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Multiple Effects of Agricultural Cultural Heritage Identity on Residents' Value Co-Creation—A Host–Guest Interaction Perspective on Tea Culture Tourism in China

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Abstract: The identity of community residents is the basis for passing on the GIAHS (globally important agricultural heritage system) and promoting the sustainable development of heritage sites. However, there is a lack of discussion in the existent literature on its composition and effective mechanisms. Based on the theory of the ABC (Affect–Behavior–Cognition) model, we collected 482 questionnaires from residents of tea communities of the GIAHS. We construct a model of multiple effects of identity on willingness to co-create values based on the perspective of host–guest interaction. The results show that identity has both social identity and self-identity dimensions. It has a valuable effect on the process of host–guest interaction. It stimulates residents' willingness to co-create value for the GIAHS through the chain-mediating effect of welcoming nature and emotional closeness. The study results reveal the theoretical mechanisms by which the identity of residents influences the multiple behaviors of guests. It also provides an interactive perspective for the study of the participation of the community in the GIAHS. At the same time, it promotes the local practice of value mining and development research in the GIAHS. In addition, it expands the research framework of value co-creation in heritage tourism.

Keywords: GIAHS; identity; value co-creation; community residents; emotional solidarity; tea



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1. Introduction

The dynamic conservation and adaptive management of the GIAHS (globally important agricultural heritage system) is an international program launched by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in 2002. The program was officially implemented in 2009 [1]. The GIAHS as a tourism resource is regarded as one of the essential ways of dynamic conservation of agricultural cultural heritage [2]. Indeed, the dynamic conservation and adaptive management process of the GIAHS emphasizes the sustainability of traditional farming systems. However, the GIAHS has serious problems with homogenization and commercialization in tourism development [3,4]. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes the importance of heritage conservation [5]. In addition to traditional production functions, the ecological and social sustainability of traditional farming culture systems gives them multiple values, such as cultural heritage preservation [2]. Some scholars emphasize that the core principle of sustainable development lies not only in the protection of the existing environment but also

in the establishment of a framework of stakeholders to achieve sustainable development [6]. Specific measures are taken to integrate environmental development and conservation, ensure cultural diversity, and maintain the integrity of ecosystems [7]. Therefore, how to synergize the relationship between agriculture, culture, and tourism in the development process is an important issue for the sustainable development of the GIAHS.

Research related to GIAHS tourism attempts to answer the link between conservation and development. Early studies on agro-heritage tourism mainly explored the impact mechanisms of tourism from economic, environmental, and socio-cultural perspectives, and they focused on the coordinated development perspective of heritage tourism and conservation [3,8]. With the continuous deepening of the research, the idea of heritage conservation is gradually clarified. Based on the ecological value and multifunctionality of traditional agriculture in heritage sites, scholars have further constructed dynamic conservation pathways such as creative tourism, heritage tourism, and ecological compensation [9,10]. Among them, tourism as a conservation pathway is increasingly recognized and respected by academia. Following this line of thought, academics have begun to pay attention to the impacts of tourism on heritage site residents from the perspective of heritage conservation. In recent years, a number of studies have examined the multiple impacts of tourism development with the help of resident perception surveys and other methods [11]. The studies mainly focus on farmers' livelihood and land use [12], smart tourism [13], community participation [4], value evaluation [2], resource utilization [14], willingness to pay for different values [15], the impacts of different values on tourism [2], etc. Scholars have discussed in depth the external factors of agricultural heritage tourism, but they are still unable to explain whether the participation of residents of agricultural heritage sites in tourism is spontaneous or socially empowered.

Unlike traditional types of heritage tourism, tourism resources of agricultural heritage are also heritage in nature. Local communities are also an expression of tourism and heritage resources [16]. More importantly, community residents of agricultural heritage sites have the dual roles of heritage inheritors and tourism development operators. Being nurtured by a long history of local lifestyles related to agro-culture, community residents are most cognizant of the potential tourism resources and development of the agricultural heritage sites in which they live [4,17]. However, the dual identity of community residents of agricultural heritage sites is not very clearly recognized. This violates the original intention of sustainable development of agricultural heritage. On the one hand, GIAHSs are generally in remote, backward, and geographically isolated villages. Community residents of heritage sites are slow to receive information from the outside world [18]. On the other hand, the dominant role among the subjects of the GIAHS value assessment is played by authoritative organizations, such as the government. It is difficult for community residents to directly participate in cultural heritage tourism [17]. Therefore, how the dual identity of community residents can play a role in the process of tourism construction and development requires urgent attention.

However, the academic community lacks discussion on the effective mechanism of community residents' identity in agricultural heritage sites. Early studies on community residents of agricultural culture heritage tourism mainly focused on resources related to conservation development [19,20] and community potential research [21]. In recent years, there have been studies on the multi-subject conservation of community resources [22], role identity [23], and other aspects of supplementary exploration. However, most of them remain in qualitative discursive or case studies [24]. They lack discussion from an interactive perspective. This makes it difficult to provide direct evidence for the common behavior of community residents and tourists participating in tourism. At the same time, they also lack empirical research on community participation of heritage site residents

from the perspective of identity. Therefore, residents need to pay attention to how to stimulate the positive behaviors of residents to participate in the interaction through identity. However, a few scholars have noted that identity is an important dimension influencing heritage conservation and value co-creation. They emphasize the socio-cultural influence of identity [25]. At the same time, they also focus on the elements of geographic time and space [26,27], cultural identity [5,28], landscape design [29,30], local identity [30,31], and role identity [32] in the process of social influence. In addition, some scholars have emphasized that residents not involved in agricultural heritage tourism cannot realize the value of agricultural cultural heritage [13,33]. This idea indirectly indicates the relationship between identity and value creation. However, few scholars have so far synthesized the value-creation perspectives of the interaction between the two groups of tourists and residents. We explore an aftereffect mechanism of the identity at agricultural heritage tourism sites. Therefore, taking value co-creation as a breakthrough can help open the theoretical black box of the formation of identity aftereffect mechanism by host–guest interaction in agricultural heritage tourism.

