

# Perceived value of customer citizenship behavior

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## **Perceived value of customer citizenship behavior**

### **Abstract**

This study investigates how customers perceive value by engaging in citizenship behaviors (CCB) towards the company and other customers. Building on Holbrook's typology of values and functional theory, we suggest a framework analysis based on 20 interviews using the critical incident technique - CIT. A total of 18 subcategories emerged, highlighting values and motivations regarding 2 dichotomies (self vs. other oriented; extrinsic vs. intrinsic) and 4 categories: Efficiency/Quality; Social/Esteem; Play/Peace; and Ethics/Spirituality. Although CCB has been associated with positive antecedents and outcomes, customers may engage in CCB to cope with their protective functions or feelings of impotence towards the service experience. Salience of social norms, even in a private context, may also help firms to control CCB related to extrinsic and self-oriented benefits. The "compresence" (Holbrook, 1994) of intrinsic/self-oriented perceived values with other dimensions was recurrent in CCB.

Keywords: CCB; Values; Services.

Track: Services Marketing

## **1 Introduction**

Customers are increasingly expected to behave as temporary employees and human resources of the organization, supporting the company with unsolicited, extra-role behaviors, including helping other customers, being tolerant, facilitating services, and providing recommendations and feedbacks (Bartikowski & Wash, 2011; Groth, 2005; Revilla-Camacho, Vega-Vázquez, & Cossío-Silva 2017). These discretionary performances are defined as customer citizenship behavior (CCB) and are “not required for the successful production and delivery of the service but that, in the aggregate, help the service organization overall” (Groth 2005, p. 11). Previous literature on CCB have overlooked individual differences that can influence these behaviors (e.g., Balaji, 2014; Bartikowski & Wash, 2011; Lii & Lee, 2012; Choi & Lotz, 2016; Johnson & Rapp, 2010; Yi & Gong, 2013; Karaosmanoglu, Altinigne, & Isiksal, 2016;). Understanding factors, motivations, and circumstances that lead to relational exchanges are imperative to develop a competitive advantage from customer (inter)actions. Therefore, in this study we investigate how customers perceive value by engaging in citizenship behaviors towards the company and other customers. In order to do so, we build on consumers’ perceived value framework and functional theory to formally analyze values and motivations.

This study is organized as follows: the next section provides previous research on CCB, Holbrook’s typology of perceived value, and functional theory. Next, we detail data collection and analysis procedures involving critical incident technique (CIT). After discussing the results, we offer final discussion with theoretical and managerial considerations.

## **2 CCB and Holbrook’s Typology of Value**

Customers involved in CCB behaviors will assume extra-role as partners and collaborators of the firm (Organ, 1988), going beyond customer coproduction due to its discretionary initiatives beyond the requirements to provide service delivery (Nguyen et al., 2014). These behaviors have already been studied under different names, such as customer voluntary performance (CVP), customer extra-role behavior, and organizational citizenship behavior (customer OCB; Bettencourt, 1997; Bove et al., 2009; Groth 2005). These extra-roles include activities such as helping other customers (Johnson, Massiah, & Allan, 2013; Jung, Yoo, & Arnold, 2017; Yi & Gong, 2013); recommendations (Balaji, 2014); feedback (Bartikowski & Walsh, 2011; Choi & Lotz, 2016; Groth, 2005); tolerance (Revilla-Camacho, Vega-Vázquez, & Cossío-Silva, 2015); facilitation (Anaza, 2014; Kim & Choi, 2016);

cooperation (Bettencourt, 1997; Oyedele & Simpson, 2011; Yi, Gong, & Lee, 2013;); and advocacy (Garma & Bove, 2011;).

