



CO-CREATION: LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH ISSUES

Sunishtha Dhaka^{*1}

^{*1} Assistant Professor, Manipal University Jaipur, INDIA

*Correspondence Author: dsunishtha@gmail.com

Abstract:

Co-Creation has attracted serious research attention in the recent past. Purpose of this paper is to review co-creation research, classify research articles according to the two approaches, content and process and on the basis of methodologies used in the articles and find the gaps in the literature for better co-creation research. A total of 110 articles from 53 refereed journals are classified into six categories on the basis of content approach: Value co-creation, co-creation, customer engagement, co-innovation, co-destruction and customer network. Research methodologies were classified into conceptual, empirical, descriptive, exploratory and experimental approaches. This study finds lacking in co-creation evaluation and implementation as well as better facilitation of co-creation value chain and processes. This paper could be helpful for business managers as well as for the firms to understand co-creation efficiency and to regain the customer's satisfaction, trust and loyalty to facilitate customers to innovate and enhance competitive advantage.

Keywords:

Value co-creation, Co-creation, Innovation, Customer satisfaction, Competitive advantage, customer network.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction and service quality are considered as a fundamental marketing framework to determine customer loyalty. Service sector plays important role in development and growth of any country. Services also play a vital role in the economies of both developed and developing countries. Today service sector plays important role in the economy's growth and also enrich key role in business growth too. In the increased competition, requirement of better quality and creation of value has raised. Co-creation can be one of the modes of creating value in service sector. Co-creation is a strategic tool that emphasizes the generation of mutual and ongoing realization of mutual firm-customer value. When the customers is engaged/ involved willingly and unwillingly with the business process in any form by shared or personal resources, to provide meaningful output in the growth of the company. Co-creation provides forum for customers and firms to share combine and renew each other's resources and capabilities to create value through new forms of interaction, service and learning mechanisms. To achieve the competitive advantage and to gain the customer satisfaction and customer retention, service industry should look in the extent of co-



creation in practical nature. Partitioning or practical implementation of co-creation process attracts/calls serious research attention in the present time.

C.K.Prahalad and Venkat Ramaswamy(2000) introduced the concept of co-creation in their *Harvard Business review article* “Co-Opting Customer Competence” in which they said that consumer are not only customizing, they are participating with providers to create value. Co-created value arises by the personal experiences, by some uniqueness, by better and services in form of satisfaction, loyalty or through strong relationship.

The main objective of this research is to provide an extensive literature review on co-creation. Around 110 articles have been collected in this work from 40 referred journals and international conferences. The selection of these papers were done by simply putting key work “ Co-creation”, “value creation” and “customer engagement” in google scholar search. Around 300 articles were downloaded. Then according to the relevancy of co-creation approaches 110 articles in total were selected. Further these articles were divided into two broad categories content and process. From 110 articles six categories were made i.e. Value creation, Co-creation, Customer engagement, Co-innovation, and co-destruction. The purpose of this study is to:

- Describe what constitutes co-creation research.
- Classify co-creation research articles according to their approaches and methodologies.
- Find the gaps in co-creation literature.

2. CO-CREATION

(Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000) coined a concept of co-creation. It helps in pull instead of push. When people create an idea they might become excited and committed to it, which provides an opportunity for the provider where they can actually interact in better way to customer. Co-creation has been defined in number of ways by the researchers. It will serve as a hub for the entire process from visioning, identifying, researching, implementing, donating and volunteering. It involves a major rethink on how business create value. It involves redefining of organizations in value creation. It is unleashing the creative energy of the people by inviting and enabling them to interact with them in different ways through their experiences. “Co-creation is a customer made paying attention aspect”. It is a platform for expanding, allowing the connections between public, private and creative people. “Co-creation becomes global” it is a seismic shift in thinking from the industrial age mind set to people engagement mind set.

(Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) kept on functioning on their novel ideas, they use extensively the word “Value co-creation”. (Vargo and Lush, 2004) created the Service-Dominant logic of marketing, “the customer is always a co-producer but later it is altered in “the customer is always a co-creator”. (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) explained the building blocks elements of co-creation DART i.e. dialogue, access, risk/benefit and transparency. The effectiveness of co-creation depends on the how much value is created for the customers as well as for the producer (Ajit Kambil et.al, 2004). There are five powers to connect with the consumers i.e.: information



access, inclusive view, networking, experimentation and activisms (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, Strategy issue 27).