How the identity of agricultural heritage affects the willingness of community residents to co-create values is the key question to be addressed in this study. Based on the above issues, the objectives of this study include (i) addressing the key question of how identity affects the value co-creation of host–guest interactions at agricultural heritage sites and (ii) exploring the role that welcoming nature, sympathetic understanding, and emotional closeness play in the process of identity’s influence on value co-creation. This study establishes a multiple mediator model, as shown in Figure 1, to systematically explore the role of identity in influencing value co-creation. It not only bridges a research gap of the host–guest value co-creation in agricultural heritage communities from the perspective of host–guest interaction but also provides an antecedent theoretical path for the value excavation and sustainable development of heritage sites. It also expands the application of the ABC (Affect–Behavior–Cognition) model theory [34] and other theories in the field of agricultural heritage tourism. This study introduces for the first time the value co-creation variable of marketing to explain the subject–object interaction in the field of agricultural heritage. In addition, in contrast to related studies, the findings illustrate that the formation of residents’ willingness to value co-creation in heritage sites is a socio-cognitive process rather than a socio-informational stimulation process. Finally, this study also discusses the differential processes of emotional solidarity around hedonism and utilitarianism on residents’ community participation. More importantly, this study provides management ideas for the integration and application of tourism development and heritage conservation. It helps to realize the sustainable development of agricultural heritage tourism.

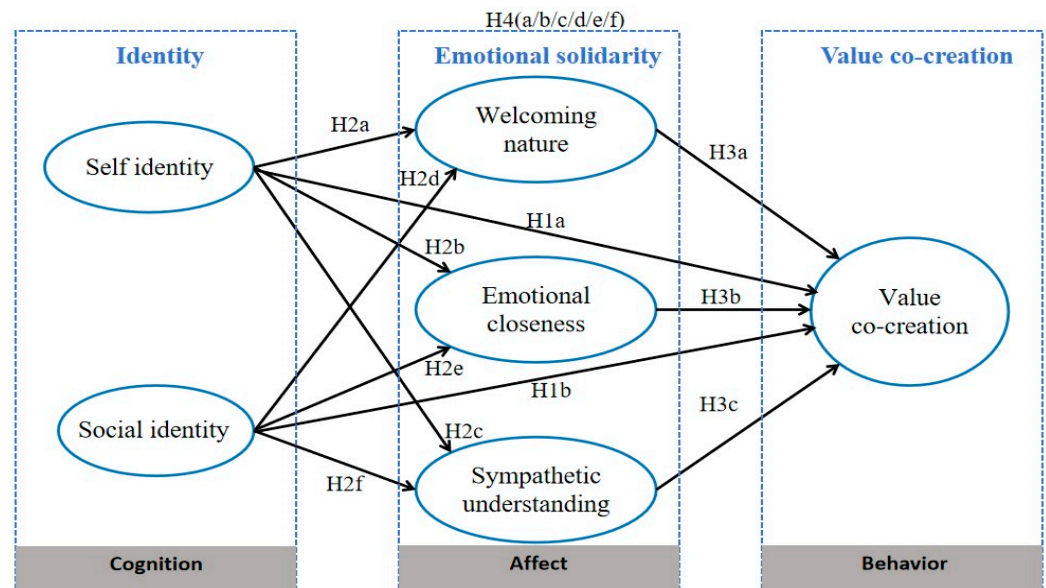


Figure 1. Research framework—hypothesized model.

2. Literature Review and Research Hypothesis

2.1. ABC Model Theory

The ABC (Affect, Behavior, Cognition) model was first proposed by Rosenberg and Hovland in 1960. It is also known as the Ternary Attitude Model. Rosenberg pointed out that attitude consists of three components: cognition, affect, and behavior. Its core view is that cognition is the perception of the attitude object, affect is the feeling of the emotional object, and behavior is the behavior made to the attitude object. They also constructed the ABC model [34]. It illustrates the formation of consumer attitudes through a three-dimensional mental process. The model emphasizes the use of the concept of hierarchical effects to explain the interaction of the three elements [35]. The application of the ABC model was initially focused on the consumer perspective. It is currently applied in a wide range of perspectives [25,36]. The ABC perspective is a cognitive–emotional–behavioral framework where emotion mediates cognition and behavior, and behavior is the result of cognition and emotion [34]. Identity, emotional solidarity, and willingness to co-create host–guest values are selected as variables in this study. They correspond to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions indicated in Rosenberg’s ABC model framework. That is, identity corresponds to the cognitive dimension, emotional solidarity corresponds to the emotional dimension, and willingness to co-create host and guest values corresponds to the behavioral dimension. In addition, irrational factors are ignored in the existing research [13,33]. In this paper, the ABC model is introduced. Emotional solidarity, as a mediating variable from identity to value co-creation willingness, can effectively make up for the theoretical defects of related studies.

The ABC model theory lays a theoretical foundation for community participation in value-related research. On this basis, identity is a potential effect of cognition. From the perspective of emotional solidarity, the dual identity of heritage inheritor and protector creates a sense of pride among heritage residents. The belief in the co-construction of heritage sites motivates residents to welcome foreign visitors [37]. At the same time, it confers unique emotions in residents of heritage communities towards foreign visitors. Their participation in the development and construction of heritage sites leads to a deeper understanding of the heritage site construction by the residents. At the same time, it translates into an interactive process with foreign visitors. They also stimulate positive emotions and a sense of identity among residents of communities, which in turn can lead

to the formation of shared values between residents and visitors [38]. Accordingly, we hypothesize that the mechanisms by which the identity of residents of communities in the GIAHS influences willingness to co-create values include welcoming nature, sympathetic understanding, and emotional closeness.

2.2. The Impact of Identity on the Willingness of Community Residents to Co-Create Values

The ABC model considers cognition as the perception of the attitude object, which has an impact on behavior [34]. The value co-creation theory suggests that value enablers provide customers with resources such as products, services, and information. They invest resources and capabilities to realize value co-creation in a continuous interaction [35,38]. In addition, based on social exchange theory and identity theory models [36], scholars have proposed that residents' resource-based occupational identity, environmental identity, and gender identity can affect their attitudes toward tourism behavior in community environments. Esawe et al. pointed out that customer place identification is a crucial antecedent of value co-creation, significantly affecting customers' willingness to revisit [25]. In ethnic tourism communities, Yang et al. pointed out that the local identity of residents in ethnic cultural protection areas is positively correlated with the value co-creation behavior represented by spontaneous cultural protection [39]. Based on the theory of social representation, some scholars have explored the impact of the collective identity of stakeholders in mining sites on cultural landscape participation, further reflecting the critical value of identity factors in the process of heritage value co-creation [40,41]. Finally, based on the host–guest interaction perspective similar to the present study, researchers have mainly explored the impact of place identity on value co-creation in terms of research [42].