We suggest Holbrook's typology of customer's perceived value (Holbrook, 1994, 1996, 1999) to understand why customers would spend efforts helping the company, employees or other customers. Holbrook's framework is based on the axiology of values (Lewis, 1946; Perry, 1954) and refers to an "interactive relativistic preference experience" (Holbrook, 1999, p.5) of an object (e.g., a service, a social cause, or a political candidate) by a subject (usually a consumer or another consumer). The framework englobes two dichotomies (Holbrook, 1994, 1999; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007): (1) extrinsic versus intrinsic value (where extrinsic refers to the functionality and instrumentality of the object to attain a purpose) and intrinsic to the appreciation of the experience as an end being considered a self-sufficient and self-justified activity; (2) self-oriented versus other-oriented value (self-oriented is connected to the aspect in which customers are concerned for their own sake or the effect that it will have on themselves) and other-oriented values (they extend beyond the self and consider the extent of how the experience will affect others, how others react to it, and how others value it). Combining two of the suggested dichotomies, we adapted the typology of consumer value to a 2x2 cross-tabulation with four different dimensions to a CCB context (Table 1). To analyze citizenship behavior and the helping provided to firms and other customers, we assume a personal, interactional, and situational perspective consistent with Holbrook's typology of values (1999).

### **3 Functional Theory**

Functional analysis stems from reasons and meanings and plans and motives that determine and produce psychological phenomena (Snyder, 1992), assuming that different people can generate the same behavior with distinct functions in mind (Snyder, 1993); that is, customer performing similar citizenship behaviors on the surface may be serving diverse sources of motivations. For example, helping someone use a ATM can have two motives that generate the same helping behavior: speed up the line or avoid feeling guilty.

Clary et al. (1998) and Clary and Snyder (1999) suggested six functions that reflect a variety of attitudes towards helping people and general prosocial activities, from which five are related do CCB (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Adaptation of volunteering functions to CCB.

<b>Function</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Holbrook's types of values</b>
Understanding	Customers are seeking to learn more about the service or exercise skills often unused.	<b>1</b> Extrinsic Self-oriented
Social	Helping allows customers to gain social recognition or strengthen social relationships (related to social rewards and punishments).	<b>2</b> Extrinsic Other-oriented
Protective	Helping is used to reduce negative feelings (e.g., guilt) and address personal issues such as escape from one's own problems.	<b>3</b> Intrinsic Self-oriented
Enhancement	Helping allows someone to grow and develop psychologically (e.g., self-esteem).	<b>3</b> Intrinsic Self-oriented
Values	Customers help to act on relevant values such as altruism and humanitarianism.	<b>4</b> Intrinsic Other-oriented

Source: Adapted from Clary and Snyder (1999) and Holbrook (1999).

The identification of motivational foundations is an appropriate resource to investigate the factors that guide CCB and unfolding dynamics. In this study, we propose an analysis of how customers perceive value and feel motivated towards performing citizenship behaviors. Next, we approach the critical incident technique (CIT) and delineate methodological procedures used to understand the phenomena.

#### **4 Method**

We adopted the CIT - critical incident technique (Flanagan 1954) to investigate CCB motivations. According to Keatinge (2002), critical incidents relate to representative or meaningful behaviors or circumstances. For the current study, the critical incident needed to meet the subsequent criteria: 1) consist of a customer-to-customer or customer-company interaction; 2) involve helping other customers (strangers), recommendations, feedback or displays of tolerance (CCB dimensions); and 3) must specify context and circumstances with satisfactory details. The data for this study were collected over a 3-month period. The author conducted two waves of interviews, totaling 554.5 minutes of recording time and 171 pages of transcriptions, with interviews ranging from 20 to 44 minutes. Notes from interviews supplemented the transcriptions. Our sample reflected product and service customers with heterogeneous demographic profiles: age, occupation, education, and family status: Alex, 47, Psychologist, Divorced; Anne, 31, Architect, Married; Carl, 30, Consultant, Single; Carrie, 29, Graduate student, Single; Charlotte, 34, Health technician, Married with kids; Corinne, 31, Communications analyst, Single; David, 52, Consultant, Divorced with kids; Gabriel, 27,

Engineer, Single, Jerry, 42, Graduate student, Married with kids; Jake, 27, Business analyst, Single; John, 45, Physiotherapist, Married with kids; Kate, 39, College professor, Single; Larry, 29, Business manager, Single; Loren, 31, Police officer, Married; Matt, 28, Lawyer, Single; Rebecca, 26, Logistics manager, Single; Rory, 28, Lawyer, Single; Rose, 28, Architect, Married; Tina, 52, College professor, Married with kids; Tory, 46, Secretary, Married with kids.

