

CAN THE CUSTOMER'S VALUE CO-CREATION BEHAVIOR BE MEASURED?

Validating a measurement scale based on the customer's perspective

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Can the customer's value co-creation behavior be measured?

Validating a measurement scale based on the customer's perspective

During the last years, the economic and social situation has been marked by the crisis. Given this, rivalry between firms has increased and the difference between competitive products has become almost imperceptible for consumers. There are few opportunities to differentiate the offer and increasingly more firms see customer value as a key factor when seeking new ways of achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage.

On the other hand, customers show a more participative and active behavior. Their degree of connection and linking through social networks allows them to be permanently informed about a notable number of alternatives and, often, they know more about the products or services than even the salespeople of the firms which commercialize them.

This new consumer – more informed and more prepared – demands a greater value generation from firms (Sánchez et al., 2009).

It is necessary to respond to these challenges by modifying the way of competing. In this context, applying the Service-Dominant Logic paradigm (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) has become more important. According to this approach, firms do not deliver value, they elaborate value proposals. It is the clients themselves who, individually, create value via the use or consumption of the products or services (Lusch et al., 2009). One of the fundamental premises of this approach is value co-creation. This concept is based on the idea

that the main business competences are not already in the value chain, but at the point of interaction between the customer and the firm. In any case, it is the customer who is a value co-creator (Yi and Gong, 2013).

We are thus witnessing a change in the customers' role. They have ceased to be simple users and have taken on the functions of consumers, cooperators and value co-creators (Wang et al., 2004). In this way, value co-creation allows the firm to jointly design experiences with the customers. This is a value source for the service user, although firms can only attain a state of value co-creators when interacting with their customers (García et al., 2011). Prior to this interaction, organizations take on the role of value facilitators, as they try to provide their customers with goods and services which they can use to obtain value (Grönroos, 2008). However, and despite the importance that academics and those in charge of firms give to this subject¹, knowledge about the way in which customers take part in value co-creation remains very limited (Payne et al., 2008). Among the reasons for this research gap is the lack of customer-oriented measurement scales. Until now, the greatest efforts have centered on measuring the perception that the firm itself has of the

customer's attitude in this process. Very few studies have tried to develop measurement instruments of the co-creation behavior from the customers' perspective. Also, those that have done so have focused on partial aspects of this behavior (Cermak et al., 1994; Bettencourt, 1997; Dellande et al., 2004; Groth, 2005; Fang et al., 2008).

Taking these considerations into account, Yi and Yong (2013) have tried to fill this research gap by developing a multidimensional measurement tool to evaluate customers' value co-creation behavior. The scale proposed by these authors is the first which tries to get to know all the aspects associated with the value co-creation behavior from the customer's perspective. As the researchers themselves point out, the study of the customer's behavior in value co-creation is in its initial phase and the research carried out until now has not been able to explain the relation which exists between the value co-creation construct and its dimensions or factors.

This pioneering character of the scale entails the need to test it in different countries and environments in order to guarantee its validity and reliability. Taking this into account, in this research we mean to contribute to validating the scale via an empirical study carried out among 106 users of personal care centers related to health and beauty. To do so, first we present the original scale

¹ The list of research priorities of the Marketing Science Institute for 2012-2014, for instance, especially refers to acquiring business capacities to foster value co-creation.

and some methodological considerations related to the validating of a measurement scale. Later, we explain the methodology and the results of the validity and reliability analysis, following the recommendations of Churchill (1979) and Camisón and Bou (2000). Following this, we extract the pertinent conclusions, as well as the recommendations which lead to refining it and adapting it to the characteristics which are inherent to the South Cone consumer.

■ Measurement of co-creation: yi and gong's scale (2013)

In line with prior research, these authors uphold that co-creation is a third-order construct made up of two second-order dimensions: participative behavior and citizenship behavior. Participative behavior is that adopted by the customer during the service provision. This is necessary in order to attain an appropriate performance in the value co-creation. Citizenship behavior can create a superior value for the organization but is not necessary for value co-creation (Groth, 2005; Bove et al., 2008; Yi and Gong, 2013).

