

The Impact of Experience Value of Chongqing Homestays on Customer Engagement: The Differential Roles of Emotional, Social, and Cultural Values

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Abstract

To address the homogeneous competition dilemma of Chongqing homestays and clarify the driving mechanism of experience value on customer engagement, this study focuses on Chongqing homestays. Taking consumers aged 18 and above with experience of staying in Chongqing homestays as the research objects, 412 valid questionnaires were collected through both online and offline channels. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to empirically analyze the direct impact and differential roles of the three dimensions of experience value (emotional value, social value, and cultural value) on customer engagement. The results show that: 1) All three dimensions of experience value have a significant positive direct impact on customer engagement in Chongqing homestays, verifying that experience value is a key driving factor for customer engagement in homestays; 2) There are significant differences in the impact intensity of the three dimensions on customer engagement. Among them, emotional value ($\beta=0.418$) has the strongest driving effect, followed by cultural value ($\beta=0.286$), and social value ($\beta=0.185$) is relatively weaker; 3) The reliability and validity of the measurement scale are good, and the model's explanatory power ($R^2=0.499$) and predictive power ($Q^2=0.492$, large effect) for customer engagement both meet the standards. This study not only fills the regional research gap in the relationship between experience value and customer engagement of Chongqing homestays, deepens the research on the differential impact of multi-dimensional experience value, but also provides practical guidance for Chongqing homestay operators. They should give priority to optimizing

emotional value (such as personalized services and the creation of a "home-like atmosphere"), supplemented by the enhancement of cultural value (such as Bayu intangible cultural heritage experiences), to specifically improve customers' willingness to engage and market competitiveness.

Keywords: Chongqing Homestays, Experience Value, Emotional Value, Social Value, Cultural Value, Customer Engagement

Introduction

In recent years, driven by the upgrading of cultural and tourism consumption, China's homestay industry has entered a stage of high-quality development. According to the Report on the Development of China's Homestay Industry (2024), the number of homestay rooms nationwide exceeded 2 million in 2023, with an annual reception volume of over 500 million person-times. "Experiential consumption" has become the core motivation for tourists to choose homestays. Different from the standardized services of traditional hotels, homestays, by integrating local culture, building emotional connections, and creating social scenarios, have gradually become the core carrier for fulfilling tourists' demand for "in-depth destination experiences" (Wang et al., 2023).

As a benchmark city for cultural and tourism in western China, Chongqing's homestay industry possesses both "regional uniqueness" and "market representativeness". On one hand, Chongqing's core attractions include its "mountainous urban landscape", "Bayu culture", and internet-famous landmarks such as Hongyadong, Liziba, and Wulong Karst, which have given rise to differentiated types of homestays. There are "scenic homestays" in urban areas relying on internet-famous landmarks, as well as "intangible cultural heritage (ICH) homestays" in rural areas that carry local culture (e.g., stilted building homestays in Gongtan Ancient Town, Youyang County). By 2023, the number of homestays in Chongqing had reached 12,000, accounting for 35% of the total number of homestays in Southwest China (Chongqing Municipal Commission of Culture and Tourism Development, 2024). On the other hand, with the rapid expansion of Chongqing's homestay market, the problem of "homogeneous competition" has become increasingly prominent: some homestays only focus on hardware decoration while neglecting experience design in terms of emotion, social interaction, and culture. This leads to low customer engagement willingness among tourists, as well as low repurchase rates and recommendation intentions (Li et al., 2023). Against this backdrop, clarifying "how experience value directly affects customer engagement"—especially the differential roles of the three value dimensions (emotional, social, and cultural)—has become the key to resolving the competitive dilemma of Chongqing's homestays.

Based on the above context, this study focuses on the scenario of Chongqing's homestays, with the following core research questions:

1. Do the emotional value, social value, and cultural value of Chongqing's homestays all have a significant direct positive impact on customer engagement?
2. Are there differences in the intensity of the direct impacts of emotional value, social value, and cultural value on customer engagement in Chongqing's homestays? If so, which dimension has the strongest driving effect?