3. A LITERATURE REVIEW

In this review, co-creation literature has been examined. A total of 110 papers have been studied. These papers have been taken from 40 journals which include Journal of consumer marketing, Journal of strategic management, Industrial marketing management, International journal of sustainable value creation, Journal of academy of marketing science, Journal of business research, Journal of strategy and leadership, MIS Quarterly, Journal of service management, European management review, Journal of service research, Managing service quality, Marketing theory, Journal of cultural theory, International journal of co-creation in design and arts, Journal of Australian marketing.

It has been observed that 30% of papers have been published in six journals (Journals of academy of marketing science, Journal of service management, European management review, Journal of quality and service science, Journal of Strategy and Leadership and Journal of Industrial marketing management). All these papers were classified in content and process approach. Content includes value co-creation, co-creation, customer engagement, co-destruction, Co-Innovation, customer network. Process includes pattern and procedures of co-creation process development and implementation.

Table 1: Distribution of reviewed article in various Journals

Name of Journals	No. of Papers
Journals	
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	
Strategy and Leadership Journal	6
Journal of Industrial Marketing Management	6
European management review	6
Journal of service industry Management	5
Journal of quality and service science	5
Journal of Marketing Theory	5
Managing Service Quality	3
Journal of Service Research	3



Journal of consumer marketing	3
Journal of Intellectual capital	3
Journal of interactive marketing	3
Journal of Australian Marketing	3
Journal of Services Marketing	3
International Journal of Service Industry Management	2
Journal of strategic Management	2
MIS quarterly	2
European Journal Management	2
Others	2
Grand Total	47
	110

The literature can be classified into two main categories, content and process. The content is sub grouped into six parts as shown in Table 2. The papers were classified according to their content which can be explained as below.

Table 2: Explanation of content and its respective constituents

Content Name	Constituents
Co-Creation	Concepts of co-creation, co-creation approach, Emergence of co-creation, Building blocks of co-creation, Powers to connect consumers and co-creation implementation.
Value co-creation	Sources of value creation, value chain analysis, visualizing value creation, the point of exchange and theoretical foundation of efficiency.
Customer engagement	Emergent synthesis of customer engagement, Customization and dynamics of engagement.



Co-innovation	Innovating Co-Creation engagement platforms, Product Innovation, Co-Design.
Co-destruction	Notion of value Co-destruction.
Customer network	Strategic networks, Value creation networks, understanding of S-D lexicon and customer value proposition.

Table 3: Breakdown of content According to Content

Focus On	No. of Papers	Percentage (%)
Content		
Co-creation	27	25
Value co-creation	26	24
Customer engagement	14	12
Co-innovation	12	11
Co-destruction	04	3
Customer network	16	15
Process	11	10
Total	110	100

The breakdown of the literature on the basis of research focus is given on Table 3. It is clear from the above data that the content aspect seems to be the dominant research theme in the literature and process research on co-creation strategy seems to have received less attention from



researchers. Hence review work on co-creation was done to identify research outline in view of certain developments such as:

- Utilize resources to maximize returns in terms of satisfaction and to use co-creation as a competitive advantage.
- To identify tendency to co-create and co-destruct on the basis of consumer behaviour pattern.
- Relative importance of co-creation facilitating parameters and platforms in implementation of co-creation.

In Appendix, we can see different methodologies used by various researchers are divided into five categories which are conceptual, descriptive, empirical and exploratory. Explanation of the above categories is as follows.

- **Conceptual/ Theoretical:** Basic/Fundamental concepts of co-creation.
- **Descriptive:** Explanation or description of co-creation content or process.
- **Empirical:** Data for this study is taken from existing database, reviews.
- **Exploratory:** objective of study is to become familiar with survey method.
- **Experimental:** To find out the cause and effect relation between variables.

