

The Driving Factor of Influencer Marketing on Value Co-Creation Through Patronage Intention

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 25 Dec 2024	<p>This conceptual study will examine the driving role of influencer marketing through value co-creation toward patronage intention, focusing on young consumers. The data collection will concern young consumers and utilize Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to examine causal relationships among the variables. The conceptual framework in this study consists of influencer marketing, which will significantly impact value co-creation by the stronger brand community and customer-company identification (CCI), driving patronage intention. These findings will explain how young consumers interact with influencer marketing strategies. This study will provide a practical contribution to the service industry in enhancing customer engagement through influencer marketing and value co-creation. Future research can explore the model across other demographic groups and industries. The findings can guide marketing strategies on the importance of brand communities and CCI as mediators from influencer marketing to increased patronage intention. This research presents a novel integration of influencer marketing and value co-creation toward patronage intention, addressing gaps in understanding the mechanisms linking these constructs among young consumers in the service industry.</p> <p>Keywords: Influencer marketing, Brand community, Customer-company identification, Value co-creation, Patronage intention.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has rapidly changed the current situation and transformed marketing, creating a space where brands and consumers interact in new and meaningful ways [1]. One of the developments in this space is influencer marketing, a strategy in which brands collaborate with individuals and followers on digital networking platforms [2]. These social media influencers have credibility and relatability to endorse goods and services, influencing the purchasing decisions of their audiences [3]. While the effectiveness of influencer marketing is widely recognized, the mechanisms through which it drives critical business outcomes, such as value co-creation impact on patronage intention, remain underexplored.

Value co-creation is the process for every business to create value, shared experiences, active participation, and mutual interaction [4]. This concept is increasingly significant in the service industry, where intangible offerings require strong consumer engagement to achieve meaningful differentiation [5]. For young consumers, who dominate social media platforms and are known for their active engagement with brands and influencers, value co-creation offers a compelling avenue for stronger consumer relationships [6]. However, understanding how influencer marketing facilitates value co-creation and leads to tangible outcomes like patronage intention remains a key gap in the literature.

Although prior research has established that influencer marketing impacts consumer behavior, much of this work focuses on direct effects, neglecting the mediating mechanisms that link influencer marketing to outcomes like patronage intention. Specifically, the roles of brand community—where consumers develop a shared identity around

a brand—and customer-company identification—where consumers align their identity with a company—have not been sufficiently integrated into existing frameworks. While young consumers represent a key demographic in social media and influencer marketing, their behaviors and preferences remain underexplored. This gap necessitates an approach that examines the correlation between influencer marketing, mediating variables, and consumer outcomes, particularly in the service industry.

This study addresses the research question below:

1. How does influencer marketing affect the value co-creation?
2. To what extent does the brand community affect value co-creation?
3. How does CCI impact value co-creation?
4. Does value co-creation influence patronage intention?

This study proposes the research objective of examining the impact of influencer marketing, brand community, and CCI, analyzing how value co-creation affects patronage intention when considering young consumers. We proposed a research objective:

1. To examine the direct effects of influencer marketing, brand community, and CCI on value co-creation among young consumers.
2. To examine the mediating role of value co-creation between influencer marketing, brand community, and CCI impact on patronage intention.

The present study will give a new paradigm and direction to contribute to the growing knowledge of influencer marketing by addressing two critical areas. It offers an understanding of the mechanisms linking influencer marketing to business outcomes and the indirect pathways through value co-creation. The role of young consumers in this process is to provide practical information for service providers seeking to enhance their marketing strategies. This research is expected to guide businesses in designing effective influencer marketing campaigns that resonate with young consumers, strengthen brand relationships, and drive sustained patronage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study will use the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the fundamental basis for its theoretical framework [7]. The TPB provides a structured approach to analyzing variables and is an external determinant influencing memorability and attitudes. The key antecedent of behavior, TPB, supports the development of interventions [8]. Where attitudes reflect behavior evaluations by social and environmental factors. In contrast, subjective norms influence social expectations, perceived behavioral control, beliefs about self-efficacy, and access to necessary resources, with their interactions varying across contexts [9].

