AI-Driven Value Co-Creation: Deliberate vs. Spontaneous Customer Participation

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This research aims to deepen our understanding of the dynamics of deliberate and spontaneous customer participation in AI-facilitated value co-creation. In an era where artificial intelligence plays a pivotal role in shaping customer experiences, it is crucial to explore the nuanced ways in which customers engage with AI. This study investigates the factors influencing deliberate and spontaneous participation, shedding light on the implications for businesses seeking to optimize customer participation in value co-creation processes. The investigation encompasses diverse industry scenarios and explores the intricate relationships between customers and AI in co-creating value.

Keywords: Value co-creation, Customer Participation, Artificial Intelligence, Deliberate and Spontaneous Participation.

1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of contemporary business, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) has become integral to the notion of value co-creation. As we traverse an era where AI profoundly shapes customer experiences, a critical examination of the nuanced dynamics of customer participation with AI systems is paramount. This research seeks to delve into the interplay between deliberate and spontaneous customer participation within the context of AI-facilitated value co-creation. Deliberate participation refers to intentional or purposeful involvement in a particular activity or process (Blazevic et al., 2013). Deliberate customer participation recognizes that customers possess valuable knowledge about their preferences, needs, and experiences. By involving them in the value creation process, businesses can gain a competitive edge, enhance customer loyalty, and create products and services that better align with customer expectations. Spontaneous participation refers to individuals or entities engaging in an activity or process without premeditation or prior planning (Jung & Yoo, 2017). It involves unplanned and impromptu involvement in a given situation. In the context of co-creation or value creation, spontaneous participation implies that individuals contribute or collaborate without a predetermined or structured arrangement. This perspective sees value co-creation as a natural outcome of customer interaction with the brand, where customers, knowingly or unknowingly, contribute to the overall value.

Some scholars argue that customers participate in the value co-creation process intentionally and deliberately. This perspective suggests that customers actively seek opportunities to contribute to the development, design, or improvement of products and services (Prahalad, Ramaswamy, 2004). On the other hand, other researchers propose that customer participation can also be spontaneous. In this view, customers may contribute to value co-creation without a predefined intention, driven by their immediate needs, experiences, or desires (Payne et al., 2008). It's important to note that these perspectives are not mutually exclusive, and both intentional and spontaneous aspects of customer participation can coexist (Blazevic et al., 2013). The nature of customer involvement may vary depending on the context, industry, and specific circumstances.

The foundational premise of value co-creation suggests that value is collaboratively generated through the integration of resources between organizations and consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a, 2004b). The swift evolution of information and communication technologies has positioned AI as a central facilitator in this co-creation process. Empowered and interconnected customers now actively contribute to content creation, support one another in product/service utilization, provide feedback, and advocate for brands—all facilitated by AI systems (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014).

While existing marketing literature extensively explores the motivations, types, and dimensions of consumer participation in co-creation, the landscape is transforming with the increasing integration of AI (Chandra and Rahman, 2023). This study aims to investigate the factors influencing deliberate and spontaneous customer participation in AI-facilitated value co-creation, emphasizing the distinctive aspects of dynamic customer participation. The goal is to shed light on the implications for businesses striving to optimize customer involvement in value co-creation processes in the AI era.

This exploration moves beyond generic and industry-specific studies, focusing specifically on the pivotal role of AI in shaping the relationship between customers and companies. By delving into the goals that companies can achieve through engaging customers in AI-facilitated co-creation, the study seeks to unravel the techniques employed for customer- AI engagement and the multifaceted nature of the value derived from this dynamic process. The critical inquiry extends to whether the realized value encompasses dimensions beyond the economic, addressing a notable gap in the current understanding.

This paper integrates theoretical perspectives from consumer participation and value co-creation research with insights gathered through case studies. By doing so, it not only contributes to the theoretical discourse on dynamic customer participation in AI-facilitated value co-creation but also offers practical insights for businesses navigating this transformative landscape. The

subsequent sections will provide a theoretical background on customer participation in value co-creation, and AI-facilitated value co-creation. The research approach will be outlined, and findings will be presented, culminating in key conclusions that bridge the identified gap in understanding the symbiotic relationship between customers and AI in the realm of value co-creation.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Customer Participation in Value Co-Creation

In marketing literature, the concept of value is viewed as a collaborative creation arising from interactions and the integration of resources, moving beyond traditional transactional exchanges (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). This collaborative creation, termed value co-creation, is influenced by individual value processes, goals, and the broader social context (Epp & Price, 2011; Michel et al., 2008). While the traditional emphasis was on firms creating conditions for successful value co-creation through strong relationships and high-quality interactions (Jaworski & Kohli, 2006), there is a shift towards recognizing the pivotal role of customers in this process, particularly through the lens of customer participation. Customer participation involves the resources contributed by customers, where non-transactional engagement behaviour's contribute diverse resources such as time, money, and actions (van Doorn et al., 2010). These contributions impact both the firm and other customers to varying degrees.

Recent developments in the Service-Dominant (S-D) literature emphasize that value co-creation occurs within complex and dynamic network structures or service systems. Service systems are configurations of exchange parties (providers and customers) and their networks, highlighting the permeable boundaries and dynamic nature of service settings (Maglio et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Examples include cities, call centers, hospitals, and universities.

Through customer participation, customers extend their contributions beyond the immediate provider-customer relationship, affecting value creation processes at the system level (Schau et al., 2009). The nature of customer participation in value co-creation can be intentional and deliberate or spontaneous. Intentional participation implies that customers actively seek opportunities to contribute to product and service development (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). Conversely, spontaneous participation occurs without predefined intentions, driven by immediate needs, experiences, or desires (Payne et al., 2008).

Importantly, intentional and spontaneous customer participation can both happen at the same time (Blazevic et al., 2013). The context, industry, and specific situations really matter and influence how customers get involved. It's crucial to understand the factors affecting intentional and customer contributions, especially when AI is involved in creating value. This highlights how customer involvement is always changing and dynamic.

2.2 AI Facilitated Value Cocreation

In today's digital transformation landscape, value co-creation is a key concept reshaping the relationships between companies and customers (Sheth, 2019). It involves a collaborative effort between product/service providers and beneficiaries (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a), guided by service-dominant logic. Resources, classified as operand or operant, form the core of value co-creation (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015; Paschen et al., 2020; Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Digitalization expands exchanges beyond human interactions, incorporating AI-enabled actors like virtual assistants and chatbots (Kohler et al., 2011; Sashi, 2021). Technologies such as AI, Augmented/Virtual Reality, and big data analytics play a pivotal role in Value Co-Creation (VCC) (Kelleher et al., 2020; Ng et al., 2019).

AI, or artificial intelligence, mimics human-like intelligence, providing technical support and widening consumer participation channels (Syam & Sharma, 2018). It predicts consumer motivations, potentially triggering value co-creation with humans (Akaka & Vargo, 2014).

Studies on AI and value co-creation focus on technology supporting service providers, resource integration, and enhancing beneficiaries' well-being (Kaartemo & Helkkula, 2018). Despite advancements, the human-centered aspect of AI interaction remains underexplored (J. Paschen et al., 2021; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018).

Recent efforts explore how individuals interact with machines for value co-creation, with AIs exhibiting soft skills like empathy (Barile et al., 2017; Paschen et al., 2020). The rapid development of AI transforms interactions, influencing the psychological state of stakeholders (Larivière et al., 2017). Service-dominant logic emphasizes customers' central role in value co-creation, where participation and experiences create more value than products alone (Vargo & Lusch, 2016, 2017). Modern technology broadens customer participation in AI-based services (Chandra & Rahman, 2023).

3. Methodology

In this research, we have opted for a qualitative method to delve into the intricate dynamics of deliberate and spontaneous customer participation within the context of AI-facilitated value co-creation. Our primary objective is to scrutinize the factors influencing both deliberate and spontaneous customer involvement, providing valuable insights for businesses aiming to enhance customer participation in value co-creation processes.

The rationale for selecting a qualitative approach lies in its capacity to capture the nuanced aspects of customer participation, particularly in the rapidly evolving landscape of artificial intelligence. This method allows for a profound understanding of the motivations and behaviors of customers as they interact with AI technologies in the co-creation of value.

To ensure external validity and generalizability, we have employed a multiple case study design (as show in table 1), drawing inspiration from the works of Carrillo-Hermosilla et al. (2010) and Leone et al. (2021). By examining five distinct cases

exclusively related to AI-facilitated value co-creation, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon through diverse real-world instances. Additionally, the case study design is well-suited for situations where there is limited existing knowledge about a phenomenon and substantial disagreement within the literature, as noted by (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

In conclusion, our qualitative approach and case study design are intentional choices, strategically made to offer a nuanced exploration of customer participation dynamics in the realm of AI-facilitated value co-creation. This research aspires to generate both theoretical and pragmatic insights, providing actionable recommendations for businesses navigating and optimizing customer participation in this rapidly evolving landscape.

Table 1 *The Investigated Cases*

Company	Case description
Neutrino RPM	In this case, Techlogix discusses Neutrino RPM, detailing how it employs artificial intelligence (AI) to facilitate the connection between patients and healthcare providers via a mobile app designed for remote patient monitoring. The Neutrino RPM app incorporates a specialized survey engine that formulates tailored questions based on the patient's medical history and current condition. Patients can conveniently respond to these questions from the comfort of their homes, providing daily updates on their symptoms. The Neutrino engine then examines the gathered data, promptly notifying healthcare providers or caregivers in the event of significant changes in the patient's symptoms. This innovative approach effectively addresses the challenge of monitoring chronic illnesses, offering a solution that minimizes the necessity for in-person visits or weekly phone calls.
Ant financial	The case study examines Ant Financials' business model in inclusive finance and the technological capabilities that give it a competitive edge. Ant Financial focuses on providing equal access to financial services, particularly targeting underserved segments in China. The deliberate strategy of catering to young people and low-income individuals is reflected in its vision statement. Technologically, Ant Financial leverages big data analytics, cloud computing, risk control, and artificial intelligence (AI). The company utilizes real-time, multi-dimensional data from over 600 million users for innovative financial solutions. Advanced cloud computing services and effective risk management contribute to efficient and secure transactions. Ant Financials' application of AI extends to customer service, automating issue resolution through data mining and semantic analysis. The case study underscores how Ant Financial's deliberate customer focus and advanced technological capabilities drive inclusive finance and maintain its competitive position.
Booking.com	The case highlights how Booking.com is leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) to revolutionize the travel industry and provide a bespoke customer experience. Booking. Om's Chief Marketing Officer, Pepijn Rijvers, emphasizes the company's commitment to using data and AI to reduce the friction in the travel planning process. The AI technologies deployed by Booking.com span various aspects of the business, including customer service, marketing, and the website/app interface. The company aims to offer intelligent, targeted results to users, saving them time and presenting options aligned with their preferences. Personalization begins from the moment a user lands on the website, with destination recommendations and content tailored based on individual data. The article explores how chatbots and AI-driven personalization are transforming the customer journey and creating a more seamless and user-centric travel booking experience.
Amazon	This case highlights how Amazon strategically employs artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) across various aspects of its business to dominate the e-commerce market. It discusses key statistics showcasing Amazon's market dominance and explores specific use cases of AI implementation, including personalized product recommendations, Alexa-enabled voice shopping, AI-powered search relevancy, AI optimization in warehouses, and the innovative 'just walk out' technology in Amazon Go stores. The article emphasizes Amazon's early adoption of AI, contributing to its competitive edge and customer-centric approach. The flywheel approach, where AI innovation in one department catalyses growth in others, is identified as a key factor in Amazon's success as a major AI adopter and market leader.
Netflix	This case highlights how Netflix utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance user experience through personalized content recommendations. The AI system tracks users' viewing habits, preferences, and ratings, using this data to suggest movies and shows tailored to individual tastes. Netflix's AI, powered by advanced machine learning algorithms, continuously learns and evolves as users engage with the platform, becoming more adept at providing relevant recommendations over time. Approximately 80% of content viewed on Netflix is a result of these personalized suggestions. The benefits of AI for Netflix include increased user engagement, retention, and streamlined content discovery. Businesses can draw insights from Netflix's AI approach, emphasizing the collection and analysis of customer data for tailored marketing and improved customer experiences.