From the above studies, it can be seen that based on the perspective of host–guest interaction, identity can indeed effectively enhance the willingness of value co-creation between the tourists and the owners. In the context of agricultural cultural heritage tourism, with the deepening of value co-creation research, tourists and residents in the long-term tourism service relationship can encourage community members to participate in value co-creation activities in the community, and it also can influence the enhancement of other values. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: *Identity positively influences the host–guest value co-creation willingness of community residents.*

H1a: *Self-identity positively influences the willingness to co-create values of community residents.*

H1b: *Social identity positively affects the value co-creation willingness of community residents.*

2.3. Impact of Identity on Emotional Solidarity

According to the social identity theory, Tajfel proposes that individuals have knowledge about their belonging to a social group. Based on this, they have emotional and value significance because of their group membership. Individuals want to obtain and maintain a positive social identity. This social identity can evoke cognitions and emotions that can influence and translate into emotional responses [43]. The ABC model assumes that cognition is the basis of emotion. Emotion is a mediating variable of cognition and behavior [25].

The theory of emotional solidarity proposed by Woosnam and Norman suggests that the basis for the formation of emotional solidarity consists of three types: shared beliefs, shared behaviors, and interactions. Shared beliefs and shared behaviors are consistent with group identity [44]. Currently, in the study of identity–emotion relationships, identity is divided into self-identity and social identity in terms of two-dimensional structure.

According to the identity theory, firstly, in terms of self-identity, based on society's behavioral situations, Chen et al. emphasized that social identity changed people's equilibrium behavioral outcomes, especially identity-embedded social norms [45]. Second, in terms of interaction behavior, based on the organizational behavior research context, relevant studies have suggested that people's access to respect and recognition induces optimistic affective experiences that lead to higher organizational performance [46]. In the context of the identity of individuals in virtual communities, Sharma et al. argued that the impact of gamers' interactions with other gamers on their in-game emotional solidarity is positive [47]. Based on the perspective of social identity, Tan and Hsu pointed out that emotional solidarity partially mediates the impact of interactive diversity on tourism stereotypes [48]. It further affected behaviors, such as community participation and willingness to contribute. In addition to this, in terms of agricultural heritage, Su et al. [2] argued that the role identity of heritage site residents mainly affected the tourism participation of community residents through the sense of place dependence, exclusion, pride, and deprivation in the emotional factors.

From the above studies, it can be seen that groups with identity in a particular social context can stimulate emotions at different levels: individual, collective, and social. This emotion increases their participation in the heritage community, thus forming the willingness for host–guest interaction. In the agricultural heritage tourism context, the heritage community residents have identities that are different from those of general rural residents, i.e., the identities of heritage inheritors and protectors. These identities will give heritage community residents unique emotions. Their identification with the dual identities stimulates positive emotions in community residents. This will increase their social identity and self-identity. It can increase the emotional solidarity (welcoming nature, emotional closeness, sympathetic understanding) between residents and visitors of communities. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: *Identity positively influences the emotional solidarity of community residents.*

H2a: *Self-identity positively influences the welcoming nature of community residents.*

H2b: *Self-identity positively influences the emotional closeness of community residents.*

H2c: *Self-identity positively influences the sympathetic understanding of community residents.*

H2d: *Social identity positively influences the welcoming nature of community residents.*

H2e: *Social identity positively influences the emotional closeness of community residents.*

H2f: *Social identity positively influences the sympathetic understanding of community residents.*

2.4. Impact of Emotional Solidarity on Value Co-Creation

Attitude–behavior theory suggests that there is an association between attitude and behavior. Attitude is an internal structure and it can be expressed as cognition and emotion towards things. Meanwhile, it also affects behavior [49]. The ABC model suggests that emotion has an antecedent effect on behavior [34]. Emotional solidarity theory suggests that emotional solidarity comes from shared beliefs and common actions. It will have an effect on the behavior of the research subjects from the interaction perspective. It has been shown that the emotional solidarity between residents and tourists has a significant impact on their support for tourism development and the co-creation of host–guest values [50]. According to the theory of emotional solidarity, based on the host–guest interaction context, Woosnam points out that a higher level of emotional solidarity between residents and

tourists indicates a higher level of support for residents for tourism [50]. There is a positive correlation between the welcoming nature and sympathetic understanding of tourists by residents of destinations and tourism-supportive attitudes [51]. Emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding between residents and tourists have a positive and significant effect on the sustainable development of community tourism [52,53]. According to the value co-creation theory, based on the host–guest interaction context, Aleshinloye et al. found that welcoming nature and emotional closeness had a more significant effect on involvement [52]. In addition, according to the interaction theory, tourists interact with local residents, producing emotional communication. In addition, social relationships will subsequently affect the formation of tourists' willingness to co-create host–guest values [54,55]. Lai et al. found that true feelings and deserved feelings had a positive effect on tourists' satisfaction [38]. Using emotional solidarity as a mediator, the interaction between tourists and residents is inevitable [56]. Good interaction conditions help to realize value co-creation; on the contrary, the resistance reflected by community residents will convey a negative experience to tourists. It will be detrimental to the realization of value co-creation [30].

From the above study, it can be seen that in the case of good interaction between agricultural heritage tourists and local community residents in tourism activities, the more emotionally close the residents of the tourist site are to the tourists, the more willing the residents are to invest a lot of resources in the interaction between the two. It not only satisfies the value experience needs required by the interaction but also promotes the willingness of both parties to co-create value. Therefore, this paper proposes the following hypotheses accordingly:

H3: *Emotional solidarity of community residents positively influences willingness to co-create values.*

H3a: *Welcoming nature positively influences willingness to value co-creation among community residents.*

H3b: *Emotional closeness of community residents positively influences willingness to co-create values.*

H3c: *Sympathetic understanding of community residents positively influences willingness to co-create values.*