Table 4: Distribution of Various Methodologies Used by Researchers

Methodology	No. of Papers	Percentage
Conceptual/Theoretical	45	41
Descriptive	15	14
Empirical	18	16
Exploratory	9	8
Experimental	7	6
Case Study	16	15
TOTAL	110	100

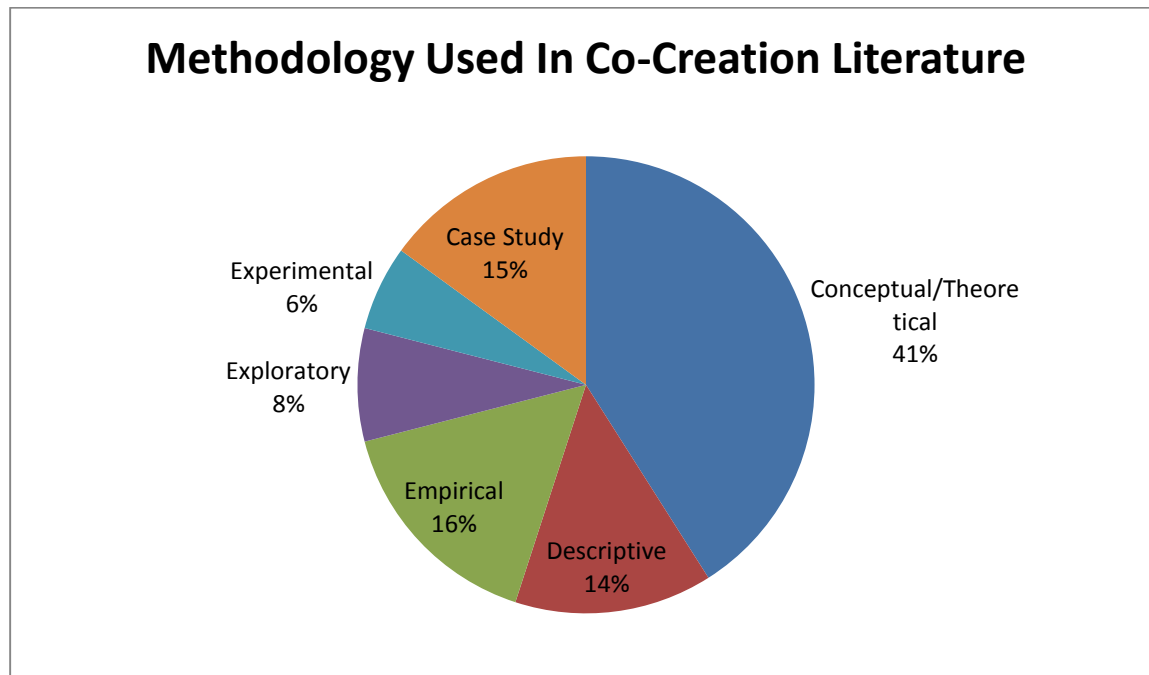


Figure 1: Methodology used in co-creation Literature

Distribution of various methodology used by researchers is shown in Table 4 and in Figure 1. It seems that experimental and exploratory methods are less in consideration, but the conceptual and theoretical method is in emphasis as compared to other methods of research in co-creation literature.

4. CONTENT APPROACH

The content approach has been viewed as a strategic choice by today's researchers and practitioners. Research on co-creation can be classified into six categories (content) as shown in appendix. The three contents "value co-creation" and "customer engagement" are the topmost research areas which can be explained as below.

Value Co-Creation: A Value chain framework analyzes the value creation at firm's intensity. Value chain analysis identifies the activities of firms as well as with that also explains the economic strength of the firm (porter, 1985). Value chain analysis is helpful in examining the value creation in market. Value creation opportunities in market may be resulted from novel combination of market, effective participation of customers, optimum configuration of resources as well as effective relationship with customers, suppliers, service providers etc. (Vargo and Lush, 2004) offered conceptual framework of S-D logic, which explains the strategies approach through marketing solutions, can be traced and helps to create Value. (Vargo and Lush. 2006) explains the pattern in which value is generated: solutions are co-created by customers and providers. In fact