4. Findings

This research delves into the intricate dynamics of deliberate and spontaneous customer participation in AI-facilitated value co-creation, aiming to provide comprehensive insights for businesses seeking to optimize customer-AI engagement. The study encompasses diverse industry scenarios, offering valuable observations through case studies such as Neutrino RPM Techloix, 2023), Ant Financial (Bonde et al., 2018), Booking.com (Verdict AI, 2018) , Amazon (Jr Harrigan, 2022), and Netflix (Akif, 2023).

In the case of Neutrino RPM within the health sector, deliberate customer participation is intentionally woven into the fabric of AI-facilitated value co-creation. Patients actively engage with the platform, voluntarily sharing health conditions through a personalized survey generated by the AI-driven engine. This deliberate act empowers the AI to generate tailored insights, fostering a symbiotic relationship where customers contribute actively to the co-creation of value, while the AI leverages their input to deliver personalized and timely information, particularly in the context of remote patient monitoring.

Similarly, in the inclusive finance model of Ant Financial, deliberate customer participation is a cornerstone. Customers actively contribute real-time and multi-dimensional data, forming a valuable resource for creating financial innovations. The deliberate focus on underserved segments aligns with the company's vision, with purposeful AI applications designed to enhance customer service, predict user questions, and automate issue resolution.

Booking.com, in the e-commerce and travel sector, exemplifies deliberate customer participation in AI-facilitated value co-creation. Users actively shape their travel experiences by providing information about preferences and booking history. The platform utilizes this data to personalize the travel planning experience, offering tailored recommendations and content. The deliberate participation includes the strategic use of chatbots and AI-driven personalization features to enhance customer interaction and satisfaction.

Contrastingly, Amazon's approach demonstrates spontaneous customer participation in AI-facilitated value co-creation. The seamless integration of AI into the user experience allows customers to engage effortlessly with features such as personalized product recommendations, Alexa voice shopping, and AI-enhanced search. The spontaneity arises from the user's natural interaction with AI-driven functionalities seamlessly embedded in the e-commerce platform. Continuous innovation in AI applications creates a spontaneous customer participation model, contributing to a more efficient and personalized shopping experience.

Further emphasizing spontaneous customer participation, the case of Netflix illustrates how users contribute to the system through natural actions like watching, rating, and finishing shows or movies. The AI observes these actions without requiring explicit input, refining its recommendations in real-time. Customers spontaneously become part of the co-creation process by enjoying content tailored to their preferences, showcasing a dynamic and personalized streaming experience.

Observing sectoral trends, the health sector, insurance industry and travel sector often exhibit deliberate customer participation due to the sensitivity of information involved. In contrast, the e-commerce sector and entertainment services tend to foster spontaneity, with customers expressing preferences and opinions in real-time.

Over time, the evolution of user participation with AI-facilitated value co-creation has become increasingly dynamic, as observed in the highlighted cases of Neutrino RPM and Booking.com. The recognition that intentional and spontaneous aspects of customer participation are not mutually exclusive underscores the evolving nature of these interactions. In Neutrino RPM, for instance, patients' intentional sharing of health information contributes to the deliberate co-creation of value. Simultaneously, the seamless integration of AI over time has led to a paradigm where spontaneous participation occurs organically, as patients routinely engage with the app, fostering a collaborative approach to healthcare monitoring.

Similarly, in Booking.com, the evolution of user participation over time is notable. While deliberate participation is evident through users actively providing preferences and booking history, the long-term impact of AI-driven personalization features and chatbots has led to a shift. Over time, users not only intentionally shape their travel experiences but also engage spontaneously as the system learns and adapts to their preferences. The coexistence of intentional and spontaneous participation, observed in both cases, reflects the adaptive nature of user interactions with AI over time. It underscores the importance of recognizing the evolving dynamics influenced by the context, industry norms, and specific circumstances that shape the intricate relationship between users and AI in value co-creation processes.