In the original scale, each of these dimensions has four factors: information seeking, information sharing, responsible behavior and personal interaction within the participative behavior

framework; and feedback, advocacy, helping and tolerance for citizenship behavior. The authors consider the first four as indispensable for the service's normal development, while the rest are complementary to this process and have a superior value for the organization. Next, we describe these eight dimensions:

- **Information Seeking:** To be able to participate in the value co-creation process, customers need to have access to the information concerning the basic characteristics of the service which they are going to receive. They specifically seek information related to the best way of developing their role of value co-creators and what is expected of them during the service provision. This information can be obtained from various sources. These range from consulting to observing the behavior of other customers while they use the service. This knowledge is going to reduce the customers' uncertainty while facilitating their integration into the value co-creation process. It has an important influence on user participation in the service delivery. Indeed, if the customer does not know or does not understand how a service works or is provided, it will be quite complicated for them to take part in its creation and they will probably become passive subjects in the provision.
- **Information Sharing:** For the value creation process to be developed

appropriately, it is necessary for the customers to actively take part in it. They must provide information to the employees about their needs and the specifications of the service which they expect to receive. Without this information transmission, the service provision process will be made more complex, as the worker will not have the necessary knowledge about the problem to be solved and the best way of doing so from the customer's point of view. This co-creation dimension is of vital importance for the success of the service, as the employees' ability to provide a service adapted to the customer's specific needs depends on it.

- **Responsible behavior:** In the value co-creation process, the customers must cooperate with the employees, following their guidelines and orientations. This involves the users knowing their rights and responsibilities in the development of the provision and being willing to collaborate in this process. Without this type of behavior, the service encounter will have a low level of value co-creation.
- **Personal Interaction:** Interpersonal relations between customers and employees, based on courtesy, friendliness and respect, are fundamental for the success of value co-creation. Therefore, for this process to develop satisfactorily, it is necessary to create a climate of trust and a pleasant environment for the customers

which favor their involvement in the value co-creation process.

- **Feedback:** This refers to the information which the customers supply to the employees (suggestions and orientations) and which facilitates the long-term improvement of the service provision. It is not a behavior that is necessary for the success of the service encounter, but it greatly contributes to its improvement, as it involves exploiting the customer's experience and knowledge for the perfection of the service.
- **Advocacy:** This involves recommending the firm or its employees to family and friends. This dimension is not necessary for the success of co-creation, but it contributes to the renown and reputation of the firm, as well as attracting and retaining customers. It is also an indicator of customer loyalty.
- **Helping:** In the value co-creation process, the customers can help other customers. This spontaneous willingness to advise or assess other service users contributes to improving the service without the need for the employees to intervene.
- **Tolerance:** This refers to the consumers' willingness to be patient when the service provision does not fulfill their expectations. Taking into account that service failures are one of the main reasons which explain switching behavior, this dimension is vital to retain customers and improve the organization's profitability indicators.

■ Research methodology

The main aim of this paper is to test the appropriateness of Yi and Gong's scale (2013) in the Southern Cone environment. The recommendations proposed by Churchill (1979) and Camisón and Bou (2000) have been followed in the validation process.

Aims and information gathering method

First of all, and given that the measurement instrument was developed and validated in English, the appropriate procedures were used to ensure equivalence with respect to the meaning of the instrument in Spanish (Douglas and Craig, 1983; Hui and Triandis, 1985). The translation was initially carried out by two bilingual professors specialized in the knowledge areas. Three other professors – also bilingual – later revised the translations, compared them and discussed the differences of nuances. The definitive version was again translated by a professional psycholinguist (Brislin, 1986). The two versions in English – the original one and that which had been retranslated – turned out to be very similar. This guaranteed the measurement instrument's equivalence of meaning.

All of the questionnaire's variables are measured by a 7-point Likert-type scale. The resulting questionnaire was

submitted to a pilot sampling based on 44 people who had contracted the services of a personal care center. As no problem in the understanding of the questionnaire was observed, it was considered to be definitive. The questionnaire items are in Table 1.

The study population is made up of users, over 18 years old, of personal care centers: hairdressers', beauty shops, hair removing centers, gyms, etc. The data gathering method was a personal questionnaire and the field work took place between April and May 2013. Specially-trained interviewers did the interviews. The data sheet of the field work is in Table 2.

The data was analyzed with the SPSS 22 and AMOS 22 programs. The estimation method used was ML.

Analysis of unidimensionality and reliability

We next deal with the psychometric characteristics of the measurement scale proposed by Yi and Gong (2013), studying the reliability, unidimensionality and validity of the customer's value co-creation scale.