2.5. Mediating Effects of Emotional Solidarity

According to the ABC model, in the process of attitude formation, scholars propose that individual cognition is the foundation. Behavioral tendency is the result of emotional regulation. Emotion is a mediating variable in the process of cognition to behavior [57]. Based on the ABC model, perceived value theory, involvement theory, and expectation difference theory of customer satisfaction, some scholars have emphasized the mediating role of affective components in the influence of cognitive components on behavioral components [36,58]. In this study, in the context of agricultural heritage tourism, it is inferred that identity (self-identity, social identity) affects individual emotional solidarity (welcoming nature, emotional closeness, sympathetic understanding). This emotion, in turn, affects residents' willingness to co-create host and guest values. Therefore, this paper proposes the following hypotheses:

H4: *Emotional solidarity has a mediating role in residents' self-identity and willingness to co-create values.*

H4a: *Welcoming nature has a mediating role in residents' self-identity and willingness to value co-creation.*

H4b: *Emotional closeness has a mediating role in residents' self-identity and willingness to value co-creation.*

H4c: *Sympathetic understanding has a mediating role in residents' self-identity and willingness to value co-creation.*

H4d: *Emotional closeness has a mediating role in residents' social identity and willingness to value co-creation.*

H4e: *Welcoming nature has a mediating role in residents' social identity and willingness to co-create values.*

H4f: *Sympathetic understanding has a mediating role in residents' social identity and willingness to co-create values.*

3. Data Collection

Fujian province is recognized as one of the important cultural heritage protection areas in China. It has a unique traditional lifestyle and historical style [18]. Fujian province has pursued cultural tourism integration and regional cultural expansion strategies in recent years. It promotes the integration of regional multicultural creative tourism. In 2022, the Anxi tea cultural system was officially selected as a globally important agricultural cultural heritage system. Tea cultural tourism in Fujian province attracts many groups or organizations to visit and experience tea tourism and ecology annually [59,60]. Therefore, it is typical and representative to take the Anxi Tieguan Yin tea cultural system as the research area to assess the development of the integration of the residents in this context.

The Anxi Tieguan Yin tea cultural system has been chosen as the research area for this study's formal research. It is specifically centered on Xiping town in Anxi county, where the core area of the heritage is located. In addition, it includes data sampling locations, including tourist sites such as Huqiu town, Penglai town, Daping town, Senne town, and Chengwang town. Firstly, the formal research was conducted between 1 June and 30 October 2022. We distributed questionnaires to the target research participants based on random sampling. Five assistants were invited to distribute the questionnaires for this study. We trained the five assistants in advance. To improve the quality of the questionnaire collection, they answered the questions when the respondents were confused about the formulation of the questions, etc. Second, in the formal distribution of the questionnaire stage of the field research, 550 questionnaires were distributed, and 537 were recovered. According to the definition of the respondents restricted to the residents of the community of the GIAHS, we eliminated samples that did not meet the definition and questionnaires that were answered randomly, totaling 55. We finally obtained 482 valid questionnaires. Our questionnaire recovery rate reached 87.64%. This meets the basic requirement that the sample is higher than 10 times the number of question items [61]. The information of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Statistics of respondents' information.

Items	Frequency	Percent	Items	Frequency	Percent
Gender			Monthly income (CNY)		
Male	274	56.8%	2000 or below	61	12.7%
Female	208	43.2%	2001–4000	65	13.5%
Age			4001–6000	96	19.9%
18–25	99	20.5%	6001–8000	87	18.0%
26–35	149	30.9%	8001–10,000	66	13.7%
36–45	134	27.8%	≥10,001	107	22.2%
46–55	81	16.8%	Type of work		
56–65	19	3.9%	Company employees	42	8.7%
Education background			Private owners	112	23.2%
Junior high school or below	129	26.8%	Freelancers	78	16.2%
Senior high school	118	24.5%	Government and institutions	84	17.4%
Junior college	134	27.8%	Schoolchildren	97	20.1%
College students	71	14.7%	Other	69	14.3%
Master or Doctor	30	6.2%			

4. Measurement

In this study, double-blind back-translation was used to translate English back into Chinese. Two professional translators were independently translated into the Chinese version. In addition, two professional translators specializing in tourism management were invited to perform the back-translation so as to maintain the consistency between the English scale and the Chinese questionnaire. The variables were all on a seven-point Likert scale, with “1” representing complete disagreement and “7” representing complete agreement. (1) This study determines the dimensions of residents' willingness to co-create host and guest values in heritage communities with reference to the scale of Lin et al. [62] on residents' willingness to co-create host and guest values. (2) Referring to the method of determining the dimension of identity by Cheek et al. [63] and combining Ruan et al.'s viewpoints on identity in heritage tourism [5], the two-dimensional structure, i.e., self-identity and social identity, was selected to determine the influence dimension of identity. (3) With reference to Woosnam's scale adopted by most scholars, we selected three dimensions of welcoming visitors, emotional closeness, and sympathetic understanding to measure emotional solidarity. For the antecedent variables of emotional solidarity, the identity variables that have similar degrees of similarity with shared beliefs, shared behaviors, and interactions were selected [38]. (4) In addition to this, variables related to demographic characteristics such as gender, age group, average monthly income, education, and occupation were used [59].

5. Data Analysis

Table 2 describes the means, standard deviations, correlations, and square root of the mean variance for each construct. The correlations for all constructs are less than the square root of the mean explained variance. Therefore, the constructs have differential validity and reliability. To further measure whether the variables are highly correlated with each other and thus have covariance problems, this study tests the VIF of the independent and dependent variables. The results show that there is no covariance problem with the variables of the value co-creation study. In addition, this study strictly follows the relevant steps to measure the problem of common method bias among the variables, which is measured using well-established scales from authoritative journals. Harman's one-factor test is used to calculate the loadings of all research indicators. The first of these

factors explains 36.059% of the variance and does not explain 40% of the total variance [5]. Therefore, there is no common methodological bias.

Table 2. Variables, descriptive statistics, correlations, and discriminant validity.