4.1 Factors Influencing Deliberate and Spontaneous Participation in Value Co-Creation

From the insightful case studies of Neutrino RPM, Ant Financial, Booking.com, Amazon, and Netflix, it is evident that several factors influence deliberate and spontaneous participation in value co-creation processes facilitated by AI. These factors, as identified, span across technological, psychological, and contextual elements. Examining the critical determinants, user interface design emerges as a pivotal factor in shaping deliberate and spontaneous customer participation. For deliberate participation, the clarity and intuitiveness of the interface are crucial, promoting active input and feedback through user-friendly designs. On the other hand, for spontaneous participation, a well-designed interface should seamlessly capture implicit user actions, enabling routine engagement without intrusiveness.

Incentive structures play a significant role in both deliberate and spontaneous participation (Clark & Wilson, 1961). Tangible incentives such as discounts or rewards motivate deliberate participation, especially when customers perceive clear benefits from their contributions. Conversely, spontaneous participation is driven by the inherent value derived from personalized experiences and recommendations, emphasizing the seamless integration of AI recommendations into the customer's journey.

Industry-specific variations are observed, where norms and expectations shape customer interaction with AI-driven processes(Jan et al., 2023). In healthcare, deliberate customer participation is prominent, with customers willingly providing health data for personalized recommendations. In contrast, in e-commerce, spontaneous participation arises from routine purchasing behaviour’s, reflecting industry-specific dynamics.

Ethical considerations are fundamental for establishing customer trust in both deliberate and spontaneous participation (Puntoni et al., 2021; Van Doorn et al., 2017). Transparency in data usage, clear communication of privacy measures, and explicit consent are essential for ethical engagement in value co-creation.

Understanding customer motivations is vital for both deliberate and spontaneous participation (Daugherty et al., 2008). For deliberate participation, businesses need to align their strategies with customer motivations, such as a desire for personalization or a sense of co-creation. Recognizing factors that drive spontaneous contributions, such as the convenience of AI-driven recommendations, informs strategies to foster spontaneous engagement.

User education and awareness emerge as critical elements (Isidore & Arun, 2021). For deliberate participation, educating users about the benefits of active engagement and the value derived from providing input can influence intentional participation.

For spontaneous participation, increasing user awareness of how routine interactions contribute to AI algorithm improvements enhances spontaneous engagement.

AI system transparency is a common factor impacting both deliberate and spontaneous participation (Noble et al., 2022; Van Doorn et al., 2017). Transparent operation and ethical use of customer data build trust, encouraging customers to actively participate in the co-creation process.

Finally, the overall customer experience is highlighted as a crucial factor (Hoyer et al., 2020). A positive and seamless experience with AI-driven features fosters both deliberate and spontaneous participation, while a poor experience may discourage engagement. In conclusion, businesses seeking to optimize customer participation in value co-creation processes facilitated by AI should consider these factors and their interplay, allowing for the design of more effective strategies, tailored interfaces, and an environment that encourages both intentional and natural customer contributions.

5. Implication for Theory and Practice

5.1 Implications for Theory

The insights gleaned from the case studies of Neutrino RPM, Ant Financial, Booking.com, Amazon, and Netflix offer notable implications for advancing theoretical understanding in the domain of AI-facilitated value co-creation. Firstly, the identified factors influencing deliberate and spontaneous participation provide fertile ground for the development of a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics between customers and AI in value co-creation scenarios. These factors, spanning technological, psychological, and contextual dimensions, underscore the need for a multidisciplinary lens in theoretical exploration, where insights from fields like psychology, human-computer interaction, and marketing converge to enrich the theoretical foundations. Moreover, the distinction between deliberate and spontaneous participation emphasizes the dynamic nature of customer participation with AI over time, urging scholars to construct theoretical frameworks that accommodate the evolving relationship between customers and AI in value co-creation processes.

