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INCLINATION TO CO-CREATE – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF GEN Z CUSTOMERS’ MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VALUE CO-CREATION PROCESS

SKŁONNOŚĆ DO KOKREACJI – EMPIRYCZNE STUDIUM MOTYWACJI KONSUMENTÓW POKOLENIA Z DO UCZESTNICZENIA W PROCESIE WSPÓŁTWORZENIA WARTOŚCI

Keywords: Customer value co-creation, Generation Z, Motivation, Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Słowa kluczowe: Współtworzenie wartości, pokolenie Z, motywy, analiza czynnikowa

Abstract

The article presents the results of exploratory research. The purposes of this study were to recognize correlates with the inclination of Gen Z customers to perform value co-creation in favour of companies, as a specific form of extra role behaviour, as well as to identify and categorise particular motives of Gen Z customers’ inclination to co-create. Literature studies as well as conducted research prove that Gen Z consumers are willing to engage in relationships with companies having a proactive attitude by participating in the value co-creation process in a form of providing information on customers’ satisfaction, providing feedback, sharing ideas with companies, or participating in customer surveys. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) allowed to identify the following motive categories: Customer_Personality, Customer_Relatedness, Customer_Esteem, Customer_Growth, as well as Customer_Inclination, which allows testing relationships among these constructs in future studies.

Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań eksploracyjnych mających na celu rozpoznanie skłonności konsumentów pokolenia Z do współtworzenia wartości dla firm, a także zidentyfikowanie i skategoryzowanie motywów skłaniających konsumentów do kokreacji. Studia literaturowe oraz wyniki badań własnych wskazują, że konsumenci pokolenia Z chętnie angażują się w relacje z firmami prezentując proaktywną postawę, odnośnie do współtworzenia wartości, czego przejawami mogą być: informowanie o poziomie satysfakcji, przekazywanie informacji zwrotnej, dzielenie się pomysłami z przedsiębiorstwami czy udział w badaniach bezpośrednich. Analiza czynnikowa (EFA) pozwoliła na wyróżnienie pięciu kategorii motywów konsumentów pokolenia Z odnośnie do kokreacji: Osobowość, Relacyjność, Uznanie, Rozwój i Skłonność. Mogą one stanowić podstawę dalszych pogłębionych badań

INTRODUCTION

The concept of value co-creation has been widely addressed in different areas of management and marketing, since introduced by Kambil, Ginsberg and Bloch in the 90s and popularised by Prahalad and Ramaswamy in 2000s. Since that time both researchers and business practitioners see this phenomenon

as a means of generating value for companies and consumers. Value co-creation implies that value is not solely created by the firm and delivered to customers, but can be created by both parties, when they interact with each other [Grönroos, Voima, 2013, Neghina et al., 2017].

Value co-creation is perceived as customers' extra-role behaviour [Carvalho, Alves, 2023], and thus must be driven by particular motives, which are important in determining how willing consumers are to engage in co-creation behaviour. Willingness to co-create is conceived of as an attitudinal concept that represents the extent to which consumers are willing to integrate their own resources with those of the service firm [O'Hern, Rindfleisch, 2010]. In turn, willingness to co-create is expected to be a strong determinant of intended co-creation behaviour [Neghina et al. 2017], especially among Gen Z customers [Litman, 2022]

The purposes of this study were to recognize correlates with the inclination of Gen Z customers to perform value co-creation in favour of companies, as a specific form of extra role behaviour, as well as to identify and categorise particular motives of Gen Z customers' inclination to co-create. The research was in a form of a survey conducted in 2021 and 2022 on Polish respondents aged 18–25, who declared they had engaged in value co-creation.

In order to identify the key drivers for customers' inclination to participate in value co-creation, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the basis of SPSS program. The Varimax results of EFA for identified 16 items (motives) used for the latent constructs were then categorised. The rotated component matrix allowed to indicate 5 main constructs determining the inclination of customers to engage in value co-creation.

This study may enrich our understanding of value co-creation inclination on both theoretical and empirical levels. The paper contributions were presented, and limitations addressed, which indicates further areas of future studies.

VALUE CO-CREATION AS A FORM OF EXTRA-ROLE CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR

The term "customer value co-creation" was first used by Kambil, Ginsberg and Bloch [1996] to emphasize the role of customers in business strategy. It was then popularised and disseminated by Prahalad and Ramaswamy [2004], who conceptualised value co-creation as the "co-creation of personalised experiences with the customers". Instead of focusing only on the offering, organisations should emphasise on experiences at the multiple points of exchange as the basis of value co-creation [Agrawal, Rahman, 2015].

