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Dialogue and Transparency in Value Co-creation: An Empirical Analysis of Airline Passengers¹

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Abstract

Increasing the interaction between firms and customers relation in the service system led to changes in the value creation processes. Value is co-created between actors who have high communication and information sharing, unlike traditional approaches. In this context, the study focusing on the value co-creation process between passengers and airline firms; it aims to reveal the effect of the dialogue and transparency on passenger trust, as well as the effects of the trust on affective and normative commitment. The data set obtained from participants by the questionnaire form applied online to airline passengers. The study hypotheses tested through the Least Squares-Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM). The findings show that dialogue and transparency, which are the determinants of the value co-creation process, have an impact on passenger trust. Especially the acceleration of multi-directional information flows and minimizing the losses during these flows affect the trust levels of the passengers in value co-creation processes. The results also show that the relationship between passengers' trust and their affective and normative commitment to the airlines. This relationship between passenger trust and commitment (affective and normative) is a long-term investment. At the same time, the passengers' trust and commitment are the determinants of indirect and/or direct value co-creation processes.

Keywords: Value co-creation, trust, dialogue, transparency, commitment.

JEL Classification: M10, L93, M30

Ortak Değer Yaratmada Diyalog ve Şeffaflık: Havayolu Yolcularının Ampirik Analizi

Öz

Hizmet sisteminde firmalar ve müşteriler arasındaki etkileşimin artırılması, değer yaratma süreçlerinde değişikliklere yol açmıştır. Değer, geleneksel yaklaşımların aksine, yüksek iletişim ve bilgi paylaşımına sahip aktörler arasında birlikte yaratılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, yolcular ve havayolu firmaları arasındaki değer yaratma sürecine odaklanan çalışma; diyalog ve şeffaflığın yolcu güveni üzerindeki etkisini ve yolcu güveninin duygusal ve normatif bağlılık üzerindeki etkilerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın veri seti havayolu yolcularına çevrimiçi olarak uygulanan anket formu ile oluşturulmuş ve hipotezler En Küçük Kareler-Yapısal Eşitlik Modeli (EKK-YEM) ile test edilmiştir. Bulgular, değer yaratma sürecinin belirleyicileri olan

¹This study is the expanded version of the “11th International Conference of Strategic Research on Scientific Studies and Education (ICoSReSSE-8-10 November/2019)” proceedings.

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diyalog ve şeffaflığın yolcu güvenini etkilediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Özellikle çok yönlü bilgi akışlarının hızlanması ve bu akışlar sırasında kayıpların en aza indirilmesi, yolcuların değer yaratma süreçlerine duyduğu güven düzeylerini etkilemektedir. Sonuçlar aynı zamanda yolcuların güveni ile havayollarına duydukları duygusal ve normatif bağlılık arasındaki ilişkinin de olduğunu göstermektedir. Yolcu güveni ve bağlılığı (duygusal ve normatif) arasındaki bu ilişki uzun vadeli bir yatırımdır. Aynı zamanda, yolcuların güven ve bağlılıkları dolaylı ve / veya doğrudan değer ortak yaratım süreçlerinin belirleyicisidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ortak değer yaratma, güven, diyalog, şeffaflık, bağlılık.

JEL Sınıflandırma: M10, L93, M30

INTRODUCTION

With the effects of the customers' changing habits, traditional perspectives of the firms have been a witness to radical changes. These changes evolved the traditional Goods-Dominant Logic (G-D Logic) to Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic). S-D Logic, which locates the customer as a creator of value, argues that the interaction between customers and firms is value co-creation oriented (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Value co-creation concept which suggests that firms should shift their closed systems (from their headquarters) to more collaborative platforms dedicated to creating co-value (Albinsson et al., 2016) is defined as a new collaborative production process which customers dynamically contribute (O'Hern & Rindfleisch, 2009). High-quality interactions in value co-creation processes create unique experiences between customers and firms and it causes a new way for competitive advantage. Therefore, the value must be created jointly by both firm and customer (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