	AVE	Sympathetic Understanding	Welcoming Nature	Emotional Closeness	Value Co-Creation	Social Identity	Self-Identity	VIF
Sympathetic understanding	0.612	0.782						—
Welcoming nature	0.530	0.492 ***	0.728					1.675
Emotional closeness	0.630	0.389 ***	0.348 ***	0.794				1.494
Value co-creation	0.658	0.430 ***	0.579 ***	0.276 ***	0.811			1.719
Social identity	0.541	0.474 ***	0.340 ***	0.363 ***	0.540 ***	0.736		1.331
Self-identity	0.573	0.513 ***	0.684 ***	0.448 ***	0.648 ***	0.445 ***	0.757	2.014

Note: $n = 482$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

6. Validation Factor Analysis

In order to detect the common bias of the model as a whole, this paper launches a validation factor analysis of the modified model. The results are shown in Table 3. First, a total of seven variables are included in this study. The results of a validation factor analysis on the overall model are shown in Table 2. The factor loadings corresponding to each question item are significant at the 0.001 level. First, in the absolute fitness index, $\chi^2 = 504.365$ and the RMSEA = 0.054, and each value is less than the critical value. The GFI = 0.918 and the AGFI = 0.892, which are basically close to the standard of 0.9. Second, in the value-added fitness index, the NFI = 0.912, the RFI = 0.894, the IFI = 0.947, the TLI = 0.935, and the CFI = 0.946, which are all in the acceptable range; furthermore, in the parsimony fitness index, $\chi^2/df = 2.413$, which is between 1 and 3, and the PGFI = 0.695, the PNFI = 0.753, and the PCFI = 0.782, which are all greater than 0.5. Lastly, for the intrinsic fitness test, all the variables have a CR value greater than 0.7. Our results indicate that value co-creation, emotional closeness, and the other seven variables selected for this study's constructs meet the relevant requirements; the AVE values for each measurement question item are greater than 0.5, indicating good internal consistency. Overall, the measurement model selected for this study has good stability and aggregation.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and validation factor analysis.

Constructs and Factors	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
Value co-creation (Cronbach's alpha = 0.850)				0.852	0.658
I have great respect for Anxi Tea Heritage Site visitors.	5.75	1.197	0.870		
I am happy to inform visitors about the Anxi Tea Heritage Area.	5.81	1.084	0.871		
I'm happy to help visitors when they need it.	5.83	1.074	0.894		
Self-identity (Cronbach's alpha = 0.840)				0.842	0.573
I share my interest in heritage tourism with other members of the Anxi Tea Heritage Site local area.	5.56	1.145	0.707		
I engage in Anxi Tea Heritage Site tourism with other members of the local area.	5.29	1.295	0.842		
I share the goal of preserving the Anxi Tea Heritage Site with other local community members.	5.44	1.269	0.861		
I consider myself a member of the local community of Anxi Tea Heritage Site.	5.55	1.291	0.809		

Table 3. Cont.

Constructs and Factors	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
Social identity (Cronbach's alpha = 0.777)				0.779	0.541
When someone criticizes the local residents of the Anxi Tea Heritage Area, it feels like an insult.	5.82	0.948	0.797		
When I talk about local Anxi Tea Heritage Area residents, I usually say "we" instead of "they".	5.59	1.002	0.844		
Recognizing the local residents of the Anxi Tea Heritage Area is recognizing me.	5.76	1.006	0.806		
Sympathetic understanding (Cronbach's alpha = 0.825)				0.825	0.612
I identify with visitors to the Anxi Tea Heritage Site in many ways.	5.42	1.204	0.833		
I identify with visitors to the Anxi Tea Heritage Site.	5.55	1.155	0.833		
I share some thoughts with visitors to the Anxi Tea Heritage Area.	5.48	1.145	0.828		
Welcoming nature (Cronbach's alpha = 0.817)				0.818	0.530
I appreciate the contribution of local visitors to the Anxi Tea Heritage Site to the local economy.	5.73	1.166	0.797		
I am proud to have visitors to the Anxi Tea Heritage Site.	5.59	1.106	0.803		
I feel that the local area benefits from visitors to the Anxi Tea Heritage Area.	5.51	1.159	0.804		
I treat visitors to the Anxi Tea Heritage Area fairly in the local area.	5.70	1.126	0.723		
Emotional closeness (Cronbach's alpha = 0.835)				0.836	0.630
I'm close to the tourists visiting the Anxi Tea Heritage Site.	5.60	1.146	0.857		
I have made friends with some local tourists at the Anxi Tea Heritage Site.	5.52	1.217	0.858		
I am affectionate for local visitors to the Anxi Tea Heritage Site.	5.52	1.166	0.834		

7. Results

First, this paper uses Amos 23.0 to construct structural equation modeling (SEM). We also use the Bootstrapping method, which is commonly used in international authoritative journals for mediation effect tests. In addition, we use the maximum likelihood method for model fitting. We repeat the sampling 2000 times and calculate 95% confidence intervals. If the distribution of the confidence intervals of the results does not contain 0, the mediation effect is significant [47].

(1) Hypothesis 1. Self-identity and social identity have a significant positive effect on the willingness to co-create host and guest values ($\beta = 0.402$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.467$, $p < 0.001$). The results indicate that hypotheses H1a and H1b are valid. Under the cognitive-behavioral theory [34], individual perception affects individual social behavior. In the tourism context, the sense of belonging and pride motivates local residents to create a sense of self-identity as resource owners of heritage sites [39]. It creates a satisfying tourism experience. At the same time, it promotes the motivation of local residents to participate in the development of the heritage tourism community. Thus, it generates a willingness to co-create values with tourists [64]. In the community of the GIAHS, compared with non-community residents, there is a significant emotional difference between community residents. The production and life of local community residents are highly dependent on heritage sites' human and natural environment. The community's development will

inevitably promote community residents' enthusiasm for tourism construction. Thus, it consciously generates the willingness to co-create value.

(2) Hypothesis 2. Self-identity has a significant positive effect on welcoming nature, emotional closeness, and sympathetic understanding, with standardized regression coefficients of $\beta = 0.584, p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.343, p < 0.001$; and $\beta = 0.397, p < 0.001$. The above results indicate that hypotheses H2a, H2b, and H2c are valid. Meanwhile, social identity has a significant positive effect on emotional closeness and comprehension, with $\beta = 0.285, p < 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.428, p < 0.001$. The above results indicate that hypotheses H2e and H2f are valid. However, social identity does not significantly affect welcoming nature. Hypothesis H2d is not valid. This result of H2d indicates that in the context of immature community development in heritage sites, despite the publicity and promotion of agricultural heritage, community residents have conceptually defaulted themselves to the core group of heritage sites. However, due to the lack of radiation from agricultural heritage tourism, the community residents lack the level of enthusiasm for tourists. Communities' residents do not know the benefits of interaction with tourists. This indicates that the current communication and interaction between residents and tourists of agricultural heritage sites are still very shallow. The sense of identity between each other is still not formed. So, it is more difficult to form intimate, interactive relationships. Therefore, residents' identification with the society does not affect residents' sense of welcome to tourists. This result is consistent with Lai's results on identity understanding and residents' attitudes toward society [65]. If the GIAHS is still not well established, residents' social identity will not significantly affect welcoming tourists.