by co-creating the function, the customers co-construct value for himself: customers are always a co-creator of value. (Gronroos, 2006) providers only create the resources or make way for customers to create value. Value is a continuous that unfolds over time as customer take part in value co-creation. (Bernard et.al, 2004) value creation with the customer system actors across has been identified and this helps in step by step development approach to value co-creation in customer networks. (Gronroos, 2008) Value creation is defined as the customer's creation of value-in-use. (Richard, 2007) value creation and value capture and offers an further tool for addressing difficult issues in strategic management. (Suvi Nenonen and Kajstorbacka, 2010) explained business models are defined as configuration of 12 components, The effectiveness of a business model in value co-creation is defined by the internal configuration fit between all business model components and external arrangement fir between provider's and customer's business models. (Gronroos, 2011) Customers always are co-creators of value, but rather that under certain circumstances the service provider gets opportunities to co-create value together with its customers in various business functions i.e. primary and secondary.

Customer Engagement: Customer engagement refers to involvement of customers with one another with a company or brand (Webster 1992 and Day 1999). The conceptual shift from a product-centric to a customer-centric organization has been a topic for decade. (Webster et.al, 2005) the change to customer-centric organisation has, in reality, been slow. (Anderson and Mittal 2000; Giese and Cote 2001) Research into customer satisfaction has been plagued by imprecision and inconsistency leading many researchers to conclude that satisfaction measurement should be as a trap to be avoided. (Saks, 2006) The concept of engagement has been explored in the organizational behaviour literature means to explain organizational commitment and organizational behaviour and has been subsequently utilized as one means by which to predict financial performance. Employee engagement is argued to be optimistically related to individuals' attitudes, intentions and behaviour.

(Doorn et. al, 2010) states that customer engagement behaviors go beyond connections, may be specifically defined as a customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firms focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers. Customer engagement consists of multiple behaviors such as word-of-mouth, blogging, providing customer ratings. (Libai and coauthors, 2010) talk about the present knowledge on customer-to-customer interactions, which has become even more important due to rise of new (social) media. (Hoyer et.al, 2010) widely discuss things of customer co-creation in new product development. They define co-creation as "a two-way new product development action in which consumers actively put in and select various elements of a new product offering. (Hoyel et.al, 2010) customer engagement has an impact on important marketing metrics and discusses the consequences of consumer co-creation for NPD performance.

5. PROCESS APPROACH

Process aspect includes development and implementation of co-creation. In the literature we found a number of researchers who have emphasized on co-creation core process (C.K. Prahalad and Venkat Ramaswamy, 2000). A researcher contributes in development of framework of co-



Creation. Researchers such as (Grönroos, 2000), (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000) and (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) argue that value is embedded in the co-creation process between the customer and the supplier, and where the customer shifts from being a passive audience to an active player. (Prahalad, 2004) proposes that value creation is surrounded in tailored experiences: “early experimenters are moving away from the old industry model that sees value as created from products and services to a new model where value is created by experiences”.

(Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) developed a building blocks of interaction for co-creation through formulation of DART Model. (Per Kristensson et.al, 2008) seven key strategies are identified as being essential for successful user involvement in co-creation. (Takeshi Takenaka and Kanji Ueda, 2008) new classification of service models is introduced, considering the relationships among service providers, service receivers. (Michael Etgar, 2008) develops a descriptive five-stage dynamic model of consumer’s involvement in co-production. (Christian Gronroos, 2008) accepting value in use as preliminary value creation concept customers are the value creators. Through this provider can become a co-creator of value with its customers. (Ramaswamy and Prahalad, 2010) the co-creation approach, in contrast, aims to serve the interests of all stakeholders. It focuses on their experiences and how they work collectively with one another. (Ramaswamy and Gouillart, 2010) developed a framework for value co-creation through Nike+ engagement platform. (Carina Sjodin and Per Kristensson, 2012) presented a wide range of real time documentations from brief comments about certain aspects of their experience to more detailed suggestions for future service.