The value co-creation experience is the social, physical, temporal, and/or spatial context that differentiates goods and services (Grönroos, 2009). Dialogue, which is one of the important variables of the value co-creation experience, expresses the indefinite, content-rich, and on-going interactions between the firm and its customers (Zaborek & Mazur, 2019). On the other hand, it helps the firm to recognize the social, emotional, and cultural context of the customer experience. Dialogue also offers the opportunity for interaction, participation, equal communication, and learning for both parties (Tanev et al., 2011). Transparency, one of the other important variables of value co-creation, is an indicator of the extent to which a firm has succeeded in reducing the information asymmetry in its relations with its customers (Zaborek & Mazur, 2019). The more transparency the firm is towards its customers regarding its information, the more successful its interaction will be (Ramaswamy, 2005; Tanev et al., 2011), and the value co-creation process will continue without any interruption. The interaction and information sharing processes between the firm and the customers will provide a continuous sense of trust over time. Trust provides a fascinating journey for

researchers trying to better understand the dynamics of cooperation and competition (Deutsch, 1962; Gambetta, 2000), resolution of conflicts (Lewicki & Stevenson, 1997), and facilitation (Lewicki et al., 2006). It plays a role in the process of value co-creation by affecting the variables of dialogue and transparency between the firm and its customers (Ching et al., 2011).

One of the main reasons for the trust between the firm and the customer is the feeling of mutual commitment. The relationship between trust and commitment plays an important role in customer behavior (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The feelings that customers have with firms and the degree of these feelings (affective commitment) and / or their commitment arising from obligations (normative commitment) are related to the level of trust (Shukla, Banerjee, & Singh, 2016). In this context, the study aims to address the interaction between airlines and their passengers in the airline service system in the value co-creation process. The fact that both actors (airline-passenger) in the airline service system are involved in a long-term trust-based relationship is one of the important requirements for the value co-creation. When the airline firm is open to communication and sharing the information clearly, it will facilitate the participation of the passenger to the value co-creation process. By this way of creating the trust will affect the passengers' commitment to the firm through the emotions and norms.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Value Co-Creation and Trust

S-D Logic approach (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), the value of which is co-created as a concept in the interactive process between actors, has emerged as an alternative to the traditional G-D logic perspective (Vargo, Lusch & Akaka, 2010). S-D logic states that value is created by all actors by defining the customer as active participants in relational change and co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The role of the customer in the process of re-creating the value, which expresses the participation of firms and customers in the value creation process, has evolved (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The active participation of customers in value production processes also contributes to the development of the value experienced in the service (Van Beuningen, de Ruyter, & Wetzels, 2011). Co-creation of value leads to the combination of suppliers and customers in the co-production processes, leading to more effective solutions in identifying needs and demands (Lusch & Vargo, 2006).

In the recreation processes, which are handled differently from the traditional point of view, customers are in dialogue with the supplier from the design process of the product or service until the post-delivery (Payne et al., 2008). This dialogue between the firm and the customer is an interactive process in terms of learning and co-creating (Ballantyne, 2004). The dialogue, which is an interactive co-learning (Ballantyne, 2004), developing relationships and generating information (Varey, 2002), creates a commitment between the actors in the service system (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The form of the product or service may not be clear before the dialogue in the co-creation process. In order to increase the efficiency of the customer and to determine a solution, the firm can develop a dialogue in the process of value co-creation. Therefore, the dialogue is not only information exchange but also the key to the discovery of new ideas and value co-creation (Jaworski & Kohli, 2006). However, the dialogue will be difficult if customers do not have equal information (i.e. lack of transparency) due to information asymmetry. For this reason, transparency has a critical point for a meaningful dialogue process (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Transparency and usability of information are needed to develop the potential of value co-creation (Krenz et al., 2015). Transparency, which accelerates the adoption processes of the customers regarding the products or services of the firms, also provides detailed information about the process of value re-creation (Nagarethenam et al., 2018). Dialogue and transparency affect the processes of creating common value based on the mutual trust relationship between the firm and the customers. Trust, which is one of the topics that is discussed extensively in the marketing literature, has become more prominent in the relationship between the actors, and productivity can be achieved through the creation of value in different ways and the commitment created (Ballantyne & Varey, 2005). Therefore, the study offers the following hypothesis.