The research focuses on young consumers and examines how influencer marketing, brand community, customer-company identification, and value co-creation affect patronage intentions. This study expands on digital networking platforms and consumer behavior within this demographic. Young consumers have purchased power and a preference for sustainability and social responsibility. With the rapid adoption of digital technologies, they value experiences over material possessions and gravitate toward brands that align with ethical and ecological principles [10], [11]. Their behavior reflects diverse priorities, such as financial independence, accessibility, and affordability [12].

Social media is central in influencing their behaviors, serving as a platform for electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), personal connections, and digital activism [13], [14]. Young consumers often expect brands to integrate sustainability and social impact into their practices, advocating for accountability through online campaigns and movements [15]. Characterized by technological proficiency and a preference for authenticity and innovation, young consumers are drawn to brands that reflect their values. Many prioritize bespoke and environmentally conscious products and pay a premium for offerings that align with their ethical standards [16].

To effectively engage this demographic, businesses must implement tailored strategies. Building trust and emotional connections is particularly effective for products requiring greater consumer involvement. While seamless digital engagement is crucial, many young consumers value physical stores' tangible experiences [17]. Businesses can effectively address young consumers' preferences and create meaningful market impact by prioritizing transparency, ethical branding, and authentic connections.

Influencer Marketing and Value Co-creation:

Influencer marketing is experiencing significant growth [18]. The adoption of influencer marketing is occurring quickly due to the recognition that partnering may effectively promote items and generate significant viral growth [19]. Influencers encompass a broader scope than celebrities. The influencers operate on advanced social media platforms to establish a relatable and accessible connection with their audience. [20] stated that influencers can create a fresh perception of the brand and evoke a user image that aligns with the values and objectives of brands and merchants. Both individuals serve as brand ambassadors and generate content for promotional purposes. Influencer marketing methods and establishing partnerships with influencers can effectively reach a more significant target audience segment and generate greater financial returns than conventional marketing strategies [21].

The appeal can influence value co-creation by facilitating a friendly and polite disposition [22]. That pleasantness tends to gain the trust of others, leading to customers' increased in-role and out-of-role behavior [23]. Confidence can stimulate customer value co-creation among customers, products, and service providers. Consumers with higher identification are willing to share product information and interact. Influencers provide feedback, help other customers create recommendations, and even tolerate their flaws [24].

The customers will see the attractiveness of influencers, and their identification with them may improve participation in value co-creation. An influencer's number of followers and their follower base size are expected to impact value co-creation [25]. Influencers with followers have more opinion influence on the behavioral intentions of their audience [26]. Macro-influencers will likely generate more robust engagement [27]. A micro-influencer can expand the audience and influence the audience's behavioral intentions [26], [28]. The personal accounts of meso-influencers are verified.

The value of co-creation is to learn more about the brand and increase their desire to engage with businesses that align with their interests [29]. Influencers represent the prior experiences of brand users, effectively attract consumers' attention, and engage with other users who share similar interests to engage in discussions and review branded items [30]. Interactive brand posts encourage consumers to engage in debates and activities on digital platforms. Consumers collaborate with their resources to create brand significance and value. Based on the literature, this study proposed the hypothesis below:

Hypothesis 1: Influencer marketing is expected to impact value co-creation significantly

Brand Community and Value Co-creation:

The growth of digital platforms has facilitated enterprises' establishment of brand communities [31], [32]. Young consumers have convenient access to virtual brand communities to engage in social interactions with users, exchange information and ideas, and address inquiries to enhance a brand's products [33], [34], [35]. The subsequent actions of these followers, such as sharing or liking the center, can be understood as a network of actors engaging in interactive and co-creative processes [36], [37]. Numerous brands are presently allocating resources towards establishing brand communities for customers while actively co-creating value. It is crucial for research and practical purposes to identify the factors motivating customer participation [37].

Relationship marketing cannot be understated in the virtual brand community context, as it fosters value co-creation [38]. A strategic approach that establishes and sustains mutually beneficial exchanges between parties. Young consumer connections are widely recognized as a means for firms to enhance their understanding of their consumer services to meet customer needs, fostering customer satisfaction and loyalty [30]. Relationship marketing transforms customers from passively receiving services to participating as co-producers and value co-creators.