Today, various perspectives have been considered by authors to study value co-creation, i.e.: management perspective, marketing perspective, service logic and service dominant logic, design logic, or innovation and new product development perspective [Agrawal, Rahman, 2015]. Different perspectives are represented by numerous definitions of value co-creation. Chosen definitions synthesised from various authors are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Definitions of value co-creation

Authors	Value co-creation definition
Saha et al. (2020)	"[...] dyadic interactions between two parties involved in the joint creation."
Hein et al. (2019)	"[...] a process of creating value between all the involved actors within a service ecosystem."
Fernades & Remelhe (2016)	"[...] is considered as an important manifestation of customer engagement behaviour toward a brand or a firm, resulting from motivational drivers."
Roser et al. (2013)	"[...] an interactive, creative and social process between stakeholders that is initiated by the firm at different stages of the value creation process."
Ind and Coates (2013)	"[...] as a process that provides an opportunity for on-going interaction, where the organization is willing to share its world with external stakeholders and can generate in return the insight that can be derived from their engagement."

Grönroos (2011)	“[...] is a joint collaborative activity by parties involved in direct interactions, aiming to contribute to the value that emerges for one or both parties.”
Xie et al. (2008)	“[...] is an activity undertaken by the consumer that result in the production of products they eventually consume and that become their consumption experiences.”
Zwick et al. (2008)	“[...] as a set of organizational strategies and discursive procedures aimed at reconfiguring social relations of production, works through the freedom of the consumer subject with the objective of encouraging and capturing the know-how of this creative common.”

Source: Own elaboration

Consumer value co-creation may be therefore concluded as collaborative work between a consumer and a firm in an innovation process, whereby the consumer and supplier engage (to different degrees) in the activity of co-ideation, co-design, co-development and co-creation of new products or services [Dewalska–Opitek, Mitreęa 2020].

CUSTOMER WILLINGNESS AND MOTIVES TO CO-CREATE

The co-creation process involves customers’ resources (such as time and effort) invested or even sacrificed, which is sometimes described by as commitment or supportive behaviour [Tung, Chen, Schuckert, 2017]. The extra-role behaviour is voluntary; thus, it should be driven by specific motives. A question may therefore arise: what may be the antecedents of customer value co-creation? Addressing this question requires the consideration of related concepts and theories relevant to the subject matter.

According to Fowler [2013] theory of motivation may bring the answer to the question, with special regard to intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting, enjoyable or in accordance with customer’s values or attitudes [Fowler, 2013]. Elster [2006] pointed at altruism motivation. Studies on human altruistic behaviours have shown that extra role behaviour can make the value co-creator feel happy and satisfied. Once people do a good thing, they will do more to obtain inner happiness [Elster, 2006]. The extrinsic motivation, however, refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome, for instance may be appreciated and rewarded by a reference group or a company [Ryan, Deci, 2000].

Fernandes and Remelhe [2016] proposed a model, in which they point at four specific motives as drivers for customer involvement in the co-creation process, i.e.: intrinsic motives (such as joy, curiosity, new experience), financial motives (such as expected monetary compensation or other rewards e.g. special offers, prices), knowledge motives (improvement of skills, self-development) and social motives (the sense of belonging, the sense of community, communication), which may be referred to as orientation towards Maslow’s social and self-esteem needs [Fernandes, Remelhe, 2016].