H₁: There is a positive relationship between dialogue and passengers' trust.

H₂: There is a positive relationship between transparency and passengers' trust.

1.2. Commitment and Trust

One of the most important determinants of long-term relationships among the actors in the service system is the concept of commitment. While commitment shows the importance of the relationship between the actors, it also reveals the intention to maintain this relationship in the future (Wilson, 1995). Commitment is critical in the relational exchange between the firm and the customer and leads to significant consequences such as reduced customer intention to change firms (Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974) and higher motivation

in the relationship (Farrell & Rusbult, 1981). The concept of commitment, which is defined as an implicit or explicit relational continuity promise among the actors in the service system (Dwyer et al., 1987), is evaluated in this study as customer commitment, which is defined as a permanent attitude or desire for a particular brand or firm (Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpande 1992). The commitment and sincerity feelings of the customers' personal attitudes provide motivation to maintain the relationship. Customer commitment refers to the motivation to maintain a relationship, and loyalty refers to the intention to maintain the relationship (Wetzels, De Ruyter & Leminnk, 2000). The development of customer commitment is important in creating and maintaining marketing relationships (Lacey, 2007). In the literature, the commitment, which is handled under different titles, was dealt with affective and normative subtitles in the study. While affective commitment emerges due to sympathy and identification between the customer and the firm; normative commitment arises due to the obligations of actors to maintain their relationships (Cater & Zabcar, 2009). Affectively committed customers continue to prefer the firm because they love their suppliers and enjoy working with them (Fullerton, 2005). On the other hand, normative commitment takes place due to different obligations, including the relationship between the customer and the supplier and moral imperatives (Kumar et al., 1994).

When trust is established, which expresses the expectations of the firms in terms of fulfilling the activities they promised, commitment to the brand will emerge (Lacey, 2007). This is a result of the causal relationship between trust and commitment. The more customers trust the firm they serve, the more they will feel the necessity of maintaining their relationship (De Ruyter & Semejin, 2002). Accordingly, it can be stated that the increase in trust between passengers and the airline will lead to increased affective and normative commitment.

Fullerton (2005) suggested that marketing is less relevant with normative commitment, it is highly related to emotions (O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991) and its effects on relationship behavior are weaker than affective commitment (Gruen et al., 2000). Passengers believe that they should travel with this airline firm because of the psychological bond they feel for their preferred airline firm. In other words, passengers may have the intention to travel with that airline because of the positive experiences they had in the past (Cater & Zabcar, 2009). In this context, the study offers the following hypothesis.

H3: There is a positive relationship between passengers' trust and affective commitment.

H4: There is a positive relationship between passengers' trust and normative commitment.

H₅: There is a positive relationship between passengers' affective commitment and normative commitment.

2. METHODS

To test the hypotheses data were collected from a sample of airline passengers by the developed questionnaire from literature. For this purpose, by using a convenience sampling method, the data for this study were gathered through an online survey for airline passengers in Turkey. Among the 450 participants contacted through the internet, only 217 participants have filled the questionnaire. Therefore, the final data set for the study comprises answers given by these 217 participants.

The items in the questionnaire were adapted from the related literature. There are five different constructs, dialogue (DIA), transparency (TRP), trust (TRUST), affective commitment (AFFCOM), and normative commitment (NORCOM). The items for scales.

- ◆ DIA and TRP have been adapted from Albinsson, Perera, & Sautter (2016),
- ◆ TRUST has been adapted from Arnott, Wilson, Kingshott & Pecotich (2007)
- ◆ AFFCOM and NORCOM have been adapted from Cater & Zabkar (2009).

3. RESULTS

The data set collected from air passengers which test the effects of dialogue and transparency in the process of value co-creation on passengers' trust and the effects of trust on affective and normative commitment, was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM is a nonparametric method that minimizes the amount of unexplained variance. This technique differs from the maximum probability-based technique that requires normal data distribution and considers the need to use normally distributed data. PLS-SEM model analyzed with SmartPLS 3.2.8 package program (Hair et. al., 2017).