Community members share knowledge, experiences, product creation, development, and consumption through virtual networks [39]. Comprehensive research has been undertaken on value co-creation and brand communities [40], [41]. The authors possess analytical categories. The participants in value co-creation, the behaviors associated with value co-creation, the value co-creation process, and the factors influencing value co-creation within brand communities [42]. The study has concentrated on the integration of brand communities via value co-creation. Brand communities are increasingly seen as valuable assets contributing to business value [43]. The function of "content creators" is to disseminate information. This phenomenon creates a distinction between users and consumers in the value-generation process.

This community possesses specific characteristics that foster customer engagement behavior [44]. The findings of prior studies include certain constraints when elucidating the behavior of brand communities to correlate value co-creation. Previous research has primarily concentrated on explaining the fundamental notion and altering user roles in value co-creation within customer citizenship behavior. The investigation is necessary to determine the categories and degrees of user value co-creation behaviors and discern the disparities in the development. It is imperative for current research to examine the impact of the community on the perceived benefits and value of co-creation behavior. The present study put forward the hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Brand community is expected to impact value co-creation significantly.

CCI and Value Co-creation:

Customer-company identification (CCI) reflects a strong association between a consumer's and a company's identities. This connection is built through emotional bonds and shared characteristics that create cognitive attachment [45]. CCI strengthens consumer loyalty and encourages word-of-mouth communication in connections [46]. It forms the psychological foundation for the deep, meaningful relationships businesses aim to cultivate with their customers [47]. The link between identity and customer engagement is well-supported by research, emphasizing identity for customer involvement in value co-creation activities [48]. CCI improves customer satisfaction and loyalty by encouraging greater emotional and cognitive alignment with the company [49]. This identification leads to commitment, favorable company evaluations, and higher purchases [50].

Value co-creation actively collaborates with companies to improve their service experience and influence the development of services or processes [51]. The companies will gain insights, and customers will receive experiences to meet their needs. Such co-creative efforts contribute to improved service outcomes and innovation [52]. Young consumers' sense of belonging to a company drives their participation in value co-creation activities. This identification for collaboration benefits the customer and the business. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Customer Company Identification is expected to impact value co-creation.

Value Co-creation Behavior and Patronage Intention:

Value co-creation encompasses primary activities. In co-production, customers will collaborate with the company by sharing insights during the product design phase [53]. Customers utilize the product and provide their assessment—value co-creation as engaged players in the value creation chain through information acquisition and forbearance [54]. Transparency is essential in customer interactions during value co-creation.

Value co-creation is examined across multiple industries, including manufacturing, hospitality, commerce, and healthcare services [55]. It encompasses cognitive activities, research, activity collation, habit modification, co-production, co-learning, and networking [52]. Using a concrete measuring scheme, they do not delineate the boundaries between interactions and value co-creation. According to the service-dominant logic perspective, value cocreators are the agents of resource integration, and the co-creation of personal resources inside the service process generates distinctive value for customers [56].

Furthermore, patronage intention is a customer's inclination to contemplate, endorse, or engage in future repurchases from the same marketer [57]. It can significantly forecast purchasing behavior, including the likelihood of customers returning to a store and engaging in repeat purchases [58]. The intention to engage in patronage is

impacted by various factors, including purchasing experiences, the store's ambiance, and the client's hedonic values [59]—the quality of information and entertaining and instructional content impact individuals' intent to patronize these sites. When examining behavior towards retailers, the intention to patronize is considered a multifaceted concept encompassing several factors, such as the inclination to recommend and purchase and the potential for engaging in shopping activities [60].

The literature needs this investigation to understand value co-creation when participating in such activities. Service providers must understand the customers' life activities to incorporate them into their positive behavior. Value co-creation means customer behavior, satisfaction, loyalty, repurchase, and re-patronage intention. It must be observed and checked for its impact on patronage intention [61], [62]. Value-creation activities develop behavior to repurchase [58]. The current study analyzes the effects of value co-creation on patronage intention in young consumers, which had not been previously examined. The finding gives rise to the development of a hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: Value co-creation is expected to impact patronage intention significantly.