In terms of theoretical significance, this study can, on the one hand, fill the gap in regional research. By focusing on Chongqing's homestays for the first time and verifying the direct

impact of the three dimensions of experience value on customer engagement in combination with the characteristics of Bayu culture and mountainous landscapes, it enriches the theoretical achievements of "regional homestay experience marketing". On the other hand, it can deepen the research on dimension comparison. Through quantitative analysis, it clarifies the differential roles of the three dimensions of experience value, fills the theoretical gap in "comparing the impact intensity of multi-dimensional experience value on customer engagement", and improves the relationship framework between homestay experience value and customer engagement. In terms of practical significance, the research conclusions can provide an optimization path for operators of Chongqing's homestays, clarifying which type of experience value to prioritize improving to enhance customer engagement more efficiently. For example, if emotional value has the strongest impact, homestays can focus on optimizing personalized services. At the same time, it helps Chongqing's homestays resolve the dilemma of homogeneity. Through differentiated experience design (e.g., emphasizing Bayu ICH activities for cultural value and building tourist communities for social value), it enhances customers' willingness to engage and strengthens market competitiveness.

Literature Review

Experience Value

Conceptual Definition of Experience Value

The theoretical origin of experience value can be traced back to consumer value research. The consumer value theory proposed by Oliver & Holbrook (1999) laid its foundation, arguing that experience value refers to the subjective perception and judgment formed by consumers during the interaction process. Different from perceived value, which focuses on "result evaluation", experience value places greater emphasis on the subjectivity and relativity of "process interaction" (Li et al., 2021; Wei, 2022). Turnbull (2009) further clarified that experience value is the total value obtained by consumers from an experience, as well as the expression of subjective cognition and preference towards the experience process. This definition is widely recognized in the fields of service consumption and tourism: Martín-Ruiz et al. (2012) regarded it as the core component of customer value in service scenarios, while Jensen & Prebensen (2015) pointed out that in tourism scenarios, experience value is the carrier for tourists to perceive the quality of products or services.

In the homestay industry, the uniqueness of experience value lies in its deep integration with "locality". Compared with the standardized services of hotels, the experience value of homestays relies more on the integration of local culture, host interaction, and scenario atmosphere. It is consumers' subjective evaluation of the comprehensive experience of "accommodation + culture + social interaction" (Zhao et al., 2022; Dada et al., 2024). This highly aligns with the "Chongqing homestay" scenario focused on in this study, providing a theoretical basis for dividing experience value into the three dimensions of "emotion, social interaction, and culture".

Dimension Division of Experience Value: Focus on Hierarchical Models and Homestay Adaptability

In existing research, the division of experience value dimensions has mainly formed two frameworks: the "subordinate model" and the "hierarchical model". Among them, the hierarchical model has become the core adaptive framework for homestay scenarios because it better conforms to the logic of "meeting consumers' multi-level needs" (Zhan et al., 2023).

Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the hierarchical model divides experience value into multiple dimensions such as functional, emotional, and social value, emphasizing that different dimensions correspond to the satisfaction of consumers' needs from basic to high-level. Nam & Hwang (2021) proposed the hierarchy of "informational value - social value - entertainment value" in the context of social media. Zhan et al. (2023) further refined this in tourism research, pointing out that tourists' experience value presents a progressive logic of "functional value (facility quality) → emotional value (host connection) → social/self-actualization value (cultural identity)". Among these, "emotional value", "social value", and "cultural value" directly correspond to the three-dimensional setting of this study.

Research in the homestay field has further verified the adaptability of the hierarchical model: Through an empirical study on homestays around Chongqing, Lu & Yi (2022) found that customers' perception of homestay experience value can be decomposed into three dimensions—functional, emotional, and social—all of which have a significant impact on customer satisfaction. Zhao et al. (2022) confirmed in a survey of homestays in mainland China that emotional value (e.g., warm atmosphere) and social value (e.g., tourist interaction) have a more prominent driving effect on consumers' behavioral intentions. Ge (2022)'s study on homestays in Pingyao Ancient City supplemented the importance of "cultural value": the experience value derived from local cultural experiences (e.g., ICH activities) is the core difference between homestays and hotels, providing empirical support for this study's focus on "cultural value".

However, there are still gaps in existing research on the dimensions of homestay experience value: First, there is a lack of customized verification for the Chongqing region. Most studies apply general tourism or hotel dimensions (Peng, 2023; Xing, 2023) without integrating the uniqueness of Bayu culture and mountainous landscapes. Second, the differential roles of the three dimensions (emotional, social, and cultural) in "customer engagement" have not been clarified. Existing studies mostly verify the impact of "overall experience value" or a single dimension (e.g., only measuring cultural value) and do not compare the differences in the driving intensity of the three dimensions on customer engagement (Zhang et al., 2021; Dada et al., 2024). This is exactly the core gap that this study aims to fill.

Progress in Empirical Research on Experience Value in the Homestay Industry

In recent years, research on experience value in the homestay field has shifted from "dimension identification" to "influence mechanism". However, the focus is mostly on "experience value → behavioral intention" or "experience value → customer satisfaction", and research on the direct connection with "customer engagement" remains insufficient:

Verification of positive impacts: Ma & Zhang (2017) constructed a homestay model of "tourist interaction - experience value - subjective well-being" and found that experience value (including emotional and social dimensions) is a core mediating variable. Through an empirical study on homestay service attributes, Peng (2023) pointed out that emotional value (e.g., host services) and social value (e.g., interaction in public spaces) have the strongest driving effect on customers' continuous engagement. Dada et al. (2024) emphasized that "cultural authenticity" and "social connection" in homestay experience value are key prerequisites for consumers to form engagement intentions, but they did not conduct in-depth quantification of the differences among the three dimensions.

Limitations of regional research: Most existing achievements take broad regions or ancient cities such as Pingyao and Lijiang as research objects (Ge, 2022; Yang, 2022), and there are few specialized studies on Chongqing's homestays. Only Lu & Yi (2022) involved samples from around Chongqing, but did not deeply explore the role of cultural value (such as Bayu ICH experiences) in customer engagement. Although the industry report by the Chongqing Municipal Commission of Culture and Tourism Development (2024) pointed out that "insufficient cultural experience leads to low customer engagement in Chongqing's homestays", it lacks academic empirical evidence, highlighting the necessity of this study's focus on Chongqing's homestays.

Research on the Relationship between Experience Value and Customer Engagement: Theoretical Connection and Research Gaps

Theoretical Basis of Customer Engagement and Its Adaptability to Homestay Scenarios

As a core construct for the interaction between consumers and brands (Hollebeek et al., 2019), customer engagement is defined as consumers' active investment in a brand at the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels, including information attention, emotional identification, and recommendation behavior (Nguyen & Lee, 2022). In the homestay industry, the uniqueness of customer engagement lies in "non-transactional interaction". Most homestays are small- and medium-sized, so the formation of customer engagement relies more on subjective perceptions during the experience process (e.g., emotional resonance, cultural identification) rather than being driven by the membership systems of traditional hotels (Chen & Lin, 2022). This implies that "experience value" may become a direct driving factor for customer engagement in homestays.

Connection between Experience Value and Customer Engagement: Indirect Empirical Evidence and Research Gaps

Although existing research has not extensively and directly verified the relationship between "homestay experience value → customer engagement", it has provided support through the indirect logic of "experience value → consumers' subjective perception → customer engagement":

Emotional value and customer engagement: In hotel research, Chen & Lin (2022) found that emotional value (e.g., warm services) enhances customer engagement by strengthening "brand emotional identification". The empirical study on homestays by Lu & Yi (2022) also pointed out that emotional value (e.g., the "home-like atmosphere" created by hosts) significantly improves customers' willingness to engage in active interaction.

Social value and customer engagement: Van Doorn et al. (2010) proposed that social value (e.g., sharing and recommendation among tourists) stimulates customer engagement through "word-of-mouth communication". Xing (2023)'s study on homestays in Pingtan, Fujian Province, confirmed that the experience value formed by tourists' social interaction indirectly increases engagement intensity through "customer recommendation behavior".

Cultural value and customer engagement: Ge (2022)'s study on homestays in Pingyao found that the experience value derived from cultural experiences (e.g., visiting ancient buildings, participating in folk activities) enables tourists to form the cognition that "homestays = carriers of local culture", thereby enhancing their willingness to engage continuously.