The scale's reliability was first evaluated starting out from its multidimensional structure, so the Alpha was calculated for each of the original eight dimensions. As a consequence of this

Table 1. Questionnaire items

Participation behavior	
<i>Information seeking</i>	
CO1	I have asked others for information on what this service offers
CO2	I have searched for information on where this service is located
CO3	I have paid attention to how others behave to use this service well
<i>Information sharing</i>	
CO4	I clearly explained what I wanted the employee to do
CO5	I gave the employee proper information
CO6	I provided necessary information so that the employee could perform his or her duties
<i>Responsible behavior</i>	
CO7	I answered all the employee's service-related questions
CO8	I performed all the tasks that are required
CO9	I adequately completed all the behaviors expected
CO10	I followed the employee's directives or orders
<i>Personal interaction</i>	
CO11	I fulfilled responsibilities to the business
CO12	I was friendly to the employee
CO13	I was kind to the employee
CO14	I was polite to the employee
CO15	I was courteous to the employee
CO16	I didn't act rudely to the employee
Citizenship behavior	
<i>Feedback</i>	
CO17	If I have a useful idea on how to improve the service, I let the employee know
CO18	When I receive good service from the employee, I comment about it
CO19	When I experience a problem, I let the employee know about it
<i>Advocacy</i>	
CO20	I said positive things about XYZ and the employee to others
CO21	I recommended XYZ and the employee to others
CO22	I encouraged friends and relatives to use XYZ
<i>Helping</i>	
CO23	I assist other customers if they need my help
CO24	I help other customers if they seem to have problems
CO25	I teach other customers to use the service correctly
CO26	I give advice to other customers
<i>Tolerance</i>	
CO27	If service is not delivered as expected, I would be willing to put up with it
CO28	If the employee makes a mistake during service delivery, I would be willing to be patient
CO29	If I had to wait longer than I normally expected to receive the service, I would be willing to adapt

Table 2. The study's data sheet

Population	Users of personal care centers over 18 years old
Geographical area	Santiago de Chile
Gathering method	Personal interview
Sample size	106
Sample error	0.0952
Time period	April-May 2013

analysis, CO16 (Personal interaction dimension), CO17 (Feedback dimension), CO23 and CO24 (Helping dimension) were eliminated.

After refining in accordance with the previous considerations, the results of the reliability analysis for each of the scale's dimensions can be seen in Table 3.

Moreover, in order to go deeper into the knowledge of the data obtained in the survey, an exploratory factor analysis of the main components applied to each of the resulting eight dimensions was carried out. In this sense, we consider that there is a clear factorial structure when the items which define a factor have weights of 0.50 or more in this factor and less in the others (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). In this case, all the items fulfill this condition without it being necessary to eliminate any of them. Each of the concepts thus has a unidimensional character. The variance explained is over 60%.

Validity analysis

The content validity is based on the theoretical revision carried out by the authors who proposed the co-creation scale. On the other hand, and via the CFA, the convergent validity, the construct's reliability and the discriminant validity are analyzed.

To evaluate the convergent validity it is necessary to examine if the effects estimated by the model between the indicator and the latent variable are statistically significant. Once the statistical significance has been proved (standardized factorial loadings over 0.7), we determine if the magnitude of the loadings is large enough to be taken into consideration. For a significance level of 0.05, the t-value must reach 1.96. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the reliability of each of the indicators (R^2). This must be equal to or over 0.5. Fulfilling these three norms is necessary, though not sufficient, to guarantee the measurement scale's convergent validity. The condition is

Table 3. The scale's reliability and unidimensionality

Construct	Item	Cronbach's α	Factorial Loading	% Variance explained
Information seeking	CO1	0.67	0.77	60.7
	CO2		0.70	
	CO3		0.85	
Information sharing	CO4	0.81	0.80	63.9
	CO5		0.83	
	CO6		0.85	
	CO7		0.70	
Responsible behavior	CO8	0.78	0.78	61.4
	CO9		0.73	
	CO10		0.79	
	CO11		0.82	
Personal interaction	CO12	0.87	0.84	72.2
	CO13		0.90	
	CO14		0.87	
	CO15		0.76	
Feedback	CO18	0.60	0.84	70.9
	CO19		0.84	
Advocacy	CO20	0.85	0.82	76.9
	CO21		0.91	
	CO22		0.89	
Helping	CO25	0.84	0.92	86.3
	CO26		0.92	
Tolerance	CO27	0.79	0.81	71.4
	CO28		0.87	
	CO29		0.84	

sufficient when appropriate indices in the model's global fit are attained.

