation into service design, while also developing opportunities for peer support on-site, can stimulate braggart WoM.

Originality/value: Extends burgeoning literature on co-creation and co-design in leisure services. By encouraging active customer participation while providing support and facilitating C2C interactions, service providers can enhance value co-creation, influencing customer experiences and food wellbeing. Accordingly, the concept of co-created food wellbeing is introduced.

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Type: Research paper
Introduction

Contemporary society prioritises participative consumption, with food-related experiences proving increasingly popular leisure activities (Prayag et al., 2020). Accordingly, coverage of culinary activities across social and traditional media platforms signifies the centrality of food to contemporary experiential consumption (Prayag et al., 2020). Food images are posted regularly on social media, providing consumers with a global audience with which to share their culinary experiences and skills (Batat et al., 2019). The popularity of this ‘foodism’ fuels the growing demand for diverse, innovative, meaningful, and engaging culinary leisure experiences (Prayag et al., 2020), with workshops and cooking classes now serving as core destination attractions (Genc, 2017). Meaningful food experiences can therefore enhance consumer wellbeing (Pourfakhimi et al., 2020), with increasing attention paid to service design in the hope of stimulating memorable consumption (Genc, 2017).

Culinary leisure experiences are defined as a mixture of passive (e.g., local food served in traditional eateries) and active activities (e.g., food tours, festivals, cooking retreats, cooking classes) underpinned by food consumption. For example, in “co-created culinary experiences [such as]…‘cooking classes’…[consumers] learn the history of local dishes, how to identify unusual ingredients and indigenous cooking techniques, before cooking and consuming regional food” (Prayag et al., 2020, p.2). Despite the increasing economic and socio-cultural significance of culinary leisure experiences, their design has received scant attention across both marketing (Zampollo and Peacock, 2016) and food wellbeing literature (Scott and Vallen, 2019). Yet, to create meaningful and engaging experiences, service providers must adopt a holistic, collaborative, and innovative approach to co-creating and co-designing these participative activities with customers, cognizant of the implications of co-created experiences on consumers’ food wellbeing (Silchenko and Askegaard, 2020; Voola et al., 2018).

Culinary consumption often involves interaction with other customers and staff within the service arena (Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2011). The impact of this on consumer wellbeing is shaped by co-creation dynamics when consumers enjoy freedom and ownership within interactive service environments (Chen et al., 2020a). Thus, extending extant literature (Block et al., 2011; Scott and Vallen, 2019), this article views consumer food wellbeing as originating from co-created food experiences and therefore theorizes the concept of co-created food wellbeing.
Research suggests that co-created value relates to wellbeing (Hepi et al., 2017) as “consumer value co-creation is defined as collaborative work between consumer-and-firm in an innovation process...consumer and supplier engage in the activity of co-ideation, co-design, co-development and co-creation of new products or services” (Roberts et al., 2013, p.149). Thus, service provider involvement is essential to co-creating value with customers (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Further, wellbeing can be co-created by integrating resources held by various actors (Chen et al., 2020a), with Sembada (2018, p.8) proposing “co-design as a subset of co-creation where companies allow consumers to actively contribute to and shape an offering during its development and design phase”. Consequently, “co-development of value generally takes place in the...consumption (i.e., postproduction and launch) stage, where individuals can be motivated to explore new possibilities with the [service/] product, or be motivated to work with others in these efforts” (Roberts et al., 2013, p.149).

Moreover, co-design can itself influence consumer wellbeing thanks to its focus on including customers in experiential service design (Trischler et al., 2018). Therefore, while established definitions of food wellbeing contend that the concept represents “positive psychological, physical, emotional, and social relationships with food at both the individual and societal levels” (Block et al., 2011, p.6), this article adopts a more nuanced perspective. Echoing recent literature on the co-creation of wellbeing more generally (Chen et al., 2020a; Hepi et al., 2017), we contend that food wellbeing can emerge from co-created and co-designed culinary experiences. In this context, service co-design becomes relevant by including the consumer in order to improve customer experiences. Encouraging consumer involvement in the service design process can stimulate more meaningful, memorable, and valued consumption (Donetto et al., 2015); with interactive consumer involvement shown to significantly affect wellbeing (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2017). However, while co-created experiences can be developed to meet a range of consumer needs (Zampollo and Peacock, 2016); this has yet to be sufficiently explored within the context of experiential cooking classes relative to their growing popularity (Prayag et al., 2020).

Contemporary service experience design should be user-focused, with user experience paramount for those hoping to practice customer-driven design. Undertaking a co-design approach can allow consumers’ first-hand experiences to be incorporated into the design process (Donetto et al., 2015). This process is typically dynamic, user-centred, reflexive, creative, and iterative (Kimbell, 2011); with culinary leisure experiences well-placed to benefit from the added value of a co-design approach to service delivery. Co-design thus...
embodies the core values of collaborative design thinking, underpinned by a focus on joint inquiry and collective imagination, with past experiences from multiple perspectives (e.g., consumer and service provider) drawn upon to shape present and future consumption experiences (Kimbell, 2011).

Further, a user-centred approach to co-designing cooking classes can help service providers to identify ways to increase customer participation, facilitate customer-to-customer (C2C) interactions, and better predict the support and resources customers require, with this capable of increasing memorability, positive post-consumption behaviours, and consumer wellbeing. Thus, in implying that service exchanges are inherently consumer-oriented and co-creative (Vargo and Lusch, 2016), this service design approach echoes value co-creation and its emphasis on user-centrality (Kimbell, 2011). As co-design aims to improve user experience, design thinking can provide service providers with greater strategic insight into how creative solutions can be deployed in order to satisfy a diverse range of consumer needs (Kimbell, 2011). This is again characteristic of value co-creation more generally, where emphasis is placed on consumer involvement in the co-design of consumption experiences cognizant of individual desires, needs, and wishes (Donetto et al., 2015).

While co-designing experiential services with customers can enhance value co-creation, it can also engender unforgettable experiences (Batat, 2019). This can stimulate transformative service experiences that enhance consumer wellbeing via co-creation (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2017). Such experiences may have downstream effects on consumers’ propensity to disseminate word-of-mouth (WoM) (Curran et al., 2018). One type of WoM, braggart WoM, has recently captured the interest of consumer behaviour researchers (Pelletier and Collier, 2018). Unlike traditional forms of WoM, braggart WoM is associated with self-enhancement and boosting self-esteem (De Angelis et al., 2012). Research shows that sharing positive experiences with others can be used as a self-enhancement strategy (Chen et al., 2020b), improving one’s sense of wellbeing (Palmer et al., 2002). While the antecedents of braggart WoM remain overlooked within the culinary consumption context, studies in other domains suggest that value derived from experiential consumption is significant (Gannon et al., 2019).