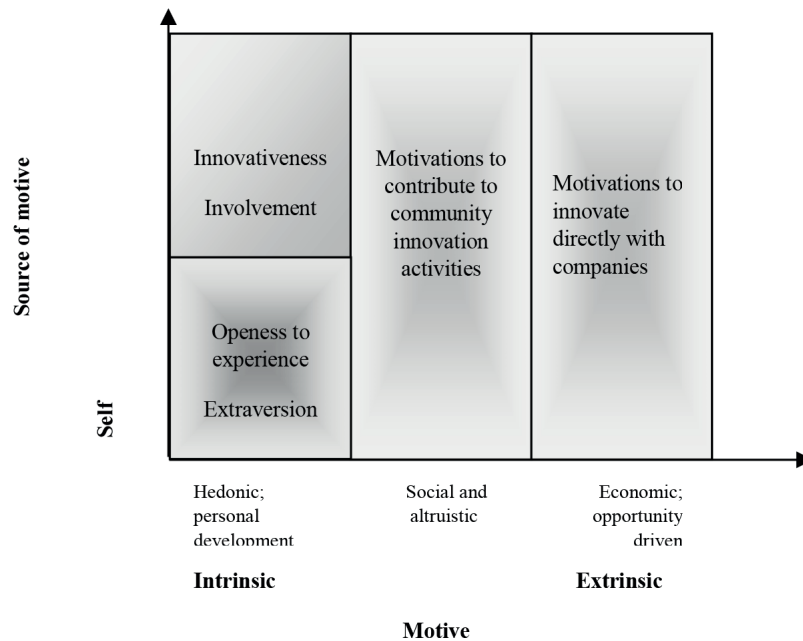
Karpen et al. [2012], followed by Neghina et al. [2017] state that customers motives to engage in the value co-creation process may be described by six factors (dimensions), which are: individualizing motives, which refer to establishing a mutual understanding of the customer’s resources, roles, and desired outcomes; relating motives, which pertain to enhancing the social and emotional connection with the service provider or other customers; empowering motives, which are connected to the desire to negotiate the power to influence the service process or outcome; ethical motives to require fair, honest, and moral guidelines for the service interaction; developmental motives, which relate to the development of the customer’s operand and operant resources; and concerted motives, which pertain to synchronizing efforts with the goal of engaging in pleasant, relevant, and timely interactions.

Vermehren et al. [2023] explain that customers’ willingness to co-create may be driven by their innovativeness and involvement. Innovativeness is a trait of individuals, who are receptive to new ideas, products, and services. Highly innovative customers may be more prompt to show an increased readiness to share information and to actively invest a reasonable amount of time and effort in the co-creation process. Involvement denotes a central predictor of customers’ active interaction and engagement with brands, products, and services [Pansari, Kumar, 2017, Harrigan et al., 2018].

Based on empirical studies of Costa et al. [2019], Maier et al. [2019] and Vermehren et al. [2023], customers willingness to co-create may also be driven by other psychological traits, i.e., openness to experience, and extraversion.

A complex model of co-creation motivation was proposed by Holbrook [2006] and followed by Roberts et al. [2011] and Bilińska-Reformat et al. [2020]. It combines the above-mentioned motivation theories (see Fig. 1)[2014].

Figure 1. Consumer value co-creation based on motivation theory



Source: Holbrook, 2006; Roberts et. al., 2014, Bilińska et al., 2020

Among the intrinsic (self-oriented) motivation to innovate we may point at fun, escapism, passion, or desire for better product, as well as personal development capability and skills development. Social motives to co-create are helping others, building ties to the community or reciprocity. Among altruistic motives the following may be mentioned: belongingness, feedback, recognition, making friends. Economic and opportunity motives to collaborate directly with companies may be in game rewards, desire for better product, recognition, or career opportunities [Roberts et. al., 2014].

GEN Z CUSTOMERS' INCLINATION TO CO-CREATE

Generation Z (also referred to as Gen Z or gen Zers) includes people born in 1995–2009 [McCrinkle, 2015]. Gen Z is the largest, most diverse, and most geographically untethered cohort in history, making up 40% of all global consumers and holding earnings of about \$7 trillion. By 2031, Gen Zers' income will reach \$33 trillion, surpassing that of millennials, making it a generation worth attention being paid to [Litman, Oz, 2022].

More than any previous generation, Gen Z wants to be involved in the ideation and participation in value-co-creation with the brands and people they care about. According to Francis and Hoefel [2018], Gen Zers believe they're more creative than previous generations, and they uniquely describe creative pursuits as essential, meaning they see creativity as a core attribute of daily life. Gen Z values brands which are willing to co-create, is keen to get involved. Empirical evidence shows that 85% of Gen Z consumers under 30 are interested in contributing ideas to help brands develop solutions for social and environmental issues [Litman, 2022]. This creative emphasis fuels Gen Z's distinct desire to share and be involved with the brands they interact with at all levels.

