Towards co-created food wellbeing

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

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.

Research limitations/implications: 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.

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.

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

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.,* 2016; Paradise and Kernis, 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

Concept	Definition
Active Participation in Co-design	Consumer engagement in co-designing an experience through the use of creativity and social resources (Hoyer *et al.,* 2010)
Braggart Word-of-Mouth (WoM)	"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)
Co-creation	"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).
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*

al., 2020a)

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.
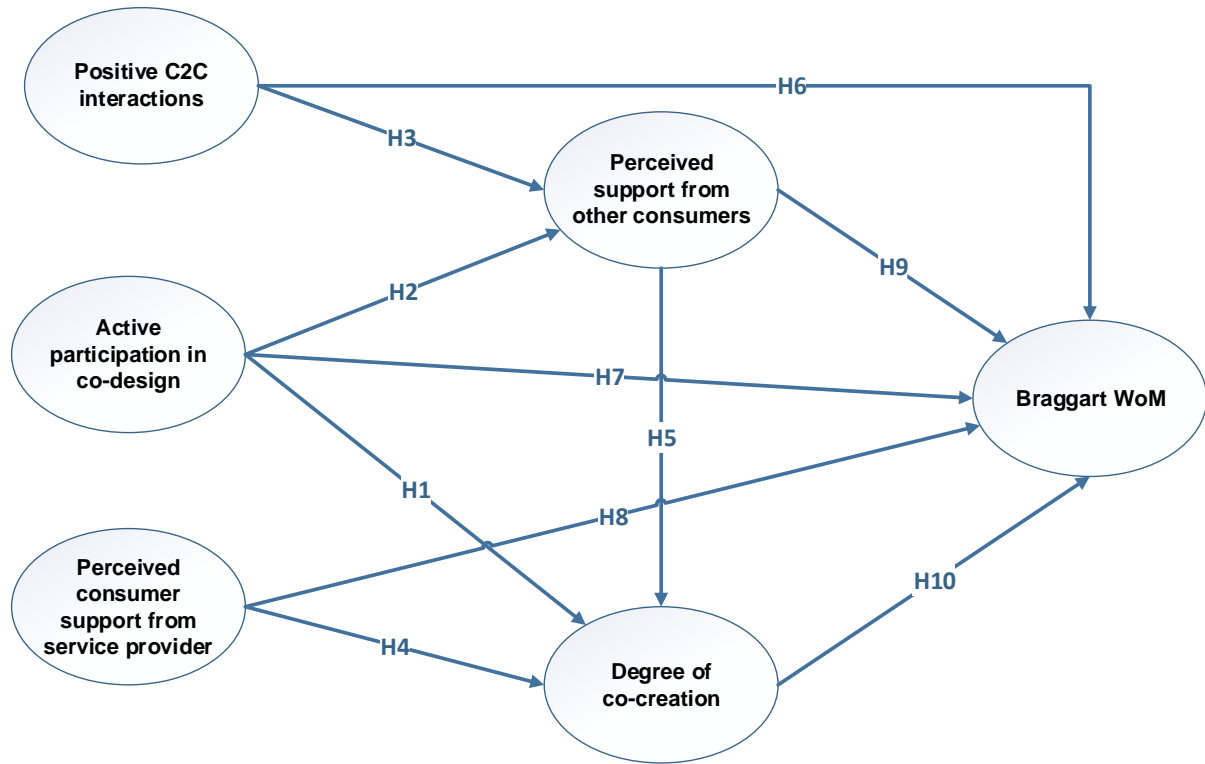
Figure 1. Conceptual model

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

ID	Occupation	Gender	Age
P1	Nurse	Male	25
P2	Policeman	Male	33
P3	Clerk	Male	41
P4	Teacher	Female	28
P5	Lecturer	Female	28
P6	Technical support	Male	46
P7	Shop assistant	Male	31
P8	Student	Female	27
P9	Nurse	Female	33
P10	Human resources	Male	37
P11	Charity work	Male	58
P12	Student	Male	28
P13	Doctor	Female	33
P14	Technical support	Male	47
P15	Shop assistant	Male	36
P16	Librarian	Male	62
P17	Technician	Male	40
P18	Hospitality	Male	27
P19	Teacher	Female	36
P20	Hospitality	Male	22
P21	Student	Male	20
P22	Nurse	Female	36
P23	Clinical support	Male	44
P24	Hospitality	Female	26
P25	Lecturer	Female	35

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). For

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-administered, 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$_{inference}$ criterion was confirmed using complete bootstrapping to check whether HTMT values differed significantly from 1. HTMT$_{inference}$ indicated that all HTMT values differ significantly from 1 (0.423-0.707); establishing discriminant validity.

Table 3. Constructs/underlying items and reliability test

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

Table 4. Correlation matrix

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

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*

Direct Paths	Path coefficient	*P* value	f^2	*Hypothesis Supported?*
H1: Active participation in co-design→Degree of co-creation	0.51	*p*<0.001	0.11	Yes
H2: Active participation in co-design→Perceived support (other consumers)	0.48	*p*<0.001	0.10	Yes
H3: Positive C2C interactions→Perceived support (other consumers)	0.44	*p*<0.001	0.12	Yes
H4: Perceived service provider support→Degree of co-creation	0.45	*p*<0.001	0.14	Yes
H5: Perceived support (other consumers)→Degree of co-creation	0.53	*p*<0.001	0.14	Yes
H6: Positive C2C interactions→Braggart WoM	0.32	*p*<0.001	0.12	Yes
H7: Active participation in co-design→Braggart WoM	0.67	*p*<0.001	0.13	Yes
H8: Perceived support (other consumers)→Braggart WoM	0.23	*p*<0.001	0.11	Yes

H9: Perceived support (other consumers)→Braggart WoM	0.41	*p*<0.001	0.18	Yes
H10: Degree of co-creation→Braggart WoM	0.37	*p*<0.001	0.13	Yes

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**:*β*=0.51;*t*=13.34) and perceived support from other consumers (**H2**:*β*=0.48*;t*=11.33). Positive C2C interactions had a direct and positive relationship with perceived support from other consumers (**H3**:*β*=0.44*;t*=12.27). Perceived support from the service provider had a direct and positive relationship with degree of co-creation (**H4**:*β*=0.32*;t*=20.07). Perceived support from other consumers had a direct, positive relationship with degree of co-creation (**H5**:*β*=0.53*;t*=13.07). Finally, positive C2C interactions (**H6**:*β*=0.32*;t*=9.78); active participation in co-design (**H7**:*β*=0.67*;t*=11.08); perceived support from the service provider (**H8**:*β*=0.23*;t*=6.72); perceived support from other consumers (**H9**:*β*=0.41*;t*=12.11); and degree of co-creation (**H10**:*β*=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 emphasise the importance of active participation in co-design

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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 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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