Likewise, studies providing empirical insight into the drivers, inhibitors, and outcomes of co-creation in leisure experiences remain lacking (Buonincontri et al., 2017). Co-creation is central to culinary leisure experiences (Jolliffe, 2016), yet its determinants and
effects on braggart WOM are overlooked (Genc, 2017). Accordingly, using a two-stage sequential mixed-method design, this study investigates the influence of two important loci of consumer value co-creation (active participation and customer-to-customer (C2C) interactions), alongside perceived support resources (from both service providers and other consumers), on the perceived degree of co-creation and consumers’ propensity to share braggart WoM. A conceptual model is developed and tested among consumers attending cooking classes in Iran. The qualitative phase of the study highlights the importance of co-design in improving the experience. In the quantitative phase, hypothesised relationships are tested, with results confirming that value co-creation is determined by the direct participation of consumers in co-designing the service in-situ, alongside the influence of other customers on perceived outcomes (Olsen, 2015). Further, the results reveal that C2C interactions are fundamentally aligned with value co-creation; emphasising the participation of all actors and the interactive nature of this process (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Table 1 defines concepts key to this study.

Table 1. Key concepts and definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Participation in Co-design</td>
<td>Consumer engagement in co-designing an experience through the use of creativity and social resources (Hoyer et al., 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braggart Word-of-Mouth (WoM)</td>
<td>“Word-of-mouth behaviours concerning the experience driven, implicitly or explicitly, by one’s desire for positive recognition from others and to boost one’s self-esteem” (Pelletier and Collier, 2018, p.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-creation</td>
<td>“Collaborative work between consumer and firm in an innovation process...consumer(s) and supplier(s) engage in...co-ideation, co-design, co-development and co-creation of new products or services” (Roberts et al., 2013, p.149).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Co-created Food Wellbeing | A transformative process. The outcome of having ownership over resource integration when interactively co-designing and co-creating a culinary leisure experience with other engaged actors (this study, extending Chen et
Co-design and Consumer-driven Design
“A subset of co-creation where companies allow consumers to actively contribute to and shape an offering during its development and design” (Sembada, 2018, p.8)

Culinary Consumption
The consumption of products/service related to food (Prayag et al., 2020)

Culinary Leisure Experiences
Food-related leisure activities, where food is the focus of the experience as opposed to solely the ‘product’ consumed (Prayag et al., 2020).

Degree of Co-creation
How customer- and firm-related resources devoted to an activity are combined by a consumer, shaping the intensity of engagement and participative actions (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012)

Positive Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C) Interactions
Positive interactions in a service setting through exchange of social, economic, knowledge resources that create functional, experiential and symbolic benefits for consumers (Bruhn et al., 2014)

Support from Other Consumers
Support consumers receive from peers in social exchanges to maintain the social relationship inherent to experiential consumption (Im and Qu, 2017).

Support from Service Provider
Resources provided by a firm to support customers in the process of value co-creation; can enhance consumer self-efficacy and stimulate engagement (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012)

From a theoretical perspective, this study seeks to extend services marketing literature by exploring whether user-centred and interactive approaches to co-designing cooking class experiences can serve as a conduit for braggart WoM. The results also extend design-related literature by introducing and distinguishing two different interactive co-design approaches: a) long-term co-design which involves consumers’ needs and suggestions as lead users in the co-design of co-creative service experiences; and b) short-term co-design which includes consumers’ involvement in-situ (i.e., during the experience). This article terms the latter
“interactive impromptu experience co-design”. Moreover, value co-creation related antecedents of braggart WoM have been sparsely researched (Pelletier and Collier, 2018). This study thus enriches knowledge of the antecedents of braggart WoM and the corresponding implications for consumers’ food wellbeing. Finally, from a practical perspective, those developing culinary leisure experiences can use this study to identify emotional touchpoints related to C2C interactions (Batat, 2019); improving customer support mechanisms to enhance cooking class experiences. The results also encourage service and leisure experience designers to understand how to motivate consumers to actively participate in value co-creation (Minkiewicz et al., 2014) by co-designing how customer and firm resources are integrated in-situ and how interactivity can be reflected long-term in experience design.

Literature review

Braggart WoM

Leisure consumption is often emotive, with recent studies suggesting that participation in novel activities can arouse an emotional and cognitive bond between consumer and experience (Gannon et al., 2019). This ‘experiential self-connection’ is underpinned by emotional engagement, with the potential to influence consumers’ social status and self-esteem (Etgar, 2008). Highly-engaged consumers who undertake co-created activities are more likely to disseminate WoM (Xie et al., 2019), with this becoming increasingly self-serving in nature (e.g., to feel good, develop a positive image, or gain social recognition) (De Angelis et al., 2012). Hence, tendency to self-enhance is increasingly considered an antecedent of WoM sharing (Chen et al., 2020b).

Pelletier and Collier (2018) suggest that experiential purchases underpinned by self-connection can stimulate braggart WoM, with this form of information sharing used to drive self-enhancement and boost self-esteem. However, while dissemination of braggart WoM can be a self-enhancement strategy for some consumers, its deployment can also be encouraged as an effective tool to shape and influence others’ perceptions of themselves (Chen et al., 2020). As such, sharing positive co-created food experiences with others can enhance consumers’ status and recognition (Chen et al., 2020b), which may ultimately enhance wellbeing (Palmer et al., 2016; Paradise and Kernis, 2002). Nevertheless, value co-creation as an antecedent of braggart WoM remains under-researched.
Active consumer participation in experience co-creation and co-design

Active consumer participation is an important antecedent of value co-creation, determining customer experiences (Vivek et al., 2012). Participation resonates with the behavioural aspects of consumer engagement (Verleye et al., 2014) and is influential in enhancing consumer wellbeing (Sweeney et al., 2015). Given the emphasis in design literature on co-developing solutions with users, not for them (Olsen, 2015), research suggests that creativity and experience co-design are outcomes of engaged consumers eager to co-create value (Gentile et al., 2007). This collaborative view of experience design aligns with the concepts of participatory and empathic design (Leonard and Rayport, 1997), implying that both improve customer experiences and encourage active consumer participation. Active participation confers a range of cognitive and emotional benefits, shaping consumer experiences (Minkiewicz et al., 2014) and stimulating post-consumption behaviours, including the dissemination of WoM (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Therefore, active consumer participation may influence co-creation, co-design, and braggart WoM within the experiential services context, and may subsequently positively impact upon consumer wellbeing (Xie et al., 2020).

Support from service providers in experience co-creation and co-design

Experience design affects consumers’ propensity to co-create services, contingent upon interest and ability to actively participate in co-creation tasks (Olsen, 2015). Social resources (e.g., firm-level stimulants/inhibitors) and normative influences play an important role in shaping consumers’ willingness to participate in co-design tasks (Hoyer et al., 2010). Higher levels of social support also increase consumer engagement, with this capable of enhancing wellbeing (Lowe and Johnson, 2017). Firms can improve consumers’ self-efficacy and encourage them to take more active roles in experience co-creation (Im and Qu, 2017). Therefore, the level of perceived support provided by firms in facilitating co-creative activities can determine consumer willingness, engagement, and wellbeing (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Lowe and Johnson, 2017).

Similarly, levels of normative support and consumers’ self-efficacy may also affect their intention to engage in collaborative activities (Lee, 2012). Both relationships can be explained by social exchange theory, which recognizes the importance of reciprocity in social exchanges and how support helps to maintain social relationships (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). In the culinary leisure context, consumers require support from service providers in co-creating high-quality meals. This can take the form of recipes,
cooking instructions and guidance, technology to support cooking processes, and equipment. Support can occur during the interaction with the customer (training) and by providing the tools and environment (servicescape and tangibles) which enables consumers to undertake tasks on-site. Therefore, firm-level support can influence value co-creation opportunities, actively contributing to experience co-design.