6. WAY FORWARD/ FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

As apparent from literature, co-creation has been a topic of attention for researchers in the recent past. This study finds issues which may require further research consideration in co-creation Process. The aim of co-creation is to involve customers with providers in development of products, giving ideas, views as per customers wish. Through co-creation, one can create or determine how best to achieve competitive advantage in the new competitive environment. Increasing customer retention is one of the means of building competitive advantage which could be attained through co-creation process. Co-creation has been implemented by very few counted companies and in that also companies are using only the online medium, and in that too only such companies which have brand value and highly established. By going all the way through the literature, the implementation or process approach of co-creation is in literature only. By reviewing the literature, loads of the research gaps are identified in co-creation. By observing and reading various literature papers co-creation aspect has to give wide approaching.

By following above parameters, the co-creation still requires a strong attention. The very first point to implement co-creation practically requires the “facilitating parameters”. No study discuss about what can be the parameters which initiates the customers as well as the employees to co-create with the company. If the customers are not having easy and comfortable tools or platforms for co-creation and in case proper platform is not there, tracking of customers could not be develop and



along with this, when superior value co-creation becomes the keystone of strategy, organizations need a collection of strategic capabilities that foster service-driving interactions.

No firm can consistently drive superior value without investing in and managing the capabilities to do so. So we suggest researchers to identify the effective platforms of co-creation. Further research is to carry out in network of co-creation. The suppliers have its own network and customers have its networks, by combining these two networks or by comparing, future research needs frame in several topics mentioned below:

- To what level supply network and customer network can create value co-creation in variant industries on the basis of strategic capabilities.
- Understanding different types of expertise that can contribute in determining the distribution of co-creative network. What network way can be the best in implementing the effective co-creation.

By identifying these two points by the researchers or practitioner, the best network could be identified for the effective co-creation.

- Examining the connection between degree of value co-creation and performance in terms of value network.

We also recommend researchers, to explore the following areas in which no research has been found.

- Designing the software for the customers to co-create.
- Identifying the tools of decision-making in co-creation, for employees as well as for the customers.
- Development of managerial tools based on the relationship value.

By identifying effective managerial tools for managers, it will be helpful for managers to access the customers' behavior which can help in creating value for the company. This will also help managers to identify how value relates, by measuring the various variables such as commitment, trust, and loyalty and satisfaction level.

- Development of reliable and robust measurement instrument to benchmark value co-creation capability across firms, market segments and industries.
- Efficacy of design principles that guide different co-creation tasks.
- Why does intensity and scope of co-creation vary across firms
- Assessment of human behaviour, values and lifestyle to co-create new services.
- What is the relative impact of financial, social, technical and psychological factors in driving consumer co-creation.

The customers are the one who participate in co-creation activity and they only take initiative when they are satisfied. Co-creation has impact on society too, therefore researchers has to work for society as well as for the environmental part also. A researcher has to carry out work on how sustainable value is created and maintained in society through interaction of various agents. Once the sustainable value is created, it will help to identify and inculcate the uncertainties in co-



creation. Covering the societal aspect, researcher should also elucidate the mechanism of value co-creation in a society.

The development of co-creation through formulation of effective co-creation process, the very first point on which researcher should find out:

- What metrics need to be developed to measure the various aspects of co-creation process.

Every customer co-creates in his/her own basis of feasibility, and when customers express their ideas, views and effectively participate in co-creation process, the firms get the challenge to maintain the bundles of views, ideas and suggestions of customers as well as to retain all the suggestions.

- Keeping above in view researcher should find out that “how firms can manage the challenges of information overload and feasibility of consumers generated ideas and views”.
- Should firms include several broad segments of consumers in co-creation process or firm should focus their co-creation activities on a few narrow segments of consumers.

Co-creation process ultimately leads to creation of value and increasing competitive Advantage, increasing competitive advantage could be attained through customer retention and customer retention is achieved through increasing customer satisfaction.

- So we suggest researcher to work upon examining the types of organisational and technological infrastructures for providing platforms for value co-creation.
- Identify or examine the technological pathways and Business development patterns which will enable in designing value co-creation platforms.
- Examine the relationship between the degree of value co-creation and innovation.