The Role of Value Co-creation Mediates Influencers Marketing and Patronage Intention:

Influencer marketing is commonly perceived as engaging with a specific audience, interacting, facilitating communication, and effectively promoting product or service sales [63]. [64] state that individuals who can influence others can include many individuals, including celebrities, professionals, and even nonprofessionals. The phrase also encompasses individuals who possess a substantial online following, attention, and interaction, and can influence or manipulate the market within a specific industry [65]. Numerous individuals have personal brands, called influencers. These individuals are digital or internet celebrities and 'Instafamous' [20], [66].

Customers' perception of influencers' likeability may increase trust, identification, engagement, and citizenship behavior in the context of value co-creation [22]. The impact of an influencer's number of followers on their it is anticipated that their follower count will positively influence value co-creation. [67] state that influencers with more followers display higher levels of credibility. These influencers have incredible popularity among their audience. [26] state that individuals who possess a substantial number of followers on digital platforms are regarded as having a greater degree of opinion leadership on the behavioral intentions of their audience. Macro-influencers and their followers will generate a higher level of engagement [27]. This level of authority can develop a greater sense of trust among the audience, influencing their behavior [26], [67]. Influencers encompass many social media strategies a brand may employ to promote its products or services. The Internet and the dominance of social networking platforms have led to the emergence of the "influencers" phenomenon in everyday life.

This phenomenon surpasses the conventional practice of utilizing renowned individuals, societal figures, and celebrities to endorse products or services [68]. A noteworthy economic phenomenon is the substantial growth in the value of their associated marketing activities. This growth has increased benefits and cash flow by a billion dollars annually [69]. In the points mentioned above, the author researches the impact experienced by purchasers [65]. The leader refers to an individual or entity that influences another person. In the field of marketing, individuals who possess the ability to sway potential customers towards a particular service or product through the means of digital networking are commonly referred to as influencers. These influences play a role in enhancing the credibility of a brand. They influence young consumers' purchasing intentions, which are the focal points of the present study. Based on the number of followers and the type of influencer, the authors offer the following categorizations for the hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Value Co-creation would mediate between Marketing Influencers and patronage intention.

The Role of Value Co-creation Mediates Brand Community and Patronage Intention:

Value co-creation invariably necessitates the active involvement of the consumers. It is the collaborative endeavor between customers and organizations to generate value to enhance customer pleasure and experience [70]. In business dynamics, the role of consumers has evolved beyond that of passive beneficiaries of value in specific consumer trends. Instead, they engage as co-creators in generating customer advantages for the brand community in patronage intention, focusing on young consumers.

This engagement encompasses various tasks, including information retrieval, dissemination, responsible conduct, feedback provision, advocacy, aid, and tolerance [71]. We can classify customer-enterprise involvement in value co-creation into several essential dimensions: dialogue, access, risk-benefit analysis, and community transparency [34]. Patronage aims to participate in interactions, execute transactions, and offer recommendations. The intention to patronize influences whether a consumer will demonstrate loyalty by revisiting a specific store. This enhances valued co-creation by utilizing the community [72].

Consequently, brand communities are assessing their inherent value. Management and stakeholders are in charge of it. Recent research perceives value-building as a continuous economic dimension of customer and brand community identification. Consumers collaboratively develop brand identities [73]. The constituents of their communities are fundamental to their subsequent success. The degree to which community members identify with a brand community affects their propensity to patronize it [59].

Brand communities are recognized factors influencing community members' perceptions of the brand, their desire to patronize it, their actual purchasing behavior, and their engagement in value co-creation activities [44], [74]. Consumers who strongly associate with a brand community possess a profound perception of the brand, thereby establishing a value co-creation process that mediates the relationship between the brand community and patronage intention. We proposed the hypothesis based on the literature mentioned above.

Hypothesis 6: Value Co-creation would mediate between brand community and patronage intention.