However, existing research has not clarified the applicability of this connection in the context of Bayu culture in Chongqing.

Existing research still has three core gaps, which constitute the innovations of this study:

1. Lack of direct influence mechanism: Most studies focus on "experience value → behavioral intention" or "experience value → satisfaction", and have not directly verified the driving effect of experience value on customer engagement, especially lacking specialized empirical evidence in homestay scenarios (Wang & Li, 2023).
2. Gap in the differential roles of dimensions: The driving intensities of the three dimensions (emotional, social, and cultural) on customer engagement have not been compared, making it impossible to provide homestay operators with a "priority optimization direction" (Zhang et al., 2021; Dada et al., 2024).
3. Insufficient regional targeting: The characteristics of Bayu culture and mountainous landscapes of Chongqing's homestays have not been integrated, so existing conclusions have limited guiding significance for practice in Chongqing (Chongqing Municipal Commission of Culture and Tourism Development, 2024).

Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The emotional value of a homestay positively influences customer engagement.

H2: The social value of a homestay positively influences customer engagement.

H3: The cultural value of a homestay positively influences customer engagement.

Methodology

Research Design and Paradigm Selection

This study adopts a quantitative research design, with positivism as the paradigm foundation. Its core logic is to quantify the direct correlation between the three dimensions of experience value of Chongqing homestays and customer engagement through numerical data, and compare the differences in the impact intensity of each dimension. The rationality of choosing the quantitative design is as follows:

Adaptability to research objectives: It is necessary to verify two hypotheses, namely "whether all three dimensions have a positive impact on customer engagement" and "whether there are differences in impact intensity". Functions such as path coefficient analysis in quantitative research can accurately quantify variable relationships, meeting the needs of comparing "differential roles" (Creswell, 2009);

Demand for representativeness of the Chongqing market: Chongqing homestays cover diverse types such as internet-famous urban homestays and rural intangible cultural heritage (ICH) homestays, serving heterogeneous customer groups including Generation Z and family tourists. The structured sampling and statistical inference capabilities of quantitative research can ensure the representativeness of conclusions (Saunders et al., 2019);

Clarity of variable relationships: Both experience value (emotional/social/cultural) and customer engagement are operable constructs (e.g., emotional value measures "sense of warmth" and "sense of belonging"). The scale tools in quantitative research can convert abstract constructs into measurable values, and clearly present the direct paths of each dimension on customer engagement through PLS-SEM.

Research Objects and Sample Design

Definition of Research Objects

The research population consists of consumers aged 18 and above who have stayed in Chongqing homestays within the past 12 months. The definition is based on the following: First, individuals over 18 years old have independent cognitive abilities and the right to informed consent, which complies with ethical standards (American Psychological Association, 2020); Second, the "past 12 months" ensures the clarity of respondents' memories of homestay experiences and reduces recall bias. A survey by the Chongqing Municipal Commission of Culture and Tourism Development (2024) shows that the accuracy rate of homestay customers' recall of details of their stays within one year exceeds 85%, which is much higher than that of stays over one year.

Sample Size and Sampling Method

Determination of sample size: The sample size was calculated using Cochran's (1963) infinite population sample size formula ($n = Z^2pq/e^2$), where the confidence level $Z = 1.96$ (95% confidence level), sample proportion $p = 0.5$ (maximum variance assumption), and sampling error $e = 0.05$. The minimum sample size obtained was 384.16, which was rounded up to 385. Considering the 4% questionnaire inefficiency rate in tourism surveys (Xie & Li, 2020), the final target sample size was 400, which meets the PLS-SEM standard of "at least 10 samples per construct" (Hair et al., 2017).

Sampling method: Purposive sampling was adopted, focusing on the group "with experience of staying in Chongqing homestays". The sampling frame covers two types of scenarios:

Online channels: Questionnaires were distributed targeting users in the Chongqing order pools of Ctrip and Meituan Homestays, as well as WeChat homestay communities and Xiaohongshu (Little Red Notes, a Chinese social media platform focused on lifestyle and travel content sharing) Chongqing homestay topic pages, covering non-local tourists and young customer groups;

Offline channels: Questionnaires were distributed on-site in homestay clusters such as Hongyadong (Yuzhong District), Ciqikou (Shapingba District), and Wulong Fairy Mountain. Survey assistants verified check-in certificates (order screenshots, room cards), covering local short-distance tourists and family customer groups.