**Customer-to-customer interactions in experience co-creation and co-design**

Core to experience design is collaboration between *all* actors in order to develop solutions (Olsen, 2015). Unlike early dyadic perceptions of customer engagement (Vivek et al., 2012), recent theorising reflects a network view (Storbacka et al., 2016). Similarly, contemporary views of consumer wellbeing emphasise its collaborative and dynamic nature, co-created through interactions among actors (including customers) in a service environment (Chen et al., 2020a). This interactional view of wellbeing and co-creation highlights the importance of consumer-to-consumer (C2C) interactions (Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2011). Positive C2C interactions (as ‘social exchange’) represent a core aspect of experience memorability (Gruen et al., 2007). While undesirable interactions can stimulate negative perceptions of experiential consumption (Minkiewicz et al., 2014); enjoyable interactions with others in a service setting can hold functional and symbolic benefit (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2018). Positive interactions enable consumers to exchange social, economic, and knowledge resources; express empathy; and increase peers’ enjoyment of experiential services (Bruhn et al., 2014).

Support received from fellow consumers is conceptualised based on its *reliability* and *helpfulness* (Jung et al., 2017), and Rihova et al. (2018) illustrate how routine social practices can result in positive psychological outcomes (e.g., participant support). Positive social interactions can enhance co-creation and consumer wellbeing (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2018), and can lead to experiential and emotional outcomes, including entertainment and fun (Yalinay et al., 2018), encouraging consumers to work collaboratively and creatively to co-design novel experiences (Bruhn et al., 2014). Such interactions can also stimulate braggart WoM (Gannon et al., 2019) and wellbeing (Hepi et al., 2017). **Figure 1** outlines the conceptual model and forthcoming hypotheses.

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Active consumer participation in co-design and degree of co-creation

From a design perspective, active consumer participation in co-designing experiences is an antecedent of value co-creation (Ind and Coates, 2013). Research demonstrates that participation can stimulate engagement (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2018), with this capable of influencing the degree of co-creation undertaken within service settings (Buonincontri et al., 2017). Degree of co-creation thus represents the resources consumers devote to an activity in the form of intensity of engagement and participative action (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). Therefore:

**H1**: Active consumer participation in co-design positively impacts the degree of co-creation.

Active consumer participation is crucial in predicting evaluations of service experiences (Vivek et al., 2012). Thus, active participation in co-designing service experiences can enhance engagement (Ind and Coates, 2013), strengthening social dynamics within leisure settings (Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2011). This may increase consumer perceptions of the level of support received from peers. Therefore:
**H2:** Active consumer participation in co-design positively impacts the perceived level of support received from other consumers.

**Positive C2C interactions and degree of co-creation**

The importance of consumer interactions in the value co-creation process is established across literature (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Regarding leisure experiences, socialisation and interaction underpin co-creation (Rihova et al., 2018). Through communication, consumers share thoughts and feelings, stimulate curiosity, and enhance companionship and security (Chen et al., 2020a). Within cooking classes, C2C interactions can build community, facilitate knowledge-transfer, provide opportunities to assist others in functional tasks, and increase the value of peer-learning (Prayag et al., 2020). Accordingly, Rihova et al. (2018) demonstrate that C2C interactions can contribute to higher levels of perceived support from other consumers, with this capable of stimulating a ‘better’ overall experience for all (Bruhn et al., 2014). Therefore:

**H3:** Positive C2C interactions have a positive impact on the perceived level of support received from other consumers.

**Degree of co-creation and support from service providers and other consumers**

Social resources (e.g., firm-customer support and peer support) shape co-creation in experiential contexts (Xie et al., 2020). Therefore, the level of support provided by firms to stimulate co-creation is an important firm-based determinant of consumer engagement (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). Accordingly, the support firms provide to customers is crucial in stimulating value co-creation (Hoyer et al., 2010):

**H4:** Perceived consumer support from the service provider has a direct and positive impact on the degree of co-creation.

Support (task-related and social) received from other consumers within service settings can also influence co-creation (Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2011). Cooking classes are inherently interactive; the contribution of other consumers is likely to shape perceptions of the experience (Prayag et al., 2020). This can take the form of sharing recipes and cooking techniques, co-designing menus, cooking in groups, and sharing knowledge and experiences around different cooking styles (Prayag et al., 2020). Therefore, support impacts consumers’ willingness to engage in co-creation (Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2011):
**H5:** Support from other consumers has a direct and positive impact on consumers’ perceived degree of co-creation.

**C2C interactions, co-creation, co-design, and braggart WoM**

Braggart WoM is often an outcome of unique experiences (Pelletier and Collier, 2018). Gannon *et al.* (2019) support this within an experiential leisure context. However, evidence of this relationship within broader services marketing literature is lacking. Therefore, we draw on general WoM literature to inform our argument. C2C interactions can enhance service experiences; stimulating the dissemination of positive WoM in-turn (Gruen *et al.*, 2007). C2C interactions facilitate experiential connections, making experiences more memorable and longer-lasting (Schmitt, 2014) while also enhancing consumers’ perceptions of the service experience and propensity to disseminate positive WoM (Gruen *et al.*, 2007). Service experiences with high perceived value can facilitate experiential self-connection (Gannon *et al.*, 2019). Subsequently, hedonic engagement in an experience confers status and social esteem, further increasing the dissemination of braggart WoM (Etgar, 2008). High levels of engagement and participation during interactions with others stimulate creativity and can encourage experience co-development and co-design (Olsen, 2015). This allows customers to express their requirements and perform experience realisation processes by integrating their needs, ideas, and resources into the provider domain while co-creating service (Donetto *et al.*, 2015). Therefore:

**H6:** Positive C2C interactions have a direct and positive impact on consumers’ propensity to disseminate braggart WoM

**H7:** Active consumer participation in co-design has a direct and positive impact on consumers’ propensity to disseminate braggart WoM

Consumer perceptions of participative service experiences are derived from value co-created through interactional relationships therein. Accordingly, value co-created within service exchanges is partly associated with the socio-psychological benefits gained from actor-to-actor engagement, including support received from both the firm and other consumers (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2018). Jung *et al.* (2017) contend that greater support enhances consumer experiences, encouraging stronger emotional connections and increasing the likelihood of WoM dissemination. Similarly, perceptions of the level of co-creation enacted within service experiences can encourage WoM (Xie *et al.*, 2019). Therefore:
**H8:** Perceived support from the service provider has a direct, positive impact on consumers’ propensity to disseminate braggart WoM

**H9:** Perceived support from other customers has a direct, positive impact on consumers’ propensity to disseminate braggart WoM

**H10:** The degree of co-creation has a direct, positive impact on consumers’ propensity to disseminate braggart WoM

**Methods**

We adopted a two-stage exploratory sequential mixed-method research design, applying a qualitative and quantitative approach in sequence. Recognising the benefits of a combined approach when investigating overlooked phenomena, the initial qualitative study focused on exploration, with the subsequent quantitative phase focused on hypotheses testing (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The qualitative phase was designed to reflect areas overlooked by extant literature, exploring the underlying constructs that motivate or constrain consumer value co-creation and co-design in the cooking class setting. This exploratory stage informed the conceptual model tested in the quantitative stage (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

In practice, twenty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted with cooking class participants as the initial mode of enquiry, followed by the administration of a consumer survey (n=575).

