

Automated Technologies: Do They Co-Create or Co-Destruct Value for the Customer? An Abstract

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ABSTRACT

As service functions based on automated technologies become more prevalent there is an increased likelihood that the way in which value is co-created and co-destructed is changing (Karteemo and Helkkukla 2018; Paschen et al. 2019; Van Esch et al. 2019). Vargo et al. (2017) assert that there is an imperative need to study fast, technology induced changes in service eco-systems. These technology induced changes along with their impact on customers' experience of value co-creation and value co-destruction are the central phenomenon of this research. Specifically, the research presented in this study explores how (and if) customers' experience value co-creation when interacting with brands' automated technology in service-based value networks. The two proposed research questions are as follows: (1) How do customers perceive the impact of automated technology (chatbots) on value co-creation and value co-destruction ?(2) What are the characteristics of chatbots that influence customers experience of value co-creation or value co-destruction ? In doing so, this paper reveals a more accurate understanding of how novel automated technologies shape the dynamics of value co-creation and value co-destruction.

A qualitative approach using exploratory interviews for data collection was chosen for this paper. Research on value co-creation and technology has predominantly adopted a quantitative survey-based approach to data collection (Balaji and Roy 2017; Zhang 2016; Khotamaki and Rajala 2016; See-To and Ho 2014). This paper offers an alternative approach seeking rich data about an under researched area. In addition, the findings of this paper provide the platform for a future quantitative study. The overall aim of the interviews was to achieve an in-depth understanding on customers' interactional experiences with brands or service providers' automated technology, while highlighting the characteristics of these automated technologies which co-create or co-destruct value for the customer during the service encounter

A total of six themes were revealed from the exploratory interviews. These included, instantaneous support (i.e., social presence), informational benefits (i.e., information quality), personalisation, perceived control, consistency and understanding (i.e., comprehension of the service -related issue) and irreplaceability of humans (i.e., empathy). The findings of the current study indicate that customers may experience both value co-creation and value co-destruction when interacting with firms' chatbots for service delivery depending on the characteristics of the chatbots. The current study is the first to explore both value co-creating and value co-destructing potentials of automated technology in value-based service networks. In addition, these emergent themes offer a differing perspective from the existing literature,

thus, providing the scope to examine the identified themes in a wider quantitative study. Moreover, the study offers practitioners an understanding of the characteristics they need to pay attention to when implementing chatbots for service delivery. Doing so will increase the possibility of value co-creation for the customer during the service encounter, as well as enhance the customer experience which in turn could yield better customer brand engagement.

Keywords: Value co-creation; Value co-destruction; Automated technology; Artificial intelligence

References Available Upon Request