Data Collection Tools and Scale Design

Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire is divided into two parts, with a total of 25 questions. The filling time is controlled within 8 minutes to improve the recovery rate:

Demographic and behavioral characteristics section (7 questions): Including gender, age, monthly income, education level, type of Chongqing homestay stayed in, price range of the stay, and core motivation for choosing the homestay, which is used for subsequent subgroup analysis;

Core variable measurement section (18 questions): A 5-point Likert scale was adopted (1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree"). The scales were adjusted based on mature scales, as detailed in the following table:

Table 1

Adopted instruments

Variable	Dimension	Number of Items	Scale Source
Experience Value	Emotional Value	3	Liu & Zhang (2020)
	Social Value	3	Sun & Wang (2019)
	Cultural Value	3	Nguyen (2023)
Customer Engagement	Cognitive Engagement	3	Nguyen & Lee (2022)
	Emotional Engagement	3	Nguyen & Lee (2022)
	Behavioral Engagement	3	Nguyen & Lee (2022)

Scale Adaptation and Validation

Cultural and scenario adaptation: Questionnaire items were adjusted to align with the characteristics of Chongqing homestays. For example, under the "behavioral engagement" dimension of customer engagement, the item "participate in Bayu cultural activities organized by the homestay, such as Chuanjiang Haozi (Sichuan River Boatmen's Chants) experiences" was added;

Translation and revision: For the customer engagement scale derived from English literature (Nguyen & Lee, 2022), a "bidirectional translation method" was adopted. Two tourism management PhDs translated the scale into Chinese, and one English major professor back-translated it into English. Discrepancies were revised (e.g., "brand engagement" was clearly defined as "homestay customer engagement");

Pilot study validation: A pilot study was conducted in homestay clusters in Nan'an District, Chongqing (n=50). The scale was optimized through item analysis (deleting items with a critical ratio < 3) and reliability testing (Cronbach's α of all constructs > 0.7) to form the formal questionnaire.

Data Collection Process

The data collection period lasted for 2 months, covering both the peak and off-peak tourism seasons in Chongqing to avoid seasonal bias. A dual-channel approach ("online + offline") was used to control common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012):

Online channel: A questionnaire link was generated via Wenjuanxing (a Chinese online survey platform) and embedded in the Chongqing review pages of Ctrip and Meituan Homestays (with small red envelope incentives attached). The link was also forwarded in Chongqing homestay owner communities. A total of 286 questionnaires were collected, with an effective rate of 82.5% (invalid questionnaires—those completed in < 3 minutes or with identical answers for all items—were excluded);

Offline channel: Questionnaires were distributed on-site in areas such as Hongyadong, Ciqikou, and Wulong Fairy Mountain. A total of 192 questionnaires were collected, with an effective rate of 91.7% (check-in experience was verified on-site);

Final sample: A total of 412 valid questionnaires were combined (exceeding the target sample size of 400). The sample structure was consistent with the characteristics of Chongqing homestay customer groups (Chongqing Municipal Commission of Culture and Tourism Development, 2024): 68.2% were aged 18–39; 52.4% had stayed in internet-famous urban

homestays; 35.7% had stayed in rural homestays; and the core motivations were "cultural experience" (38.1%) and "social interaction" (29.3%), indicating good representativeness.

Data Analysis Methods

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was conducted using SmartPLS 4.1.1.2 software. The analysis steps were closely aligned with the research objective of "exploring the direct impact and differential roles of the three dimensions of experience value on customer engagement" and were divided into two main phases:

Measurement Model Testing (Reliability and Validity Validation)

This phase focused on verifying the reliability and validity of the scales for "experience value" and "customer engagement":

Reliability testing: Evaluated using Cronbach's α coefficient and Composite Reliability (CR). The standards were Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.7$ and $CR > 0.7$ (Gliem & Gliem, 2003) to ensure internal consistency of the items;

Convergent validity: Evaluated using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The standard was $AVE > 0.5$ (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), meaning the variance explained by the items of each dimension exceeded the measurement error;

Discriminant validity: Tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). The requirements were: the square root of the AVE of each dimension $>$ the correlation coefficient with other dimensions; and $HTMT < 0.9$ ($HTMT < 0.85$ for strict scenarios) to ensure clear construct boundaries.