Before the hypotheses test the validity and reliability of the scales used in the study were observed. Primarily the factor and reliability (composite and Cronbach's Alpha) analysis were performed for the variables (Table 1). As seen from the table all the constructs have enough factor loadings and reliability as their values are higher than the suggested value of 0.7.

Table 1. Factor Loadings and Reliability Scores

Item	Factor Loadings	Construct	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
DIA1	0,713	DIA	0,950	0,940
DIA2	0,826			
DIA3	0,811			
DIA4	0,876			
DIA5	0,847			
DIA6	0,874			
DIA7	0,819			
DIA8	0,813			
DIA9	0,823			
TRP1	0,857	TRP	0,920	0,870
TRP2	0,914			
TRP3	0,898			
TRUST1	0,845	TRUST	0,935	0,916
TRUST2	0,820			
TRUST3	0,834			
TRUST4	0,875			
TRUST5	0,864			
TRUST6	0,800			
AFFCOM1	0,817	AFFCOM	0,923	0,889
AFFCOM2	0,908			
AFFCOM3	0,893			
AFFCOM4	0,845			
NORCOM1	0,906	NORCOM	0,925	0,878
NORCOM2	0,903			
NORCOM3	0,880			

After the reliability tests to measure the validity (convergent and discriminant) of the scales the study were used the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) score for the convergent validity and the square root of AVE with the correlations among constructs for the discriminant validity. Base on the literature acceptable level of convergent validity, AVE should be 0.50 or higher (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). For discriminant validity, the square root of AVE which shown in parentheses (Table 2) should be greater than the absolute values of these correlations. As seen from the table all the constructs satisfy this criterion. Therefore, it was concluded that the measures in the study have enough convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 2. Validity Scores

Constructs	AVE	Inter Construct Correlations				
		TRUST	AFFCOM	NORCOM	DIA	TRP
TRUST	0,706	(0,840)				
AFFCOM	0,751	0,682	(0,867)			
NORCOM	0,804	0,611	0,706	(0,897)		
DIA	0,678	0,562	0,562	0,514	(0,824)	
TRP	0,793	0,583	0,503	0,422	0,688	(0,890)

The structural model of the study is shown in Figure 1.

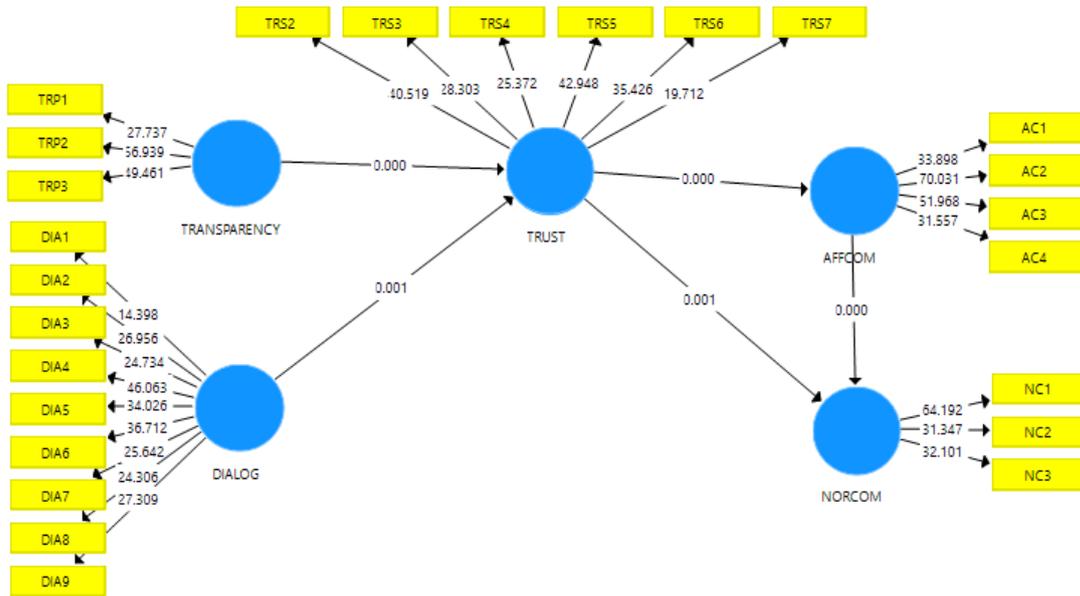


Figure 1. Structural Model

The path coefficients, the corresponding significance values, and the hypotheses results of the model are summarized in Table 3. As seen from the table, all the coefficients are statistically significant, and all hypotheses of the study accepted.

Table 2. Structural Model Coefficients and Hypotheses Results

Hypotheses	Path	Path coefficient	Std. Dev.	T Stats	p Values	Results
H ₁	DIA->TRUST	0,304	0,090	3,367	0,001	Accepted
H ₂	TRP->TRUST	0,374	0,088	4,234	0,000	Accepted
H ₃	TRUST->AFCOM	0,682	0,035	19,699	0,000	Accepted
H ₄	TRUST-> NORCOM	0,242	0,066	3,643	0,001	Accepted
H ₅	AFCOM-> NORCOM	0,541	0,071	7,618	0,000	Accepted

4. CONCLUSIONS

The data obtained in the study aiming to reveal the effects of dialogue and transparency - in the process of creating common value between airline firms and their passengers -variables on passenger trust and the passenger trust variable on firm commitment (affective and normative) were collected via a questionnaire.

The study aimed to look at the value co-creation process, the measurement of which is carried out through different variables, from the dialogue and transparency in the literature. For this purpose, the study was established to links between dialogue, transparency, and

passengers' trust, and commitment in the airline industry. As a result, it was observed that the variables of dialogue ($p < 0.01$) and transparency ($p < 0.01$) were effective in passenger trust. These findings are similar to the results in the literature. Trust has a creative and collaborative effect on airline-passenger interactions (Baumann & Le Meunier-FitzHugh, 2014). Dialogue and transparency, two important variables of value co-creation, also affect passengers' trust. The better the quality of the dialogue between airline and passenger, the better will be due to the increased trust in the experience created together (Binkhorst & Dekker, 2009). Also, the fact that symmetrical sharing of information during airline-passenger interactions will increase the passengers' trust (Spena et al. 2012). Transparency in the active dialogue process between firm and customer will increase the level of trust and facilitate value co-creation by improving the customer experience (Solakis et al., 2017).

Findings on how the firm commitment (affective and normative), (Baumann & Le Meunier-FitzHugh, 2014) is affected by passengers' trust has been shown to affect the affective ($p < 0,01$) and normative ($p < 0,01$) commitment to the airline. Trust based on past behavioral patterns allows actors to think about the future and ultimately become determined. When passengers trust to the firm, they make short-term sacrifices because of their strong belief in the potential of the relationship in the future. A passenger with a high level of commitment will become more vulnerable and will only interact with firms they can trust (Walter & Ritter, 2003). In the literature, it was observed that trust had positive effects on commitment (e.g. Kumar et al., 1995, Nyaga et al., 2010, Vijayasathy, 2010). Since the level of commitment between airline and passenger brings a vulnerability to both parties, the parties are only looking for a reliable partnership (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust between airline and passenger will also increase the levels of commitment associated with emotional and/or obligations, and this relationship will be long-term (Nyaga et al., 2010).

Airlines not only provide services to the passenger but also seek ways to create common value by including the passenger in the service process. The findings imply that implementing a value co-creation process can be beneficial for airline firms. In airline-passenger interaction, the dialogue will help the firms to support the information flows; and transparency will give correct information to them in these flows. So, these determinants of value co-creation process will contribute to passengers' trust. It has been demonstrated that it is necessary to be in dialogue and transparency with its passengers, especially for airline firms to gain long-term relationships by gaining the trust and commitment of their passengers in the value co-creation process.

The most important limitation in the study tested through the survey data collected from airline passengers is the issue of time and cost. Considering these limitations, it is important for generalizability to expand the sample in later studies and to include different models related to value co-creation in the study.

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