The Role of Value Co-creation Mediates Customer Company Identification and Patronage Intention:

The consumer serves as an operant source for co-creation, and the level of CCI impacts the customers' co-creating actions [75]. When individuals strongly identify with a particular company, it increases the social connection between the company and its customers. This heightened social engagement, in turn, is associated with consumer behavior [76], [77]. The organization's customers desire to engage in collaborative endeavors by actively participating in activities such as providing feedback on products and services [78], [79]. Young consumers are enterprises that engage in ethical and legal practices and demonstrate concern for stakeholders and the environment. Their level of identification with the company is to increase patronage intention. This increased identification can lead to co-creation [80]. As mentioned above, the ethical values-driven marketing 3.0 discourse suggests a predicted positive correlation between CCI and co-creation behavior [59].

CCI is contentment, and loyalty toward the company has been positive in previous studies [49], [76], [81], [82]. Establishing strong customer-business identification leads to consumer reactions, such as increased commitment to the firm and intention to make purchases [39]. In the role of customers mentioned above, the organization augments extra-role or unanticipated actions, providing feedback for service enhancement and customers' patronage intention. It is essential to acknowledge the importance of the collective identity of consumers in developing nations and its influence on enhancing customer civic behavior, specifically among young consumers.

Hence, retailers strategically cultivate their shop image to align with the preferences and requirements of their specific target consumer base. Individuals are to engage in patronage behavior towards a firm that aligns its image and offerings with the consumer's self-perception. CCI must understand consumer store evaluation features. Value co-creation could mediate between CCI and patronage intention as follows: when individuals use a particular product, they possess prior awareness of the product in question and the appropriate purchasing channels, which indicates their pre-existing knowledge about this firm [83]. To deliver optimal service to consumers and product offerings, retailers must possess a comprehensive understanding of consumer identity, enabling them to assess and analyze diverse firm aspects. This phenomenon is expected to develop value co-creation [84] on CCI and patronage intentions. Based on the description, it is possible to formulate a research hypothesis.

Hypothesis 7: Value Co-creation would mediate between customer-company identification and patronage intention.

This study proposes a conceptual framework to explore the relationships between influencer marketing, brand community, CCI, value co-creation, and patronage intention—the framework for how these constructs interact with

consumer behavior among young consumers in the service industry. Influencer marketing drives consumer engagement and relatability of social media influencers, as shown in Figure 1.