In order to build a lasting bond with Gen Z, companies not only need to become ones which allow for but have a digital and physical infrastructure that encourages youth to co-create and help shape the direction of the business at all levels. This requires enabling Gen Z to collaborate on shaping the brand and the impact it creates in the world—from brand purpose to community management and user support. Sharing is about co-creating a continuous value exchange for both parties. It may be associated with sourcing product ideas, feedback from existing customers or any other extra-role customer behaviour. Due to this new approach, firms can create novel relationships, customer experiences and new product categories, as well as avoid costly market missteps. It is important to think of co-creation as an ongoing process. The long-term success of community-building, the precursor to sharing, will depend on a brand's willingness to interact with Gen Z in a way that is consistent, transparent, and personal. Business leaders need to design thoughtful, engaging, and creative opportunities that encourage shared ideation and longer-term partnerships for their community members [Litman, Oz, 2022].

RESEARCH METHOD

The purposes of this study were to recognize correlates with the inclination of Gen Z customers to perform value co-creation in favour of companies, as a specific form of extra role behaviour, as well as to recognize and categorise particular motives of Gen Z customers' inclination to co-create. The research was in a form of a survey conducted in 2021 and 2022. It was as a part of broader spectrum of customer citizenship behaviour conducted on Polish respondents, nevertheless the paper presents only limited extend, i.e., research finding referring to Gen Z customers' value co-creation. The assumption of the sample selection was to find respondents aged 18–25, who declared they had engaged in value co-creation.

Sampling procedures were based on quota sampling (non-random technique). In total, 107 valid questionnaires were used in the analysis. 48 (44,86%) of the respondents were male and 59 (55,14%) female, aged 18 – 25. Asked to describe their economic status in comparison to other people at the same age, respondents evaluated it as neither better or worse similar or the same (46,74%) and rather better (21,50%). Respondents were also asked how often they used Internet. 91,59% declared the internet usage several times a day and 8,41%- about once a day. Table 2. presents the detailed information about survey respondents.

Table 2. Survey sample characteristics (N=107)

Specification	Sample (in%)	Specification	Sample (in %)
Gender:		Age:	
Male	44,86	18 - 19 years	39,25
Female	55,14	20 – 22 years	34,57
Other/ not declared	-	23 - 25 years	26,18
Perceived economic status compared to other consumers at the same age:		Frequency of Internet usage:	
Definitely better	6,54	Several times a day	91,59
Rather better	21,50	About once a day	8,41
Neither better nor worse	46,74	Several times a week	-
Rather worse	14,01	Several times a month	-
Definitely worse	11,21	Not more often than once a month	-
		Never, hardly ever	-

Source: Own elaboration

The questionnaire used as a research tool for data collection contained scales to measure the customers' inclination to co-create. For the dependent variables (inclination to co-create) several scales were adopted, i.e.: from studies by Soch and Aggarwal [2013], McCrae and Sutin [2018], Dewalska-Opitek and Mitrega [2019], Oertzen et al. [2020], while for independent variables scales were adopted from studies by Kim and Choi [2016], Vermehren et al. [2023], Neghina et al. [2014].

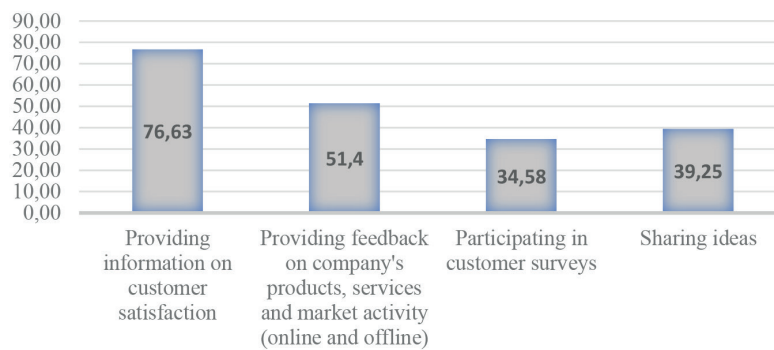
All constructs were measured with multi-item reflective measurement models using 5-point Likert scales ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”. Some adaptation was also used when respondents were asked about the frequency of an activity, ranging from (1) “I definitely did not perform”/“I will definitely not perform” to (5) “I definitely performed”/“I will definitely perform”. To reduce the measurement error and not to bias the results, neutral wording was used, as well as the assurance of respondent anonymity and data confidentiality [Mitrega, Pfajfar 2015].

The research was exploratory in nature, conducted in order to determine the nature of the problem, and was not intended to provide conclusive evidence, but to have a better understanding of the problem [Henson, Roberts 2006].