Geographic and ethnic diversity (61% of Iranians are Persian, but there are large Azeri, Kurdish, Turkic, and Jewish minorities) has shaped Iran’s cuisine and food heritage (Prayag et al., 2020). Data were collected from consumers participating in three cooking classes (organised by the same provider) offering consistent interactive experiences in an Iranian city known for domestic tourism and culinary activities. Each class offers a significant practical element and is organised along a culinary theme; participants can bring their own notes but are informed of the theme on the day (e.g., rice, kebabs, etc.). Participants select different cooking partners for each session if attending more than one session, working in fully-equipped training kitchens to improve culinary skills. Regarding layout, facilities are designed as home-style kitchens but with industrial amenities. At the request of class participants and the service provider, identifiable information has been removed or anonymised, minimising common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).
Study 1(Qualitative): Cooking experience participant narratives

Sample and procedures

Twenty-five semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with cooking class participants. These interviews allowed the researchers to delve into what each consumer experienced during the class and provided opportunities to explore a range of relevant issues. Purposeful sampling helped to identify participants from different age groups, with balance regarding occupation and gender. Patton (1990, p.169) argues that “the power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study…those from which one can learn about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research”. Interviews ranged from intercept-style discussions to longer in-depth interviews (Table 2) lasting around 45 minutes and conducted at the interviewees’ convenience. All were conducted in Farsi, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim prior to retroactive translation into English to ensure consistency in meaning.

Guided by a ‘funnel-like’ thematic procedure (Boyatzis 1998), interviews progressed from general discussions about the experience into detailed dialogue centred on co-creation and co-design. Thematic analysis was undertaken to understand participants’ experiences and interactions within the cooking class setting. Two interviews served as a pilot; testing the interview protocol, style, and approach (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Questions were framed according to the research focus and were adapted from previous studies (Buonincontri et al., 2017; Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Pelletier and Collier, 2018). Interviews were structured around a protocol but remained open-ended to encourage spontaneous opinions and to avoid bias born from limiting responses to fixed categories. Each started with ice-breaking questions (e.g., ‘have you enjoyed the class?’) to encourage engagement. Participants were asked to expand upon answers with examples from their cooking class experience.

Coding was framed by the constant comparative method, an iterative process in which researchers go back-and-forth between responses identifying similarities and differences (Boyatzis, 1998). First, the researchers looked for broad properties of data. Statements made by participants were analysed, organised, and given thematic labels; questions were investigated independently. After broad categories were identified, related categories were grouped into sub-categories nested within a wider theme; identifying sub-themes and main themes (Boyatzis, 1998). Finally, similarities or differences with the results of previous
studies were identified. Coded interview transcripts were shared among the team; enhancing the validity, integrity, and consistency of the results.

**Table 2.** Interviewee profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Policeman</td>
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<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>Charity work</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>Technical support</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15</td>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P17</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P18</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>P20</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P21</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P22</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P23</td>
<td>Clinical support</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P25</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Study 1: Results and discussion**

Several themes emphasising co-creation and co-design emerged from the qualitative interviews, with each relevant to the conceptual model (Figure 1). These themes are discussed below, drawing upon representative data in the form of participant quotes in order to delve deeper into consumers’ cooking class experiences.

**Active participation in co-creation and co-design**

The qualitative results are consistent with previous studies in suggesting that active consumer participation in co-creating and co-designing cooking classes contributes significantly to overall perceptions of the experience (Buonincontri et al., 2017).
example, one participant highlighted that incorporating their extant knowledge and skills into the cooking class enhanced their experience:

This cooking class is the best thing for me! I always loved cooking. It’s interesting and relaxing. You can use your imagination to cook something different. No doubt you need to be a creative person, but also you need to know how to use recipes and different skills (P12).

This demonstrates the emotional aspects of experiential consumption, highlighting the importance of incorporating how consumers ‘feel’ into service design (Zomerdijk and Voss, 2010). It points to the knowledge and skills (i.e., cognitive and “doing” aspects) required to complete the task component of co-created activities (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). The cognitive aspects of imagination and creativity are also highlighted (Schmitt, 2014); vital in both achieving the creative outcome of the cooking process and for co-designing the activity (Plattner et al., 2011). The need for active participation and prior knowledge in co-creating high-quality culinary experiences is further raised thus:

It’s an active class. I participated in cooking...I also used skills I learnt in the past from books…I spent a lot of time preparing for the class…I loved it! (P23).

I enjoyed the challenge of the class. As someone who loves to cook, I no longer see cooking as a collection of recipes. It’s an art; it requires creative talent and skills, following guiding principles...This fantastic class is all about participation. (P14)

These quotes underline that skill transfer is necessary within the culinary leisure context; prior knowledge must be applied to a situation or problem (e.g., learning new recipes), with familiar processes employed to identify novel design solutions in-turn (Plattner et al., 2011). This may require consumption (i.e., cooking a dish while following a new recipe) to be reframed to encourage consumers to apply existing knowledge (prior cooking skills) or generate new ideas (recipe variation; combining prior recipe knowledge with newly-developed skillsets) (Plattner et al., 2011). Participants also highlighted the importance of prior experience and continuous engagement as determinants of success within the cooking class; echoing studies enacted within broader experiential consumption contexts (Vivek et al., 2012) while reiterating the importance of applying prior knowledge and skills to new situations:

I used my past experiences and some training I had from [my] mother during the class. She doesn’t share everything with me…but I learned a lot and I think [it] helped me in this class (P23).
I spent a lot of time preparing [for] this class. I even read some cookery books. My wife and I spent a lot of quality time learning [about] good food (P4).

Thus, active participation is contingent on being able to use materials and equipment directly related to the development of culinary skills. These ‘hands-on’ experiences constitute a significant aspect of the consumer experience:

I love cooking classes. For me, cooking is a process. If you’re a learner, you’ll start off with a book, and you’ll use and apply certain kitchen tools like blenders and whisks. You’ll practice [with] them a lot in the cooking class. You want to be top of your class…to succeed [in] your cooking journey! (P8)

I loved being here and [the] challenges. I’m going to get something out of all the activities in the class…I always thought I’m a fine cook, but it seems I find some cooking activities challenging (P22).

The emphasis on hands-on participation also echoes the “doing aspect” of experience design related to the “practical act” of experiential consumption (Gentile et al., 2007, p.398). The above quotes demonstrate the importance consumers place on the ‘container for interaction’ (i.e., the servicescape), the layout of the cooking school, and the tangibles they interact with therein (utensils, aprons, etc.) (Zomerdijk and Voss, 2010), further emphasising the complexity of service co-creation in the culinary leisure context. Moreover, active participation in co-creation is vital for co-designing elements of the cooking experience (Trischler et al., 2018), particularly when consumers are given the freedom and empowerment to take ‘ownership’ of the experience by co-designing them in collaboration with peers and instructors (Xie et al., 2020):

I shared my previous cooking experience in the class with my teachers and the students. We developed and designed nice food based on different themes. This is probably my favourite part of the class. Freedom gives us opportunities to share our work (P20).