A CFA was carried out in order to check the convergent validity. These results led to the refining of the original scale. Given that the study centers on testing the suitability of the measurement instrument analyzed, we have opted for being very rigorous in this process, and have eliminated all the

items which did not reach acceptance levels. After having finished the process, the scale was made up of fifteen indicators which had an appropriate statistical significance. With respect to their individual reliability, all the indicators are over the acceptance level.

Regarding the Goodness of Fit indices, as we eliminate from the scale the items which do not fulfill the requirements,

Table 4. Convergent validity. Initial and Final Scale

INITIAL SCALE		Indicators Final scale	Standardized Loadings	T-Value	Individual reliability
CO1_1	.683	CO4	0.72	*	0.52
CO2_1	.491	CO5	0.82	7.12	0.68
CO3_1	.763	CO6	0.77	6.94	0.60
CO4_1	.713	CO10	0.79	*	0.63
CO5_1	.784	CO11	0.71	6.95	0.57
CO6_1	.808	CO12	0.82	*	0.67
CO7_1	.585	CO13	0.88	10.43	0.78
CO8_1	.703	CO14	0.83	9.66	0.69
CO9_1	.599	CO20	0.69	*	0.47
CO10_1	.722	CO21	0.88	7.78	0.79
CO11_1	.785	CO22	0.85	7.67	0.73
CO12_1	.815	CO25	0.89	*	0.80
CO13_1	.890	CO26	0.81	7.53	0.65
CO14_1	.835	CO28	0.69	4.48	0.48
CO15_1	.632	CO29	0.92	*	0.84
CO18_1	.732				
CO19_1	.567				
CO20_1	.707				
CO21_1	.888				
CO22_1	.846				
CO25_1	.878				
CO26_1	.826				
CO27_1	.683				
CO28_1	.825				
CO29_1	.762				

* The initial loading was set equal to unit

we obtain substantial improvements in both the absolute fit measurements and the incremental fit measurements. These reach the levels recommended. This confirms the suitability of the decisions adopted.

Finally, concerning the measurement instrument's internal consistency, all the indices improve with the refining

carried out. They stay well over their acceptance levels for the final scale, both for the variance extracted and the composite reliability. This ensures the measurement instrument's reliability.

The discriminant validity must be estimated when a latent variable has more than one dimension. To do so, it is necessary to revise the matrix of the stand-

Table 5. The model's global fit

ABSOLUTE FIT MEASUREMENTS	Refined scale
DF	75
CMIN	107.040
Significance level	P=0.009
CMIN/DF	1.427
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.89
Root Mean Square Residual (RMSR) or RMR	0.11
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.06
INCREMENTAL FIT MEASUREMENTS	Refined scale
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.82
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.88
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) or Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.94
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.96
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.96

Table 6. Internal Consistence

Scale	Composite reliability	Variance Extracted
Information Sharing	0.87	0.60
Responsible behavior	0.73	0.57
Personal interaction	0.88	0.71
Advocacy	0.89	0.63
Helping	0.84	0.73
Tolerance	0.79	0.66

Table 7. Discriminant validity

	Responsible behavior	Personal interaction	Advocacy	Helping	Information Sharing	Tolerance
Responsible behavior	0.57					
Personal interaction	0.79	0.71				
Advocacy	0.04	0.06	0.63			
Helping	0.02	0.03	0.39	0.73		
Information Sharing	0.08	0.16	0.01	0.05	0.60	
Tolerance	0.00	0.010	0.005	0.096	0.21	0.662

Table 8. AFC Second order scale

		Standardized Loadings	T-Value	Individual Reliability
Information sharing	PB	0.40	*	0.16
Responsible behavior	PB	0.92	3.28	0.84
Personal interaction	PB	0.97	3.36	0.94
Tolerance	CB	0.34	2.14	0.11
Helping	CB	0.92	2.71	0.85
Advocacy	CB	0.68	*	0.46

* The initial loading was set equal to unit

Table 9. Internal Consistence second order scale

Co-creation scale	Participation behavior	Citizenship behavior
Composite reliability	0.83	0.70
Variance extracted	0.65	0.47