5.2 Implications for Practice

In terms of practical implications, the findings offer actionable insights for businesses engaging in AI-facilitated value co-creation. Firstly, the strategic design of user interfaces plays a pivotal role. Businesses can use insights on clarity, intuitiveness, and seamlessness to tailor interfaces that encourage either deliberate or spontaneous participation. Secondly, the identification of factors influencing incentive structures suggests the need for a tailored approach. Tangible incentives may be more effective for deliberate participation, while emphasizing the inherent value of personalized experiences can encourage spontaneous contributions. Thirdly, recognizing industry-specific strategies is crucial. Businesses should align their approaches with the expectations and norms of their specific sector, emphasizing deliberate customer input in healthcare, for instance, and encouraging spontaneous interactions in e-commerce (Han et al., 2019) . Fourthly, ethical guidelines and transparency are paramount for building and maintaining customer trust. Clear communication about data usage and privacy measures fosters trust and encourages both deliberate and spontaneous customer participation (Harmeling et al., 2017) . Fifthly, aligning value co-creation strategies with customer motivations is vital. Tailoring approaches to tap into customer desires for personalization, co-creation, or other motivations that drive deliberate engagement enhances overall participation. Additionally, educational initiatives that highlight the benefits of active engagement or inform users about how routine interactions contribute to AI improvements can be implemented. Lastly, continuous improvement of customer experience (CX) remains a cornerstone. Investing in the enhancement of AI-driven features to align with customer expectations positively contributes to the overall customer journey.

By integrating these implications into both theoretical frameworks and practical strategies, businesses can not only deepen their understanding of AI-facilitated value co-creation but also implement effective measures to optimize customer engagement. This holistic approach aligns theoretical insights with actionable practices, contributing to the ongoing evolution of AI-driven customer interactions.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current research, while drawing insights from a diverse set of case studies spanning industries such as healthcare, finance, e-commerce, and entertainment, possesses certain limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the contextual specificity of the chosen cases may restrict the generalizability of the identified factors influencing deliberate and spontaneous customer participation. The findings, while valuable within the studied contexts, may not universally apply across various industries. Additionally, the temporal dynamics of technology evolution pose a challenge, as the factors influencing customer participation in AI-facilitated value co-creation are subject to change over time. The rapid advancements in AI and related technologies could impact the relevance and applicability of the identified factors in the future. Furthermore, the research primarily explores factors within specific dimensions such as user interface design, incentive structures, industry-specific variations, ethical considerations, customer motivations, user education, AI system transparency, and customer experience. This single-dimensional focus may not encompass all potential influences on participation, neglecting aspects such as socio-cultural factors or legal considerations.

To address these limitations and expand the theoretical understanding of customer participation in AI-facilitated value co-creation, several avenues for future research emerge. Conducting cross-industry comparative studies would provide a broader perspective on how participation factors vary across different sectors, enhancing the generalizability of findings. Longitudinal

studies tracking the evolution of customer behaviour's over time in response to technological changes could contribute to a more dynamic theoretical framework. Additionally, exploring the impact of cultural and global variations on customer participation is crucial for a nuanced understanding. Delving into user trust and perception of AI systems, examining emerging technologies' implications, conducting a comparative analysis of different AI systems, and investigating the global regulatory impact on customer participation are avenues that can further enrich the theoretical landscape in this domain. These future research directions aim to address the identified limitations and propel the theoretical discourse on customer participation in AI-facilitated value co-creation.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, this research significantly advances our comprehension of deliberate and spontaneous customer participation in AI-facilitated value co-creation, particularly in an era dominated by the influence of artificial intelligence on customer experiences. The exploration of factors influencing customer engagement with AI not only sheds light on the intricacies of these interactions but also provides crucial insights for businesses aiming to optimize value co-creation processes. The diverse industry scenarios considered in this study underscore the relevance and applicability of the findings across various sectors. By uncovering the dynamics between customers and AI in co-creating value, this research serves as a foundational guide for businesses seeking to enhance their strategies, user interfaces, and overall customer experiences within the rapidly evolving landscape of AI-driven interactions. Ultimately, the study contributes valuable knowledge that is paramount for businesses navigating the transformative impact of artificial intelligence on customer participation and value co-creation.

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