A Perceived Control-Based Model of the Effects of Co-Production on Satisfaction

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This article represents an initial effort to analyze the complex linkages between co-production, perceived control and satisfaction. Two experimental studies show that co-production, information and choice, representing respectively behavioral, cognitive and decisional control, positively affect perceived control which in turn affects satisfaction. This last relationship is moderated by customers’ self-efficacy.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Consumer’s participation through co-production is increasingly present in marketing literature. Co-production requires consumer participation in production activities, such as product design, resource aggregating or other processing activities leading to an output that will be used or consumed (Etgar 2008). From the company perspective, co-production can be an effective marketing tool, as the interaction between customer and firm has been pointed as a source of value creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004) and competitive effectiveness (Bendapudi and Leone 2003). From the consumer perspective, co-production may be of interest for consumers since it allows them to perceive some control over the process of the desired product or service.

The perceived control concept is related to the perceived ability to significantly alter a situation (Burger 1989; Thompson 1981) and has been showed to exert a crucial role in people’s life by exhibiting stress-reducing (Glass and Singer 1972) and motivation-inducing (Skinner, 1995) properties. Having made its first appearance in consumer research not until the 1990s, perceived control has been found out to exert some positive influence on pleasure (Hui and Bateson 1991), mood, involvement (Ward and Barnes 2001), satisfaction (Wathieu et al. 2002) and intention to behave (Mathur 1998). However and quite surprisingly when considering the increase of co-production in consumption activities, a clear need to understand the linkage between the control from the co-creation process and the satisfaction toward the related consumption remains (Lusch and Vargo 2006). More specifically, two questions remain unanswered: first, does co-production lead to higher consumers’ satisfaction because it makes them feel more in control? Second, does the perception of control induced by the co-production process always lead to higher satisfaction or, on the contrary, may lead in specific circumstances to lower satisfaction?

This article represents an initial effort to analyze the complex linkages between co-production, perceived control and satisfaction. Understanding how the perception of control influences the process of satisfaction is of interest because of the importance of satisfaction to predict future consumer’s choices (Woodruff, Cadotte and Jenkins 1983). Within this perspective, understanding how co-production may contribute to enhance perceived control – and consequently satisfaction – is of importance.

This research draws on Skinner’s (1996) conceptualization of perceived control – an extension of Averill’s (1973) model which states that behavioral, cognitive, and decisional control are potential antecedents of perceived control - to explain the effects of co-production on satisfaction. Two experimental studies were developed to investigate whether co-production and other two variables, information and consumer choice, affect perceived control and whether the later has an effect on satisfaction moderated by self-efficacy. The first experiment simulates behavioral and cognitive control, respectively, through co-production and information to examine them as two possible sources of perceived control and satisfaction. The second experiment replicates the first by replacing information by choice. Behavioral and decisional controls are simulated, respectively, through co-production and choice.

Therefore three hypotheses about perceived control’s antecedents were tested: consumers who co-produce will perceive greater control when compared to those who do not (hypothesis 1); consumers who gain more information will perceive greater control when compared to those who gain less information (hypothesis 2); and consumers who have choice will perceive greater control when compared to those who have no choice (hypothesis 3). As feeling in control of the environment has been strongly related to satisfaction and performance (Greenberger et al. 1989) the hypothesis about perceived control’s impact on satisfaction was also tested: the greater the perceived control, the greater the satisfaction (hypothesis 4).

A. asymptotic model of the effects of perceived control on satisfaction should be expected since the increase in perceived control may lead to negative reactions (Burger 1989) specially if co-producers are concerned with their own ability (Ertimur 2008), so a last hypothesis was tested on both experiments: consumers with high self-efficacy will experience greater satisfaction when they perceive higher control than consumers with low self-efficacy (hypothesis 5).

Results of both studies supported the five hypotheses, showing that co-production \(F(1, 93) = 57.48, p < .001\) on study 1, and \(F(1, 86) = 110.20, p < .001\) on study 2, information \(F(1, 93) = 13.53, p < .001\) and choice \(F(1, 86) = 23.34, p < .001\) affect perceived control which in turn affects satisfaction \(\beta = .809, \eta^2(95) = 13.39, p < .001\) on study 1, \(\beta = .872, \eta^2(88) = .167, p < .001\) on study 2. This last relationship depends on self-efficacy such that consumers with high perceived control and high self-efficacy reported greater satisfaction than those with low self-efficacy. These results suggest that perceived control is a powerful concept in explaining satisfaction consequently to co-production and that self-efficacy is a crucial condition for the positive effect of perceived control on satisfaction. Findings of studies 1 and 2 strongly support Skinner’s (1996) model of perceived control and confirm the power of perceived control in explaining the effects of co-production, in addition of information and choice, on consumer’ satisfaction.

This research may be of interest to marketing practitioners. As co-production leads to more perceived control, marketers can induce consumers’ feelings of empowerment by allowing them to participate in the production process. Giving consumers information about the product or service, or giving them choice also represents for marketers means to induce consumer’s perceived control. As emphasized by the wide body of literature dealing with control (Skinner, 1996), such consumer’s feeling of control may result in a variety of positive outcome, from emotions to behavioral responses, all them being of great interest for practitioners. However, we found self-efficacy as an important variable for the positive effect of perceived control on satisfaction. Thus it may be argued that co-production must engage consumers in simple process or in processes with which the consumers are familiar in order not to jeopardize the consumer’s self-efficacy and in turn its satisfaction.

REFERENCES