The use of class ‘themes’ proved crucial in ensuring participants knew what to expect prior to class, and helped create a storyline to captivate their attention on-site (Berry and Carbone, 2007). Themes thus ensured co-design and co-creation remained focused without compromising creativity (Plattner et al., 2011). This underpins the novel perspective of co-created food wellbeing; encompassing the interactive co-design and co-creation of food leisure experiences amongst all engaged actors.
Positive C2C Interactions

Participants highlighted the importance of peer-to-peer interactions when co-creating and co-developing an engaging culinary experience, with emphasis placed on how this contributes towards enhancing functional and hedonic outcomes and potential implications for braggart WoM and food wellbeing:

I got support from others in the class. It’s a fantastic place to learn and interact with others. Our aim is to cook the best dish possible. It’s a serious business, but it’s also fun (P3).

Echoing extant literature, the following demonstrates how positive C2C interactions can enhance participants’ sense of connection, stimulating confidence and empathy (Bruhn et al., 2014; Gruen et al., 2007):

I developed good friendships with fellow cooking enthusiasts. I could interact and spend time with them. We’re now good friends outside of the class…I [also] asked my own friends to join this class…there’s a good chance I’ll see them here. (P13).

Opportunities for ‘bonding’ represent the “relate to others” aspect of a customer experience (Schmitt, 2014); the above quotes demonstrate, through joint consumption with ‘cooking’ as ‘common passion’, how this can develop a sense of community (Gentile et al., 2007).

Support: Other Participants and the Service Provider

The findings reveal that the interactive nature of cooking classes can encourage task-related and social support from both peers and the service provider (Jung et al., 2017). Perceptions of peer-to-peer support influence consumers’ self-confidence and security, boosting propensity to engage in self-enhancing WoM, with each contributing to the memorability and uniqueness of consumption experiences (Thompson et al., 2018):

It’s a good, interactive class. My peers helped me if I was stuck during some activities…They’re good listeners! (P20).

I cannot ask for more. My classmates are great and listen to me. I can rely on their support. (P14)

Further, the importance of receiving help from the instructor and service provider in order to achieve desired outcomes is recognised by participants, with this type of interaction contributing to perceptions of experience distinctiveness and social exchange (Im and Qu, 2017):
You follow the steps from the recipe provided by the instructor. You get help from your instructor or other participants. As someone who loves cooking, I enjoy these steps and working with others in the kitchen (P5).

The quality is high. The service we got from the cooking class guys was amazing. They’re very professional, but they know how to make [the] place fun and pleasant for all of us. I don’t regret this class at all. (P26)

To this end, the participants suggest that service providers must design culinary leisure experiences cognizant of culinary consumers’ motivations, providing personalised service based on their extant skills, knowledge, experience, and ambitions:

I want to cook good food for my husband. He always moans about my cooking skills. I told my instructor that I want to be a good cook. She knows that and wants to help me [achieve] that. (P11)

I know what I want from this class. They know what I want to get out of it. I’m sure they’ll help me get that. (P15)

These quotes reflect the importance of the service provider serving as a humanic clue (Berry and Carbone, 2007). When empathising with them and their “world” they can enhance the consumer experience (Batat, 2019) and better understand how to co-design it (Plattner et al., 2011). Yet, while service provider support is perceived by consumers as crucial, a supportive tangible environment is equally so. An appropriately-designed servicescape functions as a mechanic clue for customers, requiring careful curation to align with customer processes (Berry and Carbone, 2007). Accordingly, participant comments demonstrate that the cooking class design helped them feel comfortable, ‘at home’, and in control:

I like the layout of the class. It looks like a home and feels like you’re cooking with your partner…It’s very clean too (P11).

Braggart WoM

The nature of participants’ propensity to engage in braggart behaviour is consistent with previous studies (Gannon et al., 2019), underpinned by social status and self-esteem, and reflected thus:

I feel good about my cooking class experiences when I talk to friends. They like to listen to me, and I might convince some of them to join the class (P23).

I shared my experience in this class with my husband. I show off the skills I learned…He loves the majority of my recipes! (P1)

These quotes synthesise the importance of sharing and storytelling in connection with interactive culinary consumption. This holds implications for the co-design of these experiences; providing opportunities for participants to take the experience home with them tangibly (e.g., buying branded souvenirs) or by revelling in the retelling of their encounters (e.g., engaging with others about the class) (Batat et al., 2019).

**Study 2(Quantitative): Conceptual Model Testing**

Study 1 demonstrates that co-creation and co-design shape cooking class experiences. However, the exploratory findings also suggest that these concepts have potentially different antecedents (e.g., prior experience, knowledge). Further, the extent to which experience co-creation and co-design are related to braggart WoM remained unclear. Thus, to extend the qualitative findings, hypothesized relationships (Figure 1) were tested on a larger sample of cooking class participants.

**Sample and procedure**

A self-administrated, face-to-face questionnaire was used to collect data. This employed back-translation (Lochrie et al., 2019) to finalise the survey instrument administered in Farsi. This was reviewed by three local academics fluent in English *and* Farsi to increase face validity. Accordingly, minor alterations were undertaken to improve the clarity of questionnaire statements, with this piloted prior to data collection.

G*Power was employed to identify the minimum sample size required (Gannon et al., 2020); a sample of 138 would accomplish a power of 0.95 for the framework. In total, 575 questionnaires were collected across a 3 month period in 2018. With regards to age, 23% of participants were 18-25, 53% were 26-40, and 24% were 41+. 42% of participants were male. The existence of common method bias (CMB) was assessed (Podsakoff et al., 2003); participant privacy was guaranteed and dependent/independent variables were measured separately. Harman’s one factor test was used; unrotated exploratory factor analysis identified seven factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 (36.23% of total variance), with the first factor accounting for 22.47% of total explained variance (<50% suggested value). The unmeasured method factor approach was used to further assess CMB (Gannon et al., 2020). A common method factor was introduced to the structural model. The average variance extracted was 61%, whereas the average method-based variance was 1.5% (40:1). CMB was not a concern.
Measures

Constructs were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale: (1) ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’ (5). Items were adapted from previous studies to ensure content validity. Positive C2C (4-items), and perceived support from other consumers (3-items), were adapted from Jung et al. (2017). Active participation in co-design (3-items) was borrowed from Buonincontri et al. (2017). Perceived consumer support (3-items) was adapted from Im and Qu (2017). Degree of co-creation (4-items) was adapted from Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer (2012). Braggart WoM (5-items) was borrowed from Pelletier and Collier (2018).

Analytical approach

Partial least-squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was applied to evaluate the conceptual model. PLS-SEM offers robust findings for data with normal and non-normal distributional properties (Hair et al., 2017). Skewness and kurtosis were calculated for each item (adequate between −3 and +3). The findings indicate that the assumption of normality was violated (Hair et al., 2017). PLS-SEM is appropriate when models under investigation have large numbers of indicators. It is desirable in the early stages of theory building, particularly when emphasis is placed on investigating construct(s) yet to receive significant empirical attention (Hair et al., 2017). SmartPLS3.2.4 (5,000 times resampling) was used to test measurement and structural models.

Study 2: Results

Measurement model

To evaluate the measurement model, composite reliability (CR), Dijkstra-Henseler’s rho (ρA), Cronbach’s Alpha (α), and average variance extracted (AVE) were applied for each construct (loadings: b>0.7, CR>0.7, α>0.6, ρA>0.7, AVE>0.5); reliability and convergent validity were established (Hair et al., 2010) (Table 3). Discriminant validity was established via Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criterion, with the square root of the AVE for each construct higher than all other cross-correlations (Table 3). Correlations amongst all constructs were below the 0.70 cut-off; each was distinct. Further, discriminant validity was established using heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations (Henseler et al., 2015). HTMT values ranged from 0.320-0.701 (<0.85). The HTMT\textsubscript{inference} criterion was confirmed using complete bootstrapping to check whether HTMT values differed significantly from 1. HTMT\textsubscript{inference} indicated that all HTMT values differ significantly from 1 (0.423-0.707); establishing discriminant validity.
Table 3. Constructs/underlying items and reliability test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Loadings*</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>ρA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived consumer support (service provider)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I have specific needs and wants, the cooking class would strongly consider them.</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I have a specific request, this cooking class would be willing to help me.</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I have a certain opinion, this cooking class would care about it.</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree of co-creation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During this experience, I have been actively involved.</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During this experience, I used my experience from previous training.</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During this experience, the idea of how to arrange this class was suggested by myself.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spent a considerable amount of time preparing for this class.</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive C2C</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I developed friendships with other customers I met at the cooking class.</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed spending time with other customers at the cooking class.</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other customers in the cooking class made my time more enjoyable.</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a good chance I will run into one of my friends at the cooking class.</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active participation in co-design</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My cooking experience and ability was enhanced because of my participation in the class.</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed taking a hands-on approach</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sought out situations that challenge my skills and abilities</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived support from other consumers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other customers can be relied on when I have questions.</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other customers are willing to listen to my problems.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other customers are very helpful.</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Braggart WoM</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about this experience makes me feel good about myself.</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about this experience boosts my self-esteem.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about this experience makes me feel like the centre of attention.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about this experience makes me feel a sense of pride.</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about this experience makes me feel important.</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: Significant *$t>3.29; p<0.001$.

Table 4. Correlation matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Perceived consumer support (service provider)</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Degree of co-creation</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Active participation in co-design</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Positive C2C</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Braggart WoM</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Perceived support from other consumers</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Square root AVE (diagonal)

Structural model and key findings

Prior to hypotheses evaluation, effect sizes ($f^2$), predictive relevance ($Q^2$), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residuals (SRMR) were calculated (Hair et al., 2010; Henseler et al., 2015). Following Khalilzadeh and Tasci (2017), Cohen’s effect size ($f^2$) was 0.01 (small), 0.06 (medium), and 0.14 (large) when employing SEM. Table 5 shows $f^2$ effect sizes for all significant direct paths; most demonstrate medium and large effect sizes. Following the blindfolding procedure, all $Q^2$ values surpassed zero, demonstrating acceptable predictive relevance. SRMR was 0.067; below the recommended value (0.08) (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 5. Direct paths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Paths</th>
<th>Path coefficient</th>
<th>$P$ value</th>
<th>$f^2$</th>
<th>Hypothesis Supported?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>H1:</strong> Active participation in co-design $\rightarrow$ Degree of co-creation</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.001$</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H2:</strong> Active participation in co-design $\rightarrow$ Perceived support (other consumers)</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.001$</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H3:</strong> Positive C2C interactions $\rightarrow$ Perceived support (other consumers)</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.001$</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H4:</strong> Perceived service provider support $\rightarrow$ Degree of co-creation</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.001$</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H5:</strong> Perceived support (other consumers) $\rightarrow$ Degree of co-creation</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.001$</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H6:</strong> Positive C2C interactions $\rightarrow$ Braggart WoM</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.001$</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H7:</strong> Active participation in co-design $\rightarrow$ Braggart WoM</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.001$</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H8:</strong> Perceived support (other consumers) $\rightarrow$ Braggart WoM</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.001$</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The model explains 45% of perceived support from other consumers, 41% of degree of co-creation, and 61% of braggart WoM. Per Table 5, active participation in co-design has a direct, positive relationship with degree of co-creation ($H1: \beta = 0.51; t = 13.34$) and perceived support from other consumers ($H2: \beta = 0.48; t = 11.33$). Positive C2C interactions had a direct and positive relationship with perceived support from other consumers ($H3: \beta = 0.44; t = 12.27$). Perceived support from the service provider had a direct and positive relationship with degree of co-creation ($H4: \beta = 0.32; t = 20.07$). Perceived support from other consumers had a direct, positive relationship with degree of co-creation ($H5: \beta = 0.53; t = 13.07$). Finally, positive C2C interactions ($H6: \beta = 0.32; t = 9.78$); active participation in co-design ($H7: \beta = 0.67; t = 11.08$); perceived support from the service provider ($H8: \beta = 0.23; t = 6.72$); perceived support from other consumers ($H9: \beta = 0.41; t = 12.11$); and degree of co-creation ($H10: \beta = 0.37; t = 10.29$) had a direct and positive relationship with braggart WoM.

**Post-hoc analysis of indirect effects**

Following Williams and Mackinnon (2008), mediation analysis (bootstrapping method) was conducted. A 95% confidence interval (CI) of parameter estimates based on 5,000 resamples was applied. The findings indicate the indirect effect of active participation in co-design on braggart WoM through perceived support from other consumers (indirect effect = 0.32; $t = 11.01; p < 0.001$; CI = [0.24, 0.38]). The direct effect was significant; perceived support from other consumers partially mediates the influence of active participation in co-design on braggart WoM.

The results also indicate that perceived support from service providers indirectly influences braggart WoM through degree of co-creation (indirect effect = 0.21; $t = 12.33; p < 0.001$; CI = [0.17, 0.30]). Again, as the direct effect was significant, co-creation partially mediates the impact of perceived support from service providers on braggart WoM. Finally, the results indicate that active participation in co-design indirectly influences braggart WoM through degree of co-creation (indirect effect = 0.28; $t = 9.38; p < 0.001$; CI = [0.24, 0.33]). Once more, as the direct effect was significant, co-creation partially mediates the impact of active participation in co-design on braggart WoM. These mediating effects emphasize the importance of active participation in co-design.
and support (from other customers and service providers) to achieve value co-creation outcomes and braggart WoM.

**Study 2: Discussion**

Consistent with other service settings (Buonincontri *et al.*, 2017), the findings support **H1**; high levels of active participation contribute to perceptions of experience co-creation. Through enhanced engagement in the experience, participants gain greater awareness of the social dynamics at play. The support they receive from other consumers becomes important in determining whether consumption experiences are considered as being co-created. This also implies that support from other customers can enhance wellbeing (Chen *et al.*, 2020a; Lowe and Johnson, 2017).