Structural Model Testing (Hypothesis Validation and Differential Analysis)

This phase focused on the direct path of "three dimensions of experience value $\rightarrow$ customer engagement":

Model fit: Explanatory power was measured using R^2 ($R^2 > 0.25$ is acceptable; Hair et al., 2017), and predictive validity was verified using Q^2 ($Q^2 > 0$ is effective);

Path coefficients and significance: β values and t-values were calculated via Bootstrap resampling (5,000 iterations) to validate hypotheses (significance was determined by $t > 1.96$ and $p < 0.05$);

Differential role analysis: The β values of the three dimensions on customer engagement were compared to determine differences in driving intensity;

Effect size analysis: The impact magnitude was quantified using f^2 ($f^2 \geq 0.35$ = large effect, $0.15-0.35$ = medium effect, $0.02-0.15$ = small effect).

Results

Figure 1 illustrates the path relationships between Emotional Value (EV), Social Value (SV), and Cultural Value (CV) on Customer Engagement (CE), as well as the associations between latent variables and their observed indicators. The key information is as follows:

Path associations: Emotional Value, Social Value, and Cultural Value all exert significant effects on Customer Engagement through distinct paths;

Variance explanation: The R^2 value of Customer Engagement (CE) is 0.499, indicating that Emotional, Social, and Cultural Values collectively explain nearly 50% of the variance in

Customer Engagement. This demonstrates that the model has good explanatory power for changes in Customer Engagement.

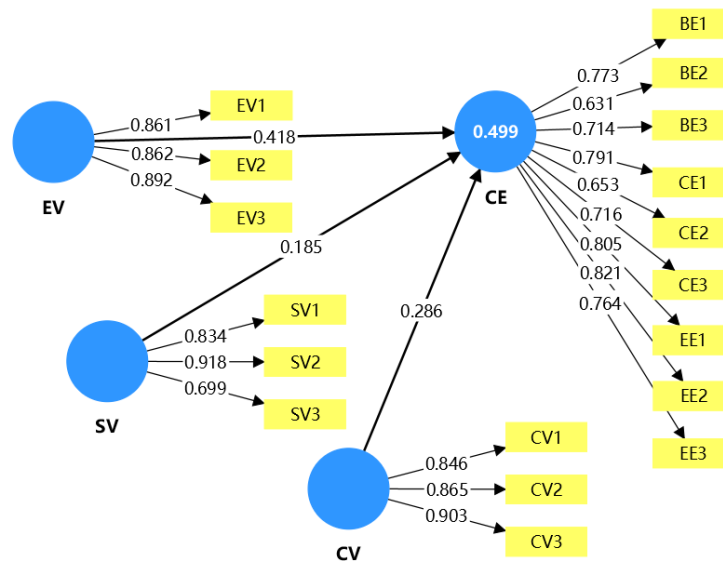


Figure 1. Structural model with path coefficients and R² values.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all constructs are greater than 0.7 (e.g., $\alpha = 0.898$ for Customer Engagement [CE], $\alpha = 0.842$ for Emotional Value [EV]). The composite reliability values are also all greater than 0.7. These results indicate that the scale items have good internal consistency, and the measurement results are stable and reliable.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of all constructs are greater than 0.5 (e.g., AVE = 0.760 for both EV and Cultural Value [CV], AVE = 0.676 for Social Value [SV], AVE = 0.553 for CE). This shows that each item can effectively capture the core connotation of the corresponding construct, and the convergent validity meets the standard.

Table 2

Reliability and Convergent Validity of Constructs

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
CE	0.898	0.902	0.917	0.553
EV	0.842	0.842	0.905	0.760
SV	0.763	0.840	0.861	0.676
CV	0.842	0.861	0.904	0.760

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is used to test the discriminability of different constructs. Typically, a threshold of HTMT < 0.9 (or HTMT < 0.85 in strict scenarios) is considered the standard for good discriminant validity. As shown in Table 3, the HTMT values between all constructs are far below 0.9 (e.g., HTMT = 0.720 between Emotional Value and Customer Engagement, and HTMT = 0.369 between Social Value and Cultural Value). These results indicate that the four constructs—"Emotional Value", "Social Value", "Cultural Value", and "Customer Engagement"—have clear boundaries, with no significant overlap, thus confirming good discriminant validity.

Table 3

Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

Path	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
EV <-> CE	0.720
EV <-> CV	0.439
SV <-> CE	0.574
SV <-> CV	0.369
SV <-> EV	0.675
CV <-> CE	0.566

The Q^2 value of Customer Engagement is 0.492, which is far greater than 0. This indicates that the model of "three dimensions of experience value → customer engagement" can not only explain the existing variance of customer engagement but also accurately predict changes in customer engagement among new samples under the blind-test scenario where some samples are excluded. There is no "overfitting" to the existing data, and the model has practical predictive utility. Its Q^2 effect size is classified as a "large effect," which further demonstrates that the model has extremely strong predictive power for customer engagement. It can accurately predict the degree of change in customer engagement when Chongqing homestays adjust their emotional, social, and cultural values.

Table 4

 Q^2 results

Constructs	Q^2 predict	Q^2 effect size
CE	0.492	Large

Emotional Value → Customer Engagement: $f^2 = 0.224$, which is classified as a medium effect, indicating a moderate level of impact.

Social Value → Customer Engagement: $f^2 = 0.047$, which is classified as a small effect;

Cultural Value → Customer Engagement: $f^2 = 0.138$, which is classified as a small effect;

All three paths are statistically significant, further verifying the positive impact of the three dimensions of experience value on customer engagement.

Table 5

 f^2 results

Path	f-square	Effect Size
EV → CE	0.224	Medium
SV → CE	0.047	Small
CV → CE	0.138	Small

Path Coefficients (β): The β value for EV→CE is 0.418 (the largest among the three), the β value for CV→CE is 0.286, and the β value for SV→CE is 0.185. These results indicate that Emotional Value has the strongest direct impact on Customer Engagement, followed by Cultural Value, while Social Value has the relatively weakest impact.

Significance: The T-values of all hypotheses are far greater than the critical value of 1.96 (the T critical value when $\alpha = 0.05$), and the P-values are all $0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, H1, H2, and H3 are all supported, meaning that Emotional Value, Social Value, and Cultural Value can all significantly and positively drive Customer Engagement.

Table 6

Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	β	T values	P values	Decision
H1: EV $\rightarrow$ CE	0.418	10.744	0.000	Supported
H2: SV $\rightarrow$ CE	0.185	4.807	0.000	Supported
H3: CV $\rightarrow$ CE	0.286	8.946	0.000	Supported

In conclusion, the empirical results indicate that: the emotional value, social value, and cultural value of Chongqing's homestays all have a significant positive impact on customer engagement, with the emotional value exerting a relatively more prominent influence. Meanwhile, the measurement scale demonstrates good reliability and validity, and the model's explanatory and predictive power for customer engagement has been verified.

Conclusions

This study focuses on the scenario of Chongqing's homestays and conducts an empirical analysis on the direct impacts and differential effects of the three dimensions of experience value (emotional, social, and cultural) on customer engagement. The key conclusions are as follows:

All three dimensions of experience value significantly and positively drive customer engagement. Emotional value (e.g., the sense of warmth and belonging created by homestays), social value (e.g., interaction among tourists and community connections), and cultural value (e.g., experiential activities related to local Bayu culture) can all directly enhance consumers' cognitive attention (e.g., proactive information seeking), emotional identification (e.g., sense of belonging), and behavioral participation (e.g., recommendation) in Chongqing's homestays through their subjective perceptions. This verifies that experience value is a key driving factor for homestay customer engagement, and such a conclusion is empirically supported in the regional context of Chongqing.