Table 10. The second order model's global fit

ABSOLUTE FIT MEASUREMENTS	
DF	84
CMIN	128.652
Significance level	0.001
CMIN/DF	1.53
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.86
Root Mean Square Residual o RMR	0.19
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.07
INCREMENTAL FIT MEASUREMENTS	
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.81
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.85
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.93
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.94
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.94

Table 11. AFC Co-creation

		Standardized loadings	Individual reliability
Participation behavior	Co-creation	0.27	0.07
Citizenship behavior	Co-creation	0.92	0.85

ardized correlations between the latent variables. If the correlations are very high, these variables will be explaining redundant information and will therefore not represent different constructs. One way to guarantee there being discriminant validity is to check that the square of the correlations between each pair of dimensions of the latent concept does not reach the value of each dimension’s variance extracted. From Table 7 we can state that there is discriminant validity, except for the pair of dimensions responsible behavior-personal interaction. This might mean that both dimensions are measuring the same concept.

Correlations between constructs. Variance extracted in the diagonal

Once the scale has been refined and its validity and reliability ensured, we check the multidimensional character of the co-creation construct. As defined by the authors, this third-order construct is made up of two dimensions: participative behavior and citizenship behavior. Participative behavior (PB) has four dimensions in the original scale but

has been reduced to three after carrying out the tests. Citizenship behavior (CB), on the other hand, has lost one dimension in the process and has three components in the final scale. In order to check this multidimensional character, we subject the complete scale to a new CFA, using ML as an estimation method. This produces results (Table 8) which allow us to affirm the co-creation construct’s multidimensional character, as proposed by the authors, although the reliability of two dimensions (information sharing and tolerance) is not high.

On the other hand, the reliability and the variance extracted of the two dimensions surpass the levels recommended and it is proved that the squared correlation (0.253) does not exceed any of the dimensions. This guarantees the discriminant validity.

With respect to the scale’s goodness of fit measurements, both the absolute fit measurements and the incremental measurements are considered to be very correct as they come close to the ideal figures.

To finish, we check the third-order model.

■ Discussion of the results and conclusions

After finishing the refinement process, we can state that the behavior of co-creation involves two different kinds of behavior. One of them - vital for the success of the service provision - is customer behavior aimed at taking part in the service encounter by being an active part of it. The second, which is voluntary, is the so-called citizen behavior. This involves the customer's willingness to participate in the long-term improvement of the service through recommendation, tolerance and being willing to help others. As the variable which refers to information seeking disappears, participative behavior is made up of three dimensions for the sample analyzed. On the other hand, citizen behavior is formed by three dimensions, as the one related to the feedback between the customer and the employee disappears. It stands out that the two dimensions which disappear refer to the seeking and transmitting of information. It appears that South Cone customers are not involved in this aspect of co-creation behavior or are not aware of the need to adopt these behaviors to obtain a substantial improvement in the service which they receive. If we do not appropriately know the service that we are going to receive, do not transmit to the employee who provides this service what it is that we want, and do not involve him

or her in our feelings after receiving the service, it will be more difficult to receive a service which satisfies our expectations and desires.

Once it has been adapted to the Chilean case, the scale can offer managers of firms a means of obtaining strategically-relevant information and it can be useful in the selection and socialization of customers to facilitate value co-creation behaviors. Indeed, if the firms were to measure and regularly reward co-creation behavior, customers would be more inclined to adopt it (Yi y Gong, 2012). We must not ignore the fact that the customer's involvement in the creation of new services or in the improvement of the existing ones brings about positive effects in the business results (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

The main contributions stem from the development of the scale whenever its acceptance requires showing its stability in different environments and situations. Regarding management implications, the study contributes to facilitating the measurement of the degree of customers' active participation in the service's delivery and provision. This question is considered to be of great importance to increase the customer's involvement with, and commitment and loyalty toward the organization.

Future research must go toward proving the stability of the results obtained, using the scales in other sectors, as well

as in other cultural environments. Likewise, they should consider the heterogeneity of the Chilean market to prove to what extent there are differences in the degree of co-creation between segments and which are the variables that determine these segments (Cossío *et al*, 2013). The customer's co-creation behavior, as it has been defined in this study, must be related to its possible consequences, such as trust and satisfaction (Vega *et al*, 2013; Revilla *et al*, 2014). Similarly, it is desirable to look into the factors which act as antecedents of customers' co-creation behavior. It would also be interesting to consider a longitudinal perspective in order to analyze if customers' co-creation behavior evolves over time.

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