Again, echoing research conducted in other contexts, the findings identify that perceived support from other consumers increases the degree of co-creation, supporting **H2**. Together, **H1** and **H2** extend research into co-creation and active participation from a consumer perspective (Ind and Coates, 2013), demonstrating that the firm-consumer dyad can be enhanced through active consumer participation and the supportive behaviours of peers, both of which can contribute to overall wellbeing (Sweeney *et al.*, 2015). Positive C2C interactions during the experience also improve perceptions of the support received from other consumers, per **H3**. This confirms the importance of consumer interactions during value co-creation processes (Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2011). Specifically, the importance of C2C interactions in leisure contexts is emphasized, echoing Rihova *et al.* (2018), with implications for the creation of memorable consumption experiences and resultant wellbeing improvement (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2017). Positive C2C interactions enhance consumer perceptions of the support received from peers; implying that social exchange value is ascribed through peers’ helpfulness and willingness to listen to others. This reflects social exchange theory, extending its application within experiential service settings (Bruhn *et al.*, 2014).

Beyond the support of other consumers, the level of support provided by service providers affects both consumer engagement (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012) and the degree of co-creation therein (Im and Qu, 2017). Co-design (Donetto *et al.*, 2015) and co-creation (Zaborek and Mazur, 2019) literature converge around the importance of firm supportive behaviours, with this postulated as holding the potential to enhance consumer perceptions of value. These results echo extant literature in highlighting the importance of
firm-related resources in supporting value co-creation processes, with greater support associated with stronger perceptions of experience co-creation (H4). It is also unsurprising that perceptions of the level of support received from other consumers affects the perceived degree of co-creation (H5). This echoes Lee (2012) and confirms that reciprocity in the consumer-to-consumer dyad is central to value and wellbeing co-creation (Chen et al., 2020a).

Given C2C interactions can facilitate experiential connections (Schmitt, 2014) and better perceptions of the service experience are associated with increased positive WoM (Gruen et al., 2007), H6 and H7 confirm that positive C2C interactions and active participation (including opportunities to co-design the experience) can increase consumers’ propensity to engage in braggart WoM. The results evidence the importance of richly co-designed and co-created experiences in generating braggart WoM, extending Pelletier and Collier (2018) by showing the importance of different elements of experience co-creation in doing so. The cooking class experience provides a setting that allows consumers to share content that makes them feel good; boosting their self-esteem when adequately supported by service providers (H8).

Thus, greater support (from both firm and peers) increases the likelihood of braggart WoM. This implies that ascribed co-created value is contingent upon the perceived psychological benefits associated with boosting consumers’ self-esteem and identity (Gentile et al., 2007). This can contribute to self-enhancement through sharing WoM (Chen et al., 2020b), with the potential to enhance consumer wellbeing (Paradise and Kernis, 2002). Receiving help from other consumers tends to encourage positive WoM (Jung et al., 2017), with this reflected in the results of H9; higher levels of perceived support from other consumers contribute to stronger intentions for disseminating braggart WoM. Further, higher levels of co-creation typically stimulate positive WoM (Xie et al., 2019). This study extends extant research; showing that this relationship also applies to braggart WoM (H10). Combined, the quantitative findings suggest that consumption that facilitates experiential self-connection requires co-design and co-creative aspects.

**Overall conclusion and implications**

Using mixed-methods, this study examined the predictors of braggart WoM based on co-created and co-designed aspects of Iranian cooking classes. The results provide both theoretical and managerial implications for interactive experience design involving customers
and their food wellbeing (Scott and Vallen, 2019; Voola et al., 2018). The qualitative data (Study 1) suggests that positive C2C interactions; active participation in co-design; perceived service provider and peer support; and co-creation opportunities influence how consumers perceive their cooking class experience. This implies that consumer food wellbeing is potentially contingent upon the firm, consumer, and peer-to-peer support, with this also encouraging braggart WoM.

However, the qualitative phase of the study only partially demonstrated how some of these antecedent factors stimulate braggart WoM. Instead, different aspects of customer experience co-creation emerged in relation to co-designing the experience. Active input in the process of co-designing the experience contributed to better perceptions of culinary service consumption on the whole. The qualitative findings also suggest that prior knowledge influences consumer perceptions of the experience and its co-creative aspects. In the quantitative phase (Study 2), we tested some of these factors and found support for all proposed relationships (Figure 1). The following sections offer implications derived from the combined qualitative and quantitative findings.

**Theoretical implications**

From a co-creation perspective, the results confirm the importance of involving consumers in co-designing service experiences, facilitating their active participation. This implies engaging, challenging, and enhancing the ability of participants during the experience, providing them with the freedom to creatively influence service outcomes. The study also provides evidence of co-designing customer experiences by enhancing perceptions of co-creation. This relates to aspects pre-, during-, and post-cooking class and thus extends design literature from a processual perspective (Patrício et al., 2011). Pre-experience, instructions and visualised recipes can establish expectations and encourage consumers to ‘imagine’ the experience (Carù and Cova, 2003). This provides space for preparation, drawing upon existing cooking knowledge or enhancing skills before the class begins (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This sets the scene when providing guidance for customers by allowing a more focused lead into the culinary experience.

Experience co-design can be facilitated using design thinking workshops with customers and/or staff (Donetto et al., 2015). While this can be utilised to include customers and their needs and suggestions as lead users to improve the experience using a long-term co-design approach, the process suggested here makes use of consumers on-site, focussing on
their ability to co-design and co-create experiences concurrently. This approach to co-design may prove easier to facilitate, but remains overlooked in literature. By shifting the opportunity of co-design to the core consumption experience (i.e., the cooking class) service providers can identify short-term measures to increase co-creation and co-design in-situ (i.e., not pre- or post-consumption per a long-term approach). Thus, the results show that freedom to co-design experiences impromptu and in-situ can enhance the overall consumer experience, extending customer experience and co-design literature by suggesting that “interactive impromptu experience co-design”, where participants can spontaneously influence the course of action, feel empowered, and improve self-enhancement and self-esteem (Pelletier and Collier, 2018) can strengthen perceived experiential value (Vargo and Lusch, 2016) and influence wellbeing (Chen et al., 2020a).

The findings also provide evidence of the role of the customer as an active participant, co-creating value through a range of activities and interactions in conjunction with others (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Following extant literature, such value co-creation processes also increase consumer wellbeing (Hepi et al., 2017). Our notion of food wellbeing goes beyond that established in literature, focusing instead on the dynamic aspects inherent to wellbeing co-creation (Chen et al., 2020a). That is, our article centres on the co-creative aspects of culinary food experiences and coins the term co-created food wellbeing. This perspective shifts the focus from the relationship with food (Block et al., 2011) to the “doing” (co-creation) characteristics of culinary leisure experiences. As such, food wellbeing co-creation emerges as an interactive process involving resource integration (e.g., skills, knowledge, ingredients, recipes), empowerment, and ownership of interactively co-designing and co-creating the food experience amongst all engaged actors. When combined, experiences endowed with these characteristics can stimulate braggart WoM (Chen et al., 2020b).

Managerial implications

From a design perspective, this study demonstrates that active participation alone can stimulate sub-optimal value co-creation. Cooking class consumers engage with different actors to co-create value. Engagement with both service providers and other customers also results in experiential self-connection and braggart WoM. However, such interactive, participative, experiential consumption becomes more meaningful when understanding the range of factors shaping value perceptions. A participatory approach of experience co-design enhances perceptions of co-creation, but also necessitates the management of C2C interactions.
interactions alongside an emphasis on aligning firm resources toward activities expressly concerned with supporting customers.