(3) Hypothesis 3. Welcoming nature has a positive effect on value co-creativity ($\beta = 0.247, p < 0.01$). The results indicate that hypothesis H3a is valid. In addition, the standardized coefficient of emotional closeness on value co-creation is $-0.115 (p < 0.05)$, which indicates that emotional closeness has a negative effect on value co-creation, and hypothesis H3b is not valid. The result of H3b indicates that in the context of a highly productive modern society, the groups associated with the Chinese GIAHS are less emotionally and functionally attached to agriculture compared to their traditional ancestors [66]. Thus, residents with low dependence choose to be emotionally close to foreign tourists because of the value created by them. To some extent, they are unable to feel to a great extent the value that proximity to tourists brings to the development of their agricultural heritage. Additionally, sympathetic understanding does not have a significant effect on value co-creation, and hypothesis H3c is not valid. The results of H3c indicate that community residents of the GIAHS limit contact with outside tourists. As the majority of community residents of the GIAHS live in the local area, there are large differences with residents outside the region in terms of living habits, individual values, etc. [67]. Therefore, in this research context, the level of understanding of the behavior of foreign tourists by community residents in the GIAHS is relatively low. The loss of understanding further leads to the inability to develop cooperative behaviors within tourism in the GIAHS. The behaviors of value co-creation between community residents and tourists are difficult to realize [68]. Therefore, comprehensibility cannot significantly influence the value co-creation behaviors of community residents in the GIAHS.

(4) Hypothesis 4. The findings of H4a, H4b, and H4c test the mediating role of the three dimensions of emotional solidarity in the process of self-identification on the formation of willingness to value co-creation. The results indicate that welcome has a mediating effect in the process of self-identity on willingness to value co-creation, with standardized regression coefficients of $\beta = 0.144$, respectively. The value is 0 in the bias-corrected estimation confidence interval. Therefore, H4a is supported, while emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding do not mediate the influence of self-identity on

value co-creation behavior. Therefore, H4b and H4c are not valid. The findings of H4d, H4e, and H4f test the mediating role of the three dimensions of emotional solidarity in the influence of social identity on willingness to co-create values. Emotional closeness mediates the influence of social identity on value co-creation with a point estimate of -0.033 ; thus, hypothesis H4d holds. Additionally, welcoming nature and sympathetic understanding do not have a mediating effect between the influence of social identity and value co-creation. Therefore, hypotheses H4e and H4f do not hold. The insignificant results of H2 and H3 reveal the effective reasons for the failure to form the mediating effect. The overall findings are shown in Table 4 and Figure 2.

Table 4. Results of the mediation effect test.

Hypothesis Path	Standard Error	Product of Coef.		Bias Corrected		Percentile		Results
		SE	Z	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	
Self-identity → Welcoming nature → Value co-creation	0.144	0.061	2.361	0.04	0.288	0.025	0.277	Support
Self-identity → Emotional closeness → Value co-creation	-0.039	0.022	-1.773	-0.092	-0.004	-0.085	0.002	Support
Self-identity → Sympathetic understanding → Value co-creation	-0.004	0.029	-0.138	-0.069	0.047	-0.069	0.047	Not
Self-identity → Value co-creation	0.402	0.107	3.757	0.208	0.626	0.202	0.625	Support
Social identity → Emotional closeness → Value co-creation	-0.033	0.018	-1.833	-0.085	-0.006	-0.070	0.002	Support
Social identity → Welcoming nature → Value co-creation	0.016	0.028	0.571	-0.021	0.095	-0.024	0.088	Not
Social identity → Sympathetic understanding → Value co-creation	-0.005	0.031	-0.161	-0.074	0.056	-0.073	0.058	Not
Social identity → Value co-creation	0.467	0.113	4.133	0.254	0.695	0.240	0.688	Support
TOTAL	0.948	0.087	10.897	0.773	1.115	0.767	1.109	Support

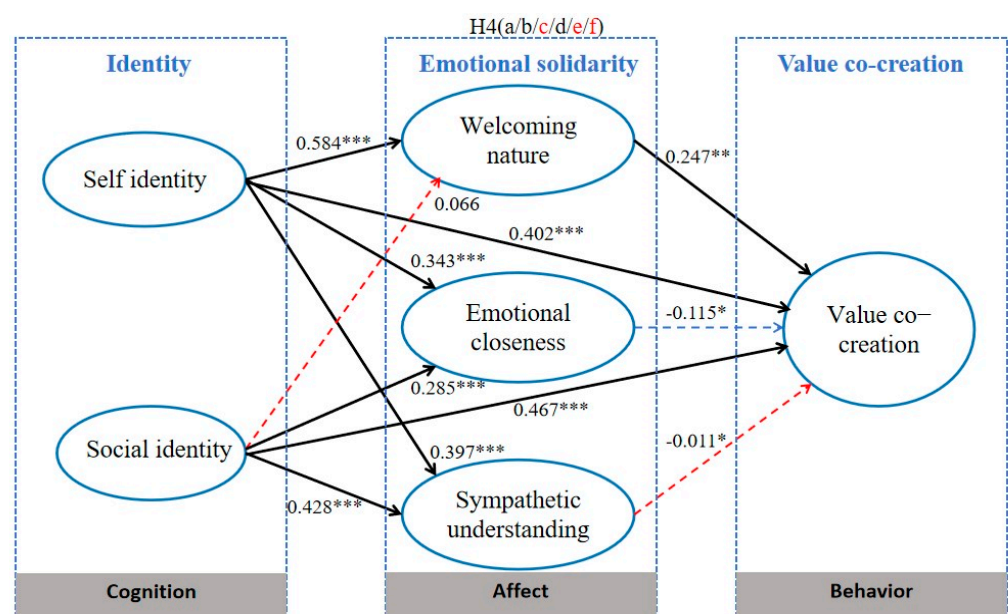


Figure 2. Results of the research model. (Note: $n = 482$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$).