There are significant differences in the impact intensity of the three dimensions on customer engagement: emotional value exerts the strongest direct driving effect on the customer engagement of Chongqing's homestays ($\beta=0.418$), followed by cultural value ($\beta=0.286$), while the impact of social value is relatively weaker ($\beta=0.185$). The emotional value of Chongqing's homestays—shaped by "home-like atmospheres" (e.g., stilted building-style room decor that resonates with local living habits) and personalized services (e.g., customizing travel tips for mountain-city attractions)—directly enhances guests' sense of belonging and proactivity in engagement, making it the core driver. Cultural value, as a supplementary force, leverages the uniqueness of Chongqing's "Bayu culture" (such as stilted building architecture and intangible cultural heritage elements like Chuanjiang Haozi, or boatmen's work songs) to help homestays stand out from standardized hotels, further deepening consumers' engagement willingness through "cultural experience-oriented" perceptions. However, due to the short-term mobility of Chongqing's homestay customer group (mostly tourists with short stay durations), long-term community connections between guests are difficult to form, resulting in a relatively insufficient driving effect of social value on customer engagement.

Theoretical Contributions

Filling the gap in regional research: For the first time, this study targets Chongqing's homestays and verifies the direct impact mechanism of the three dimensions of experience

value on customer engagement by combining the regional characteristics of Chongqing (e.g., Bayu culture and mountainous landscapes). It enriches the theoretical achievements in the field of "regional homestay experience marketing and customer engagement" and provides an empirical example of the Chongqing scenario for subsequent studies.

Deepening research on dimensional differences: This study clarifies the differential driving intensity of emotional, social, and cultural values on customer engagement, making up for the deficiency in existing research that emphasizes overall experience value while neglecting comparisons between dimensions. It improves the relational framework between homestay experience value and customer engagement and provides an analytical paradigm of "intensity comparison" for subsequent research on multi-dimensional experience value.

Practical Implications

1. Prioritizing the enhancement of emotional value to boost customer engagement

Operators of Chongqing's homestays should focus on optimizing emotional value, which exerts the strongest driving effect on customer engagement. Specific measures can include: designing personalized services tailored to different customer groups—such as preparing child-friendly amenities for family tourists, recommending off-the-beaten-path mountain-city attractions (e.g., hidden lanes in Ciqikou Ancient Town) for young backpackers, and arranging birthday surprises for guests staying during their birthdays; creating "home-like" scenarios that blend Chongqing's regional characteristics—such as decorating rooms with mountain-city elements (e.g., miniature models of stilted buildings, wall paintings of the Yangtze River), and setting up river-view terraces with warm lighting for evening relaxation. These efforts can directly strengthen guests' sense of warmth and belonging, prompting them to proactively engage in behaviors like sharing experiences on social media or recommending the homestay to others, thereby deepening customer engagement.

2. Supplementary optimization of cultural value to consolidate differentiated advantages

While emotional value is the top priority, cultural value (the second-strongest driver) can be further leveraged to form unique competitiveness. Operators can integrate Bayu culture into experience design in a targeted manner: developing lightweight intangible cultural heritage (ICH) experience activities that fit short stays—such as 30-minute Sichuan embroidery handcraft sessions, or mini Chuanjiang Haozi (Sichuan River Boatmen's Chants) learning workshops; and adding cultural storytelling elements to homestay services—such as hosts sharing stories about Hongyadong's architectural history during check-in, or providing printed booklets introducing Wulong Karst's geological culture in guest rooms. These measures help consumers form the perception that "Chongqing's homestays offer both emotional comfort and cultural depth," supplementing the driving effect of emotional value and breaking the homogenization dilemma.

3. Targeted improvement of social value with a focus on core customer groups

Given the relatively weak impact of social value, operators can target customer groups with strong social needs. For example, they can build shared spaces in urban homestays (e.g., communal kitchens for guests to cook Sichuan hot pot together, or lounge areas with board games) to encourage interaction between tourists; in rural homestays, organize themed group activities such as hiking in Wulong Fairy Mountain or picking local fruits, which facilitate connections among guests. By focusing on these core groups, the driving effect of social value

on customer engagement can be effectively enhanced without overinvesting in low-return social initiatives.

In summary, this study reveals the mechanism of how the experience value of Chongqing's homestays affects customer engagement from both theoretical and practical perspectives. It provides new insights and suggestions for Chongqing's homestays to break through homogenization and strengthen their brand competitiveness.

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