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Respondents were asked whether they had co-created value in favour of companies. It was a filter question used for sampling. 107 survey participants declared they had, and when asked to indicate which specific activities were performed, 77% declared they “Had provided information on customers’ satisfaction, participated in customer surveys” and 51% “Had provided feedback on company’s products, services and market activity (online and offline)”, 40% shared ideas and 35% participated in customer surveys. The obtained results are presented in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2. Graphical presentation of respondents’ performed activity concerning declared value co-creation

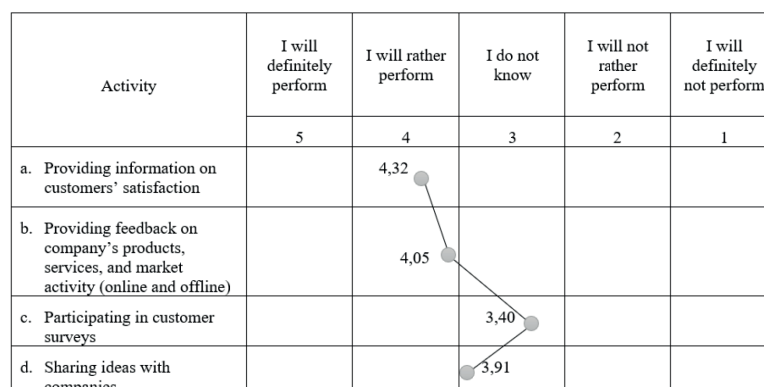


Source: Author’s elaboration on the basis of research results

Some companies notice the extra-role behaviour of their customers and express gratitude. 15% of respondents experienced gratification in forms of *acknowledgements, emails with gratefulness, but also rewards and gifts, company gadgets, discounts, vouchers, and coupons.*

We also asked the Gen Z respondents about their intention to perform value co-creation behaviour in future, and if so, which of the activities they are planning to implement. The obtained results are presented in Fig. 3. in the form of a semantic profile.

Fig. 3. Semantic profile of respondents’ intended activity concerning declared value co-creation in future



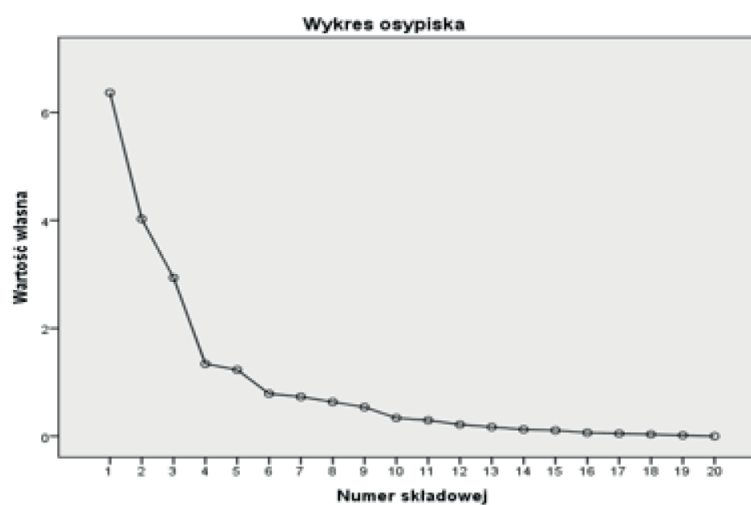
Source: Author’s elaboration on the basis of research results

Researched customers declared they “will rather” provide information and feedback on their satisfaction arisen from their contacts with the companies' goods, services, and market activities. The weighted average was scored 4.32 and 4.05, respectively. As far as participating in customers' surveys or sharing ideas with companies is concerned, the Gen Z survey participants are less certain about performing it in future (the weighted average scored 3.40 and 3.91, respectively).

Comparing the respondents' intention to perform specific behaviour in future with the declared one concerning past actions, we may notice significant similarities. It allows drawing a conclusion, that being experienced in performing value co-creation, and having experienced gratitude from companies, customers may have the intention to engage in value co-creation behaviour in future.

In order to identify the key drivers for customers' inclination to participate in value co-creation, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the basis of SPSS program. The Scree Plot (Fig. 4) indicated a five-factor solution.

Fig. 4. Scree Plot indicating the number of components for customers' value co-creation



Source: Own survey results processed in SPSS package

The Varimax results of EFA for previously identified 16 items used for the latent constructs (Table 3) were then categorised. In general, all items loaded on the expected constructs, and they had factor loadings higher than 0,6 with no cross loadings.

