



Customer value co-creation behavior: Scale development and validation



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ABSTRACT

This investigation reports a series of four studies leading to the development and validation of a customer value co-creation behavior scale. The scale comprises two dimensions: customer participation behavior and customer citizenship behavior, with each dimension having four components. The elements of customer participation behavior include information seeking, information sharing, responsible behavior, and personal interaction, whereas the aspects of customer citizenship behavior are feedback, advocacy, helping, and tolerance. The scale is multidimensional and hierarchical, and it exhibits internal consistency reliability, construct validity, and nomological validity. This study also shows that customer participation behavior and customer citizenship behavior exhibit different patterns of antecedents and consequences.

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1. Introduction

Practitioners' and scholars' interest in the service-dominant (S-D) logic of marketing has increased sharply in the last decade (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Although previous customer behavior literature has focused on the customer decision-making process regarding purchases, customers are not merely responders but rather active value creators, and scholars need to focus on customer behavior in this regard (Xie, Bagozzi, & Troye, 2008). The core concept of S-D logic is that the customer is always a co-creator of value. As active participants and collaborative partners in relational exchanges, customers co-create value with the firm through involvement in the entire service-value chain.

To date, few studies have systematically explored the exact nature of dimensionality of customer value co-creation behavior, leaving its precise composition unclear. Some studies use a multidimensional approach to capture customer value co-creation behavior and consider it to consist of many distinctive components (e.g., Bettencourt, 1997; Bove, Pervan, Beatty, & Shiu, 2008; Groth, 2005), whereas other studies employ a unidimensional approach and use single- or multiple-item measures (e.g., Cermak, File, & Prince, 1994; Dellande, Gilly, & Graham, 2004; Fang, Palmatier, & Evans, 2008). However, this method ignores the conceptual richness of customer value co-creation behavior. None of the previous research explores the relationship between the overall construct and its dimensions. Therefore, both practitioners and scholars need research that (1) clearly identifies and measures customers' behavior in co-creating

value, (2) fully validates a comprehensive customer value co-creation behavior construct, and (3) explores the hierarchical dimensionality of customer value co-creation behavior. The primary motivation for this study is thus the development and validation of a scale to measure customer value co-creation behavior.

The present article makes several contributions. First and most important, the scale will be useful not only in academic research but also in practice. As marketers engage in projects to understand and improve the value co-creation behaviors of their customers, they can use the scale for assessing, planning, and tracking purposes. Second, the firm can use the scale to detect weaknesses and strengths of customer value co-creation behavior. Based on their customer behavior assessment and business strategies, companies can allocate corporate resources to the important customer value co-creation aspects uncovered by this study. Third, the scale could be used for all types of service industries. Unfortunately, the previous related constructs were not applied to many contexts. In fact, researchers were unable to identify any broad or abstract category of customer value co-creation attributes. As an alternative, this study offers a new protocol to measuring customer value co-creation behavior that captures all related dimensions of customer behavior across industries.

The current research first defines customer value co-creation behavior and the dimensions that compose the concept. This research then reports a series of studies that develop a measure of customer value co-creation behavior and assess the new measure's reliability and validity.

2. Customer value co-creation behavior and its dimensions

Early research identifies two types of customer value co-creation behavior: customer participation behavior, which refers to required

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(in-role) behavior necessary for successful value co-creation, and customer citizenship behavior, which is voluntary (extra-role) behavior that provides extraordinary value to the firm but is not necessarily required for value co-creation (Bove et al., 2008; Groth, 2005; Yi & Gong, 2008; Yi, Natarajan, & Gong, 2011). Empirical evidence shows that in-role and extra-role behaviors follow different patterns and have different antecedents and consequences (Groth, 2005; Yi et al., 2011). Therefore, researchers should use separate scales for assessing customer participation behavior and customer citizenship behavior.

This study conceptualizes customer value co-creation behavior as a multidimensional concept consisting of two higher-order factors, each made up of multiple dimensions. These two factors are customer participation behavior and customer citizenship behavior. This study also posits that customer participation behavior comprises four dimensions: information seeking, information sharing, responsible behavior, and personal interaction. In a similar vein, this study views customer citizenship behavior as consisting of feedback, advocacy, helping, and tolerance. This study suggests a hierarchical conceptualization in a third-order factor model.