8. Conclusions and Discussion

This study comprehensively reveals the process by which agro-heritage tourism identity (self-identity and social identity) influences residents' willingness to co-create values. We also explore the role of the three dimensions of emotional solidarity: welcoming nature, emotional closeness, and sympathetic understanding in this process. Our findings suggest that (1) identity has a significant positive effect on value co-creation willingness among residents of an agro-cultural heritage community. (2) In terms of the mechanism of identity's effect on emotional solidarity, social identity had a non-significant result on the welcoming nature of community residents in agricultural and cultural heritage sites and was significant on the other two dimensions of emotional solidarity; self-identity was significant on all three dimensions of emotional solidarity. (3) From the perspective of the mechanism of the role of emotional solidarity on the subject–object value co-creation, the results of the effect of comprehensiveness on the willingness of value co-creation of the residents of the agricultural and cultural heritage land are not significant; emotional closeness has a negative effect on the willingness of value co-creation of the residents of the agricultural heritage land, and the rest of the paths are significant.

Previous studies have been controversial in terms of the effect, identity, and value of tourist-resident interactions. For example, Tu et al. (2024) and others pointed out that identity factors (local identity) and personal cognitive factors (pride) play a mediating role in the process of affective factors (expression of gratitude by tourists) on the residents' willingness to co-create subject–object value [69]. They emphasize the process mechanism of "emotion-identity-value co-creation" under the effect of social information stimulation represented by emotion. However, other scholars have emphasized the conceptual framework of "identity-emotion-value co-creation" based on cognitive-related theories. For example, some findings confirm that perceptions of tourist destinations (sensory stimulation) contribute to residents' identification, further reaching the affective element and ultimately facilitating the formation of willingness to value co-creation [70,71]. Our study provides interesting confirmation that in the context of agricultural heritage tourism, residents' self-identification is more capable of reaching resident–visitor willingness to co-create value through welcoming nature (affective). This finding supports the studies of Zhao et al. (2024) and Shoukat et al. (2022) but differs from that of Tu et al. (2024) [69–71]. Based on the ABC attitude model, cognitive factors reach behavioral factors through affective factors [65]. In conclusion, the finding suggests that the formation of resident–tourist value co-creation is a subtle cognitive formation process rather than a social information stimulation process for the initially formed agricultural heritage sites. This result provides a theoretical basis for value enhancement based on agricultural heritage tourism sites.

In addition, our results found that for the initial agricultural heritage sites, community residents were more willing to co-create value by welcoming tourists at the level of emotional solidarity than at the level of emotional proximity. They were not "sensitive" to understanding tourists. The research findings suggest that resident hedonism and utilitarianism are important factors influencing the emotional expression of residents' participation in agricultural heritage tourism [72,73]. Specifically, when community residents are emotionally utilitarian, they are more focused on the practical value that comes from spending time with tourists, whereas, due to practical value, they will be emotionally close to and understand tourists but will not authentically co-create value with tourists [73]. In contrast, residents with hedonism are more emotionally focused on interacting with tourists. They spontaneously welcome foreign tourists and take the initiative to co-create value with them [74]. In addition, the findings suggest that even if heritage site residents identify themselves socially, it does not mean that they truly welcome foreign tourists. Due to the remoteness of the agricultural heritage site, the identification from the community is more

focused on the evaluation from foreign tourists and social media [75]. The opportunities and channels for community residents of agricultural heritage sites to receive information are limited by their geographical location [18]. For the initial construction of agricultural heritage sites, community residents rely on a weak social identity that is not sufficient to welcome foreign visitors. This view is consistent with Su et al.'s (2020) view that the highly productive modern social context has reduced the emotional attachment of Chinese agricultural heritage site communities to agriculture [2]. Therefore, this study explains how different levels of emotions are linked to the development of agricultural heritage in terms of identity and residents' willingness to co-create values. And, it provides a theoretical basis for this relationship.

9. Theoretical Contribution

The first contribution of this study is that we deepen the research related to identity in the GIAHS. We explore the aftereffects mechanisms of the identity of residents in the communities of the GIAHS. In addition, we lay the theoretical foundation for related research in the field of the GIAHS. Studies have focused on exploring the social impacts of identity, cultural identity, social identity, group identity, local identity, etc. [27,28]. However, few scholars have quantified the value effects of identity in agricultural heritage tourism sites (e.g., heritage conservation and development) [32]. And, there is still a lack of holistic exploration of the mechanism of the influence of identity on residents' interactive behavior [33]. In addition, related research lacks the exploration of the willingness of multi-subject participation in heritage sites. It mainly remains at the level of single-subject identity. It lacks the host–guest interaction perspective to study identity. In this study, taking the community residents' willingness to value co-creation as a breakthrough, we analyze the post-effective mechanism of community residents' identity in the GIAHS. We also test the comprehensive effect of community residents' identity in agricultural heritage tourism sites. This will help to fill the lack of previous research on heritage tourism and respond to the theoretical calls of previous scholars.

The second contribution of this study is that we have explored the antecedent path of value co-creation willingness of community residents in the GIAHS. At the same time, we have expanded the research framework of value co-creation in the field of heritage tourism. We also advance theoretical research on agricultural cultural heritage. Current research mainly stays at the level of traditional management science, such as consumer and virtual community participation. It lacks in-depth explorations of sociological and psychological fields, such as identity and emotion [76,77]. The research field is relatively narrow. Value co-creation from the tourism perspective is less centered on the host and guest value co-creation. We also lack research on host–guest value co-creation that integrates other disciplines with the field of tourism. In particular, the research on host–guest value co-creation is relatively thin in the GIAHS. As a special region, there is currently an insufficient research base for the value co-creation of heritage sites. The related literature mainly remains at the level of government-led value assessment. In this study, combining the theory of the ABC attitude model, we analyze the factors that influence the willingness of community residents of the GIAHS to co-create host and guest values. This study finds that identity has a positive influence on the willingness of the host and guest to value co-creation. The combination of different influencing factors significantly affects value co-creation willingness.