Co-creation can be empowered in service recovery process also, which could be named as service recovery co-creation, firms can use the track of co-creation in service recovery effectively and efficiently. So we recommend research scholars, academicians and practitioners to explore in following areas where research is not yet been found:

- Types of co-created service recovery
- How certain types of co-created recovery can influence long term relationship with customers.
- Examine whether participation in recovery would have a different influence on process and outcome dimensions.
- Identify factors motivating customer’s participation in co-creation service recovery.
- Investigating consumer’s attributions and their effect on recovery.

Researchers in brand management province place very little emphasis on brand co-creation. It only highlights brand relationship with consumer experiences requires further development. Some research is stated in building brand value among customers. Within literature, evidence increases focus on brand co-creation, which requires further researches to carry out



- Develop brand value co-creation process.
- To find relationship among the players in brand value co-creation process.
- Development of brand value measures, which capture the essence of brand value co-creation notion.
- Investigate how non-brand focused communities help in co-creating brand value.

Most of the literature only discusses about co-creation and value co-creation concepts and processes, only counting or rare literature talks about co-destruction. If consumers are satisfied they will co-create but in case customers are dissatisfied they can co-destruct the value, they can co-destruct by various means such as due to service system misusing either accidentally or intentionally. So many firms engage in co-creation, it is important not to forget that where and to what extent value co-destruction may occur.

So we suggest researcher to carry out further research on:

- Longitudinal research on co-destruction and on value related process at large is needed.
- Dynamics between co-destruction and value in exchange.
- Co-Destruction process may have imbalanced consequences on service system. Does it have impact on service system? If does have to what extent.

(Berry and Parasuraman, 1991) explained the term “Zone of Tolerance” in terms of service management and consumer behaviour. They explained the term Zone of tolerance in terms of customer evaluation of in process service performance. A customer has two levels of expectation: *Adequate service*: - what they find acceptable and *Desired Service*:-what they hope to receive. The distance between the adequate service and the desired service is called Zone of tolerance. Zone of tolerance can lead as a competitive advantage for the firm. A performance falling below the tolerance zone will engender customer frustration and decrease loyalty and ultimately puts the firms at competitive disadvantage. A performance level falling within the expectation zone, it is increasing customer’s loyalty and puts the firms at competitive advantage. A performance level above the tolerance zone will pleasantly surprise customers and strengthen their loyalty offers firms possibility of developing long term competitive advantage. We suggest researchers to evaluate the co-creation in expression of Zone of tolerance.

7. CONCLUSION

The rapid pace of developments coupled with the growth of service sector gives rise to enormous opportunities for the creation of new ideas and development and the importance of adapting business models are gradually more accepted in the strategy. Co-creation is still in initial stage as far as business is concerned. Most of the providers are yet to understand that co-creation is not a time wasting process but a tool to create loyal and satisfied customers. Literature suggests a lot for the implementation and practice of co-creation, but in practice not much has been really implied. By reviewing literature co-creation topics are observed and seen in multidisciplinary journals, this suggests that co-creation is very enormous point which needs greater attention. Eventually we can say that co-creation area is covered in many of journals. Further it has been recognized that level



of understanding and trust needs to be enhanced by infusing assurance and commitment with consumers. Literature proves that co-creation can give high returns in terms of competitive advantage. To enhance business or develop new products on the basis of customization, co-creation can be effective and efficient tool. Hence, we can say that co-creation is an effective weapon. By reviewing literature, we conclude that co-creation is very new subject area and very less or no practical work is done along with this many review gaps are identified in which research carry out, by doing this it can create a fruitful track for customers to participate with companies.

Additionally, this literature review paper concludes i.e. Co-Destruction; if customers can Co-create they can also co-destruct. If customers are dissatisfied it can take many of customers from the providers, ultimately this can result in co-destruction. We conclude that researchers should also work upon the ways and means of co-destruction to overcome any such activity. The profit of co-creation that it can be used as a marketing strategy and can be formulated as competitive advantage, it can also create loyal customers. This could be very useful to maintain and build business. Along with it, the customers will get an easy platform to co-create with the providers and customer retention could be initiated. We suggest researchers to further work on review gaps which were identified in this to develop co-creation as a practical approach in all business function.

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