This typology parallels the traditional management literature on the distinction between employee in-role and extra-role behavior. According to Borman and Motowidlo's (1993) theoretical framework on partitioning of the individual performance domain, performance can be divided into task performance and contextual performance. Task performance involves behaviors that are expected and necessary for the successful completion of service delivery so that without these behaviors service delivery will be incomplete. Similar to employees, customers who participate in service delivery should engage in some behavior such as information seeking, information sharing, responsible behavior, and personal interaction, which are classified as customer participation behavior in this study. For example, customers seek information to perform their expected behaviors without which value co-creation could not be completed successfully. Meanwhile, contextual performance involves voluntary and discretionary behaviors that are not required for the successful value co-creation. In this regard, customers do not have to exhibit behaviors such as feedback, advocacy, help, and tolerance for the successful completion of service co-creation.

2.1. Customer participation behavior

2.1.1. Information seeking

According to Kellogg, Youngdahl, and Bowen (1997), customers seek information to clarify service requirements and satisfy other cognitive needs. More specifically, customers want information about service status and service parameters. Customers need information about how to perform their tasks as value co-creators as well as what they are expected to do and how they are expected to perform during a service encounter. Providing this information reduces customer uncertainty regarding value co-creation with employees. Just as employees acquire the task, role knowledge, and behaviors needed to participate as organizational members, customers seek to understand the nature of service and their roles in the value co-creation process (Kelley, Donnelly, & Skinner, 1990; Kellogg et al., 1997).

Information seeking is important to customers for two primary reasons. First, information reduces uncertainty and thereby enables customers to understand and control their co-creation environments. Second, information seeking enables customers to master their role as value co-creators and become integrated into the value co-creation process. Customers can seek information from the firm in a number of ways. For example, customers might directly ask another person for information or they can monitor the behavior of experienced customers to obtain informational cues (Kelley et al., 1990; Morrison, 1993).

2.1.2. Information sharing

For successful value co-creation, customers should provide resources such as information for use in value co-creation processes (Lengnick-Hall, 1996). If customers do not provide essential information, employees cannot even begin or perform their duties. Through sharing information with employees, customers can ensure that employees provide the service that meets their particular needs (Ennew & Binks, 1999). For example, taking the car in for service, customers need to give the mechanic information about strange noises or vibrations. Or when ordering a cake for a special occasion, customers should provide adequate information for the flavor and design. Patients should provide the physician with proper information about their condition so that the physician can make an accurate diagnosis. If customers fail to provide accurate information, the quality of value co-creation may be low. Thus, information sharing is the key to the success of value co-creation.

2.1.3. Responsible behavior

Responsible behavior occurs when customers recognize their duties and responsibilities as partial employees (Ennew & Binks, 1999). For successful value co-creation between themselves and employees, customers need to be cooperative, observing rules and policies and accepting directions from employees (Bettencourt, 1997). For example, customers must follow the employees' directives and be physically present for the successful value co-creation. Without customers' responsible behavior, little value co-creation occurs in the service encounter.

2.1.4. Personal interaction

Personal interaction refers to interpersonal relations between customers and employees, which are necessary for successful value co-creation (Ennew & Binks, 1999). Kelley et al. (1990) use the term customer functional quality to refer to the interaction between customers and employees, which includes interactional aspects such as courtesy, friendliness, and respect. Value co-creation in a service context takes place in a social setting; the more pleasant, congenial, and positive the social environment is, the more likely customers are to engage in value co-creation (Lengnick-Hall, Claycomb, & Inks, 2000).

2.2. Customer citizenship behavior

2.2.1. Feedback

Feedback includes solicited and unsolicited information that customers provide to the employee, which helps employees and the firm to improve the service creation process in the long run (Groth, Mertens, & Murphy, 2004). Customers are in a unique position to offer guidance and suggestions to employees, because customers have considerable experience with the service and are experts from the customer perspective (Bettencourt, 1997). Customers are on the receiving end of employees' behavior, and the firm can benefit greatly from customers' suggestions for better service. While feedback from customers can be valuable, it clearly constitutes an extra-role behavior and is not a requisite for successful service delivery.

2.2.2. Advocacy

Advocacy refers to recommending the business — whether the firm or the employee — to others such as friends or family (Groth et al., 2004). In the context of value co-creation, advocacy indicates allegiance to the firm and promotion of the firm's interests beyond the individual customer's interests (Bettencourt, 1997). Advocacy through positive word-of-mouth is often an indicator of customer loyalty, and it contributes greatly to the development of a positive firm reputation, promotion of the firm's products and services, higher service quality evaluations, and increase in the customer base size (Bettencourt, 1997; Groth et al., 2004). Like other

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