The rotated component matrix allows to indicate 5 main constructs determining the inclination of customers to engage in value co-creation. The first one refers to safety and belonging needs of customers (Customer_Personality) explain how customers' personality traits (i.e., openness to experience, innate innovativeness, enduring involvement, or extraversion) translate into their willingness to co-create (WCC); (Handrich and Heidenreich, 2013).

The second construct (Customer_Relatedness) refers to customers' attitudes and behaviour towards others, i.e., relationships with others or membership in a group.

The third and fourth constructs (Customer_Esteem) and (Customer_Growth), apply to customers' needs identified and described by Maslow, i.e.: esteem needs (acceptation, notification, respect) and growth needs (self-fulfilment, self-development, development of competences).

The last construct is the willingness to perform customer citizenship behaviour in the form of value co-creation in future (Co-Creation_Inclination), consisting of providing feedback on company's products, services, and market activity, both online and offline, providing information on customers' satisfaction, participating in customers surveys, and sharing ideas with companies.

Table 3. Rotated Component Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Providing information on customers' satisfaction					.712
Providing feedback on company's products, services, and market activity (online and offline)					.856
Participating in customers surveys					.655
Sharing ideas with companies					.680
Openness to experience	.915				
Innate innovativeness	.832				
Enduring involvement	.812				
Extraversion	.819				
Relationships with others			.919		
Membership in a group			.917		
Acceptation		.812			
Notification		.713			
Respect		.866			
Self-fulfilment				.815	
Self-development				.915	
Competences development				.740	

Source: Own survey results processed in SPSS package

Following Hair et al [2017], as well as Mitreęa and Pfajfar [2015], convergent validity was tested to determine whether the “indicators of a specific construct should coverage or share a high proportion of variance in common”. Average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) asses convergent validity, according to the following criteria: $AVE > 0,5$, and $SCR > 0,6$. The results of convergent validity are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Convergent validity for 5-item construct

	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Customer_Personality	0,867	0,685
Customer_Relatedness	0,782	0,548
Customer_Esteem	0,853	0,663
Customer_Growth	0,864	0,627
Customer_Inclination	0,761	0,561

Source: Own survey results processed in Excel

The above-mentioned criteria were met in case of all measured constructs. Taking this into consideration, as well as the results of conducted analysis, it may be assumed that measures of latent variables were valid and reliable in case of all five constructs: Customer_Personality, Customer_Relatedness, Customer_Esteem, Customer_Growth, as well as Customer_Inclination, which allows testing relationships among these constructs in future studies .

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the deliberation presented in the paper, value co-creation may be perceived as an important trend in customer behaviour, especially with regard to generation Z. This cohort is keen to get involved, which means that companies must be open to customer co-creation. For long-lasting bonds to be made, a participation-led business model, supported by the right physical and digital infrastructure shall be implemented in future.

Literature studies proved that value co-creation is a multidimensional construct, the meaning of value co-creation was shifting from a product- and firm-centric view to personalized consumer experiences, gaining growing attention among researchers and business practitioners. Regardless of the presented approach, customer value co-creation is perceived as an extra-role behaviour. This behaviour, voluntary in nature, is driven by specific motives. On the basis of conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) 5 main constructs determining the willingness of generation Z customers to engage in value co-creation were identified, i.e., Customer_Personality, Customer_Relatedness, Customer_Esteem, Customer_Growth, and Customer_Inclination. Measures of latent variables were valid and reliable in case of all five constructs, which allows testing relationships between these constructs in future studies, using other analytical methods. The research supports the theory of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, represented by Holbrook's model of consumer value co-creation based on motivation theory [Holbrook, 2006; Roberts et al., 2014, Bilińska et al., 2020], as well as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as referred to by Fernandes and Remelhe [2013].

This study may enrich our understanding of value co-creation inclination on both theoretical and empirical levels. It contributes to the academic literature in several ways. Firstly, this study responds to previous calls highlighting the importance of continuing to develop studies on customer value co-creation, and secondly this research highlights factors less addressed in the literature, which are relevant to understanding the concept of value co-creation.

At a management level, the ongoing study indicates the key drivers for Gen Z customer extra role behaviour in the form of value co-creation and provides useful actionable guidance to managers: by enhancing particular motives, firms can stimulate consumers' co-creation.

Several limitations apply to the study's findings. The study presents only research findings of Gen Z inclination to co-create. A cross-generational comparison might bring new perspective on the phenomenon. Also, further research may indicate other motives of Gen Z customers to provide value co-creation activities. This leaves space for a future study.

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