Accordingly, when assisting with co-creating and co-designing service experiences with consumers, employees must understand the needs driving customer participation alongside how customers interact with peers. The latter appears a critical emotional touchpoint capable of enhancing consumer perceptions of co-creation (Batat, 2019). In designing culinary experiences, providers should consider consumers’ prior knowledge, adapting support levels to match the expertise of the group (combined and individually) to achieve optimal outcomes. Support should be tailored to reflect skill (e.g., ‘beginner’, ‘intermediate’, ‘advanced’); with the promotion of experiences articulating the importance of participation in enhancing consumers’ self-expressive behaviours. For example, the findings suggest that promotional messages emphasizing the enhancement of self-esteem, pride, and wellbeing enacted through the development of cooking skills in an interactive setting may prove effective.

Moreover, by offering a family-like atmosphere and a home-oriented kitchen setup, cooking class experiences can enhance engagement. Such setups require a balance of design thinking principles; combining creative freedom and a sense of ownership of co-design and co-creation processes, underpinned by guiding instructions provided to customers by the service provider. The alternation of instructed and “free-flowing” (i.e., spontaneously altered) cooking classes will cater for both, improving skills and enabling creativity. As creativity is related to cognition, immersion, and flow, servicescape design that intersperses instructive sessions with opportunities to socialise and cook together can enhance the creative and hedonic aspects of culinary consumption (Bruhn et al., 2004), with the potential to increase hedonic wellbeing (Hepi et al., 2017). Such design can be developed in the aforementioned design thinking workshops (long-term perspective). Incorporating flexibility in the design of classes by providing opportunities to swap cooking partners creates greater exposure to other participants’ cooking skills and the chance to document and disseminate this post-experience (Batat et al., 2019). Providing virtual (e.g., stories, images) and physical memorabilia (e.g., branded aprons or utensils) could extend the experience and encourage braggart WoM beyond the core consumption arena (Carù and Cova, 2003).

In essence, from a service provider perspective, being supportive but not being too prescriptive enhances co-creation. This not only echoes extant literature (Grissemann and
Stokburger-Sauer, 2012) but also extends it, highlighting the need to design “experiential consumption spheres” (Finsterwalder and Laesser, 2013, p.21). These spheres should be interactive, providing humanic (staff and peer interaction and support) and mechanic cues (servicescapes that facilitate co-creative processes) centred on the core product or service (food and cooking lessons) as the functional clue (Berry and Carbone, 2007), but with the view of also increasing co-created food wellbeing. Such spheres permit customers to enjoy a range of experiences based on varied activities, while highlighting their role as lead users by incorporating their needs (Donetto et al., 2015).

Doing so should enable firms to respond to the different dimensions of customer experience utilising a corresponding co-design approach (Schmitt, 2014), capable of enhancing co-created food wellbeing. This can be enabled through: a) enhancing the senses-related experience by exposing consumers to different tastes (ingredients), scents, visualisations (plating and presentation), touch (textures), and auditory encounters (functional instructions, social interactions); b) improving cognitive aspects by alternating or combining cooking challenges with creativity; c) enabling an emotional experience via social interactions and fun; d) bridging the “relate aspect” (Schmitt, 2014) by connecting with peers and instructors; and e) cultivating “doing” by direct application and collaborative cooking (Gentile et al., 2007). To facilitate this, the more emotional touchpoints are established the easier co-creation of multiple experiences along the customer’s culinary journey becomes (Batat, 2019). While cooking stations might be the main touchpoints for interaction, during breaks for socialising lounge-like settings with sofas and comfortable chairs can facilitate interaction and reinforce the homely atmosphere of the home-style kitchens. Such social, familial encounters could further enhance overall wellbeing (Xie et al., 2020). Nevertheless, to stimulate braggart WoM and increase self-esteem and wellbeing, the installation of top-down cameras above cooking stations, imitating professional cooking shows, may also provide the opportunity for high-quality imagery which participants can then disseminate to peers, family, and beyond post-experience via social media.

This paper also introduces a novel impromptu co-design concept during customer experiences which encourages service providers to avoid the extensive co-design processes suggested in literature (Donetto et al., 2015). Adopting a streamlined and in-actu version of co-design can lead to service improvement by learning from lead users, providing them with opportunities to actively influence the nature of the experience. This can increase engagement and buy-in via increased participation, with such co-design boosting self-esteem and
stimulating feelings of participative ownership of the service experience (Chen et al., 2020a). This newly-introduced concept of co-created food wellbeing extends prior research into wellbeing co-creation (Chen et al., 2020a). Compared to food wellbeing, the concept of co-created food wellbeing highlights why managers should integrate interactive elements into culinary leisure experiences (e.g., co-design and C2C interactions). Alongside facilitating braggart WoM, this approach can improve consumer experiences and increase wellbeing more generally. Thus, we encourage managers to ensure that, when designing cooking classes, focus should not only be placed on enhancing participants’ skills but also on other characteristics of co-creation.

**Limitations and further research**

This study extends extant understanding of service co-creation and co-design; its limitations can be countered by future research. First, given the restricted Iranian cooking class context, future studies should assess hypothesized relationships across different culinary contexts for cross-cultural comparison. Second, future studies should consider how contextual variables (e.g., mood) influence co-creation and braggart WoM. Third, data were collected exclusively from customers. To explore perspectives beyond the customer experience, additional data should be collected from cooking class employees with the purpose of extending the results. Fourth, the concept of co-created food wellbeing should be further explored, with emphasis placed on investigating how the co-creation and co-design of culinary experiences contributes to food wellbeing. Finally, future research should investigate the hypothesised relationships over time, offering longitudinal insight into this subset of leisure marketing.
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Towards co-created food wellbeing: Culinary consumption, braggart word-of-mouth, and the role of participative codesign, service provider support, and C2C interactions

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Abstract
This study investigates whether the antecedents of co-creation influence braggart word-of-mouth (WoM) in a participative leisure context, theorising the concept of co-created food wellbeing and highlighting implications for interactive experience co-design.

A sequential mixed-method approach was employed to test a theoretical model; 25 in-depth interviews with cooking class participants were conducted, followed by a post-experience survey (n=575).

Qualitative results suggest braggart WoM is rooted in active consumer participation in co-designing leisure experiences. The structural model confirms that participation in value co-creating activities (i.e., co-design, customer-to-customer (C2C) interaction), alongside perceived support from service providers, increases consumer perceptions of co-creation and stimulates braggart WoM. Degree of co-creation and support from peers mediate some relationships.

Limited by cross-sectional data from one experiential consumption format, the results nevertheless demonstrate the role of active participation in co-design and C2C interactions during value co-creation. This implies that co-created and co-designed leisure experiences can intensify post-consumption behaviours and potentially enhance food wellbeing.

The results highlight that integrating customer participation into service design, while also developing opportunities for peer support on-site, can stimulate braggart WoM.

Extends burgeoning literature on co-creation and co-design in leisure services. By encouraging active customer participation while providing support and facilitating C2C interactions, service providers can enhance value co-creation, influencing customer experiences and food wellbeing. Accordingly, the concept of co-created food wellbeing is introduced.

Keywords: Co-creation, customer-to-customer interactions, service design, braggart WoM, culinary leisure experiences, co-created food wellbeing