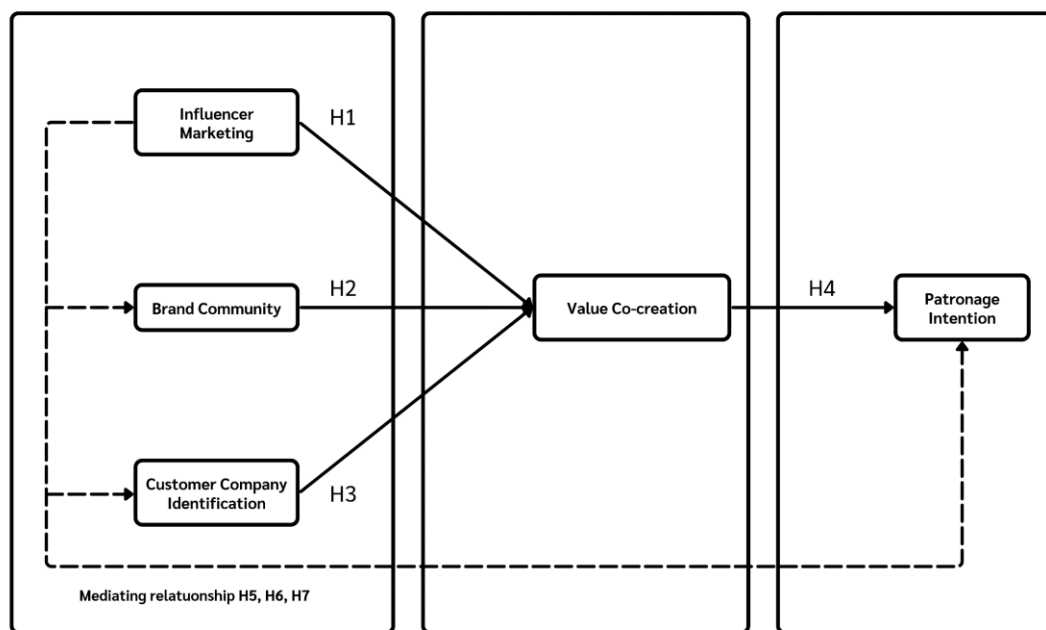


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The brand community represents the collective shared identity among consumers, while CCI focuses on the emotional alignment between consumers and companies. Value co-creation acts as a mediating variable, facilitating the transformation of these influences into outcomes. These factors collectively influence patronage intention, representing engagement with a service industry. This framework provides a theoretical foundation for the study and a roadmap for key constructs in the service industry.

METHODS

This study employs quantitative methods [85] to investigate the relationships between influencer marketing, brand community, CCI, value co-creation, and patronage intention among young consumers in the service industry. A structured, hypothesis-driven approach, this study seeks to analyze attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions quantitatively to establish causal relationships and provide a foundation for future empirical research.

Sampling Technique:

This study is focused on young consumers aged 18–35, representing a critical demographic in the service industry [86]. Stratified sampling will have a diverse representation of participants based on gender, income levels, and frequency of interaction with influencer marketing. This approach has varying perspectives on understanding how young consumers perceive value co-creation activities. A power analysis will determine the sample size statistically, with a target sample of 500–800 participants. This site will allow for generalizable findings across the young consumer demographic.

Instrument:

A structured survey design will collect data into two key sections. The first section will gather essential demographic information about participants, including their age, gender, education level, employment status, and service usage patterns. This section will discuss the frequency of their interaction with marketing influencer and their level of participation in brand communities. The second section will assess the constructs central to the study: influencer marketing, brand community, CCI, value co-creation, and patronage intention. Each construct will be measured using a Likert 7-point scale adapted from prior research [87].

For instance, influencer marketing will evaluate influencers' credibility, relevance, and trustworthiness, while the brand community will measure participants' sense of belonging and community engagement. CCI will assess the emotional and cognitive alignment between customers and companies; value co-creation will examine perceptions related to the collaborative value of young consumers, and patronage intention will measure engagement with service providers. A pilot study will refine the survey instrument, ensuring reliability [88]. Reliability will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with 0.7 or higher acceptable internal consistency.

Analytical Approach:

Quantitative data will be analyzed using PLS-SEM. This method evaluates complex models with mediating variables for the current study involving reflective and formative constructs [89]. PLS-SEM will be employed to test the relationships between the independent variables (influencer marketing, brand community, and CCI), the mediating variable (value co-creation), and the dependent variable (patronage intention). Model fit will be evaluated using R^2 and Q^2 values, and bootstrapping techniques will be applied to assess path coefficients.

This study presents a conceptual framework that emphasizes the role of value co-creation in the service industry, focusing on influencer marketing, brand community, and CCI. Future research should validate this framework using rigorous empirical methods, including appropriate sampling techniques and mixed methods. Examining how these relationships function across various service sectors or geographic regions could enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide the framework's broader applicability.

Theoretical Contributions:

As a conceptual study, this research is expected to advance theoretical knowledge by clarifying the mediating role of value co-creation in linking influencer marketing, brand community, and CCI to consumer outcomes such as patronage intention. The research contributes to the growing body of literature on influencer marketing by positioning it within a broader theoretical context relevant to the service industry. The study extends existing TPB and consumer behavior within digital ecosystems, providing a deeper understanding of how this demographic interacts with brands and co-creates value.

Practical Implications:

The findings of this study will have practical relevance for service providers aiming to enhance customer engagement and loyalty. Businesses can design more effective marketing strategies by identifying the mechanisms through which influencer marketing and brand community contribute to value co-creation. This includes creating collaborative and interactive experiences that strengthen consumer relationships and patronage intention. The framework provides a practical reference for companies to adapt their marketing efforts to specific geographic areas, ensuring alignment with consumer expectations and industry trends.

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