The third contribution of this study is that we broaden the path of cultural maintenance for community residents of agro-cultural heritage sites. At the same time, we provide a theoretical basis for making emotional responses and adaptations in the process of developing tourism in the GIAHS. Firstly, the community residents' knowledge of the production and

lifestyle of the heritage site they live in is transformed into a habit. This habit will further form a sense of identity and a sense of belonging to the heritage community. Furthermore, this sense of identity and belonging formed over a long period of time will produce actual behaviors when community residents face the impact of foreign tourists in a tourism situation. The results of this study validate the ABC model of attitude theory proposed by Rosenberg and Hovland in 1960. That is, the “cognitive-emotional-behavioral” model is applied in the context of agricultural heritage tourism [37,38]. Secondly, emotional cohesion is the link between tourists and residents to establish emotional ties. When residents have a high degree of self-recognition of their dual role as heritage owners and developers, they develop a sense of inclusiveness in matters relating to the development of the site. They will develop an inclusiveness towards the development affairs of the heritage site, spontaneously welcoming external visitors and desiring to establish a strong connection with them. This will help to unite a deep sense of affection for agricultural heritage. The internal and external ties between community members will help generate income for the development of the agricultural heritage site, establish a stable social network, and satisfy the spiritual needs of the community residents for their agricultural cultural heritage. Therefore, the dual role of material and emotional aspects promotes the creation of value co-creation behaviors among residents of agricultural heritage communities. This finding is consistent with the research viewpoint of value co-creation theory [76,78]. In conclusion, we shed light on the main points of community culture maintenance in agricultural heritage sites. At the same time, we provide theoretical clues about the sustainable development of tourism in agricultural heritage sites from an interactive perspective.

10. Management Insights

First, managers of the GIAHS should make it clear that the formation of residents’ and tourists’ willingness to co-create values requires the enhancement of residents’ sense of identity. The protection of the GIAHS in China is of great significance for the identity crisis of cultural convergence and resource depletion in the context of industrialization and globalization [66]. The management of heritage sites needs to improve residents’ awareness and knowledge education of agricultural heritage through the rational allocation of existing resources. It also needs to enhance the inheritance and protection of important cultural values of agricultural cultural heritage by residents of heritage sites [17]. For example, it should actively demonstrate knowledge of farming culture and ancient legends to the residents; it should advocate for the combination of the GIAHS and new technologies to enhance the residents’ perception of the cultural value of heritage. At the same time, it should develop visual heritage tourism to awaken the interest and experience of foreign residents [79]. Additionally, it also needs to call on the local residents to protect and pass on heritage so as to evoke a sense of mission [79]. In addition, it should cultivate the community residents’ collective consciousness and sense of responsibility to maintain and protect the heritage [80]. This will help them maintain and strengthen the sense of identity of community residents towards the GIAHS [80]. We need to link the interests of community residents with the development of heritage sites if destination managers take appropriate material and spiritual incentives. We should also build up the spirit of ownership of community residents in heritage sites to increase their sense of local identity.

Secondly, we need to improve the willingness of residents and tourists to co-create values in heritage sites with the help of residents’ emotional factors. Research has shown that welcome and emotional closeness help to enhance host–guest interaction. Therefore, first of all, the management of the heritage site should increase the financial investment and publicity of agricultural cultural heritage tourism. We should enhance residents’ enthusiasm to participate in tourism so as to spontaneously welcome tourists. For example, we should

cultivate residents' sense of cultural subjectivity. At the same time, we should strengthen the dissemination of historical stories and traditional folklore of agricultural heritage sites to establish the emotional resonance between residents and tourists so as to enhance the local residents' attachment to the heritage sites and other emotions [4]. In addition, we should vigorously publicize the excellent farming culture inherited from the GIAHS so as to awaken the cultural memories of the residents in the community. For example, we should protect the natural landscape of the heritage sites, and we should attract tourists to the agricultural heritage system to meet the needs of tourists to get close to nature and go to the countryside under the wave of urbanization. In addition, we should strengthen the immersion experience of tourists [78]. Finally, the construction of spiritual civilization in the GIAHS should be organically integrated with the development of local tourism. We create a good community atmosphere by fully mobilizing the subjective position of local community residents. In addition, we should also encourage the community residents of the GIAHS to be friendly and kind when accepting foreign tourists. Finally, we should show the spirit of heritage inheritors to realize the sustainable development of heritage tourism destinations [81].

Finally, we should explore the diversified value of heritage sites and create good external conditions for host–guest interaction. First, the development of the agricultural industry drives the cultural heritage site residents to get rich and increase their income. Most of the current agricultural heritage sites are located in traditional agricultural areas. Residents of heritage sites can produce various kinds of characteristic tourism products with their own advantages. They can also develop cultural landscapes or creative products with farming history as the carrier and create education classes for the GIAHS [9]. At the same time, we should focus on the integrated development of one, two, and three industries to attract talents to return to their hometowns to start their own businesses. Secondly, agricultural technology drives the circulation of market resources in the GIAHS [9]. The traditional knowledge and ancient technology possessed by the agricultural heritage system is a scarce tourism resource. Management developers should focus on opening the market. For example, we should create agricultural heritage hotels. In addition, we can develop agricultural heritage cultural parks to stimulate the curiosity of domestic and foreign tourists about agricultural heritage. Thirdly, the combination of intangible resources and tangible resources promotes the sustainable development of agricultural heritage tourism. By giving full play to the charm of natural resources and human resources of the agricultural heritage system, localities should focus on enhancing the pride and sense of identity of community residents in heritage sites. In addition, we also need to promote the willingness of community residents to interact with hosts and welcome foreign tourists so as to promote the deeper transformation of the value of agricultural heritage. For example, we should publicize the integration of tangible and intangible resources to provide economic resources for local residents.

11. Limitations and Future Studies

First, there are differences in the emotional dimensions of heritage conservation among heritage tourism stakeholders [73]. Therefore, the findings may differ due to the limitations of the geographical location of this study and the differences in the research groups. Future research could be conducted from the perspective of convergence or conflict of interests between tourists and community residents in tourism at agricultural heritage sites to analyze the mechanisms of multi-subject participation in tourism by communities at heritage sites. In addition, comparisons of differences could be made around cross-agricultural heritage types and across regions.

Second, the antecedent effects of identity and emotional cohesion on willingness to co-create values were constructed based on the ABC attitude model theory. In the future, more emotional factors, such as deprivation, can be tapped to explore this research subject [22].

Finally, this study quantitatively explores the antecedents of willingness to co-create value based on structural equation modeling. However, due to the specificity and limitations of the geographical location of agricultural heritage, further qualitative research can be conducted in the future on special groups, such as heritage bearers, through interview methods [2].

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