Semistructured interviews began with an open-ended question, requiring interviewees to “think of a time when, as a customer, you helped or provided support to another customer in a service encounter”. The interviewees were free to select the service to evoke a more detailed description (Meuter et al., 2000). If respondents were having difficulty in accessing the incident, the interviewer would suggest a predefined list of 15 service settings commonly used by customers and tested in previous studies to help recollection. The services include those provided by the bank, gym, restaurant, bar, concert, doctor/physician’s office, hospital, hair salon/barber shop, hotel, amusement park, movie theater, air/train/bus, and sports game (Zhang, Beatty, & Mothersbaugh 2010). We proceed with the same operationalization to comprise the other dimensions of CCB included in this study (i.e., making recommendations, providing feedbacks, and being tolerant).

After data collection and transcription, we thoroughly analyzed the respondents’ experiences: vertically to identify data categories and subcategories and horizontally to group and summarize (Grove & Fisk, 1997; Breunig & Christoffersen, 2016). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the coding process requires descriptive, interpretive, and pattern coding. The iterative process and constant comparison among stories were particularly useful to notice these emerging patterns. The author and an independent judge manually coded the incidents and discussed discrepancies until achieving an agreement. In a second moment, we also used ATLAS.ti 8.1.2 (qualitative software) (Butterfield et al., 2005). The double coding evidenced interjudge reliability of over 80 percent.

## **5 Findings**

Our analysis of CCB perceived values and motivations suggests specific means by which our participants interact with companies, employees, and other customers. As we examined the data that stemmed from critical incidents, subcategories emerged to compose our analysis. To simplify our exposition, we structure our framework building on Holbrook’s typology of values and Clary et al. (1998) additional functions. However, as we discuss our framework, we explain how these categories are components or interactive and situational

processes, in which values from different dimensions are intrinsically connected to attend various sources of motivations.

Our discussion also contemplates four distinct citizenship behaviors to offer a more comprehensive picture of CCB. We sought to closely intertwined patterns that support our discussion. The subsequent analysis follows the scheme of the detailed categories. First, we approach subcategories related to Efficiency or Quality. Next, we present results derived from Social or Esteem and Play or Peace, respectively. Lastly, we develop our discussion on Ethics or Spirituality. As shown in Table 4, the structure of analysis encompassed existing and emergent categories and subcategories suggested to investigate the perceived value on performing CCB.

**Table 2 – Summary analysis**

<b>Dimensions</b>		<b>Categories</b>	<b>Subcategories</b>
Extrinsic	Self-oriented	1. Efficiency or Quality	Convenience Money Time Excellency Performance Understanding
	Other-oriented	2. Social or Esteem	Networking Reputation
Intrinsic	Self-oriented	3. Play or Peace	Comforting Enhancement Happiness Peace of mind Protective
	Other-oriented	4. Ethics or Spirituality	Altruism Benevolence Empathy Morality/justice Sacredness

In the Extrinsic and Self-oriented dimensions, there is the Efficiency or Quality category, in which convenience, money, time, excellency, performance, and understanding play pivotal roles to a better comprehension of the phenomenon. The Extrinsic and Other-oriented dimensions are resumed in then Social or Esteem category that encompasses networking and reputation.

The Intrinsic and Self-oriented dimensions, based on the Play or Peace category, are related to the subcategories as follows: comforting, enhancement, happiness, peace of mind, and protective. Lastly, Intrinsic and other-oriented dimensions are resumed in the Ethics and

Spirituality category, composed of altruism, benevolence, empathy, morality/justice, and sacredness.

### **3.5 General Discussion**

We investigated how customers perceive value in performing CCB. Building on the previous theorizing from Holbrook (1994, 1999) and Clary et al. (1998), we integrated emerging patterns of motivations to different types of values. We proposed a framework to analyze what encourages customers to perform discretionary behaviors towards the company and other customers. Considering dichotomies of self-oriented versus other-oriented and extrinsic versus intrinsic values, we also discussed the dynamics of values and particularities of specific dