



ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

Labovitz School of Business & Economics, University of Minnesota Duluth, 11 E. Superior Street, Suite 210, Duluth, MN 55802

The Role of Learning in Consumer Value Co-Creation Activities

Heidi Winklhofer, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom

James Bailey, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom

Sally Hibbert, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom

This paper draws on Self-Directed Learning (SDL) theory (Knowles, 1975) to conceptualize learning for value co-creation as a consumer-centric process. It presents a two-stage empirical investigation of consumer learning that distinguishes consumers in terms of their learning orientation and characterizes their learning strategies.

[to cite]:

Heidi Winklhofer, James Bailey, and Sally Hibbert (2013), "The Role of Learning in Consumer Value Co-Creation Activities", in *E - European Advances in Consumer Research Volume 10*, eds. Gert Cornelissen, Elena Reutskaja, and Ana Valenzuela, Duluth, MN : Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 314-315.

[url]:

<http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1014178/volumes/v10e/E-10>

[copyright notice]:

This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at <http://www.copyright.com/>.

The Role of Learning in Consumer Value Co-Creation Activities

James Bailey, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom*

Sally Hibbert, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom

Heidi Winklhofer, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

It is widely acknowledged in contemporary marketing literature that consumers play an active role in the creation of their own value (Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Grönroos, 2011) and often need to acquire new knowledge and skills to develop capabilities and resources to draw upon during value-creating activities (Payne et al., 2008). Prior research has evaluated the effectiveness of firms' efforts to educate customers (Dellande et al. 2004; Zhao et al. 2008), but there is little research that adopts a consumer-centric perspective and recognizes them to be in control of their own learning. Theories of Self-Directed Learning (SDL) (Knowles, 1975) are suggested to offer useful frameworks for conceptualizing consumer learning for value creation and, indeed, for understanding learning as a resource integration activity in its own right (Hibbert et al., 2012). SDL assumes that individuals identify their own learning needs, formulate goals, obtain resources, implement and regulate learning strategies and evaluate outcomes, although it acknowledges that other parties may support learning in various ways (Knowles, 1975; Merriam et al., 2007; Garrison, 1997). It also emphasizes the context-specific nature of learning (Tough, 1971). SDL has been applied in an array of contexts (e.g., distance learning, healthcare) but there is, as yet, no empirical research that examines consumers' learning for value creation as a SDL process. The purpose of this research is to explore consumer learning processes in a context of consumer value creation, examining the learning motives and strategies that characterize individuals' efforts to acquire new knowledge and skills. The findings will offer insights to firms and other parties that seek to support consumer learning. Below we outline a two-stage empirical study that sought to distinguish consumers in terms of their learning orientation and to characterize their learning strategies, present the findings and briefly set out the conclusions of this exploratory study.

METHOD

A mixed method study was conducted with members of an online Do-It-Yourself (DIY) community. In the first stage of the research 248 participants completed an online survey measuring motivational aspects of goals (performance and learning), self-efficacy (confidence in their learning) and their emotional reaction (positive and negative) towards learning DIY knowledge and skills. Scales were adapted from existing measures used in the SDL literature (e.g. Dweck, 1986; Valle et al., 2003; Bandura, 1997) and responses measured on a 7-point Likert scale. The second stage involved 26 in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of survey respondents.

RESULTS: STAGE 1

Exploratory Factor Analysis grouped the items into the expected constructs. All multi-item scales demonstrated reliability with Cronbach Alpha values ranging from .748 to .961. A non-hierarchical k-means cluster analysis using the mean values for each construct as seed points was conducted to examine whether there were distinct groups of consumers in terms of their DIY learning orientations. A three cluster solution best grouped the data differentiating between *surface learners* (SL), *emotional learners* (EL) and *assertive learners* (AL) (Table 1).

ANOVA combined with Scheffé post-hoc tests revealed significant differences between these groups. Assertive Learners (AL)

scored the highest in terms of being motivated by learning and performance goals, and their positive emotional response to learning, followed by Emotional Learners (EL), with Surface Learners (SL) scoring the lowest across these constructs. EL experience more frustration and a stronger negative emotional response to learning than the other two groups, while AL have more confidence in their learning of DIY skills than EL and SL.

RESULTS: STAGE 2

Thematic analysis of in-depth telephone interviews drawn from survey respondents of each group revealed that learning in a DIY context follows a dynamic process and that there was considerable interaction between elements of the learning process. Unlike other SDL contexts (e.g. distance learning) in which individuals often learn for the gratification of developing their knowledge, consumers in the three groups who engage in DIY are motivated predominantly by performance goals. Learning goals are developed in response to performance goals as consumers assess their own abilities and recognize deficiencies in their own resources that impact on their ability to undertake tasks inherent to their project.

The domain specific knowledge and the acquisition and use of available learning resources (e.g. advice from service providers, social networks, technology) contribute to achieving learning goals and shape and support the learning process. Consumer value is realized through the acquisition of resources that help the customer to participate in learning environments to achieve their performance goals. Consumers use these resources to develop learning strategies and to set learning goals before embarking on the project. This is aided before participation by assessing the skills required to complete the task, or during participation in response to a (un)foreseen learning requirement. AL show an intrinsic interest in learning DIY, using their confidence and overall experience of the DIY environment to set, monitor, adapt and evaluate challenging performance and importantly to them, learning goals. In doing so they draw on relevant and available resources to supplement their own knowledge, skills and experience. Similarly EL participate not only for performance reasons, but also to learn new skills. They too set, monitor, adapt and evaluate their learning, importantly using resources to help support their high emotional (positive and negative) involvement in the learning process. SL on the other hand prefer to plan and utilize resources to help with their learning goals by reproducing, rehearsing and memorizing learning content made available to them (see also Bandura, 1977). For SL performance goals (e.g. financial) are the key motivation for participation.

CONCLUSION

This research complements the body of literature that has examined firms' efforts to educate consumers (Dellande et al., 2004; Zhao et al., 2008) by adopting a consumer-centric perspective on learning for co-creation. The findings reveal key differences in groups of learners both in their motivations for participation and in their acquisition of resources to support their learning process. Further work is required that examines the additional learning processes of consumers as they seek to develop their resources in learning environments to create value. This can aid service providers in developing sup-

port and environments that can help facilitate this learning process through value co-creation activities.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, Albert. (1977), *Social Learning Theory*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, Albert. (1997), *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, New York: Freeman.
- Dellande, Stephanie, Mary C. Gilly, and John L. Graham (2004), "Gaining Compliance and Losing Weight: The Role of the Service Provider in Health Care Services," *Journal of Marketing*, 68 (July), 78-91.
- Dweck, Carol S. (1986), "Motivational processes affecting learning", *American Psychologist*, 41, 1040-1048.
- Grönroos, Christian (2011), "Value Co-Creation in Service Logic: A Critical Analysis," *Marketing Theory*, 11 (3), 279-301.
- Hibbert, Sally., Heidi Winklhofer., and Mohamed Temerak Sobhy. (2012), "Customers as Resource Integrators: Toward a Model of Customer Learning", *Journal of Service Research*, 15 (3), 247-261.
- Knowles, Malcolm, S. (1975), *Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers*, New York: Association Press.
- Merriam, Sharan B., Rosemary S. Caffarella, and Lisa Baumgartner (2007), *Learning in Adulthood*, 3rd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Payne, Adrian F., Kaj Storbacka, and Pennie Frow (2008), "Managing the Co-Creation of Value," *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 36 (1), 83-96.
- Valle, Antonio., Ramón. G Cabanach., José. C Núñez., Julio González-Pienda., Susana Rodríguez., and Isabel Piñeiro. (2003), "Cognitive, Motivational, and Volitional Dimensions of Learning: An Empirical Test of a Hypothetical Model" *Research in Higher Education*, Vol. 44 (5), 557-580.
- Vargo, Stephen L. and Robert F. Lusch (2008), "Service-Dominant Logic: Continuing the Evolution," *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 36 (1), 1-10.
- Zhao, Xinyuan, Anna S. Mattila, and Li-Shan Eva Tao (2008), "The Role of Post-Training Self-Efficacy in Customers' Use of Self Service Technologies," *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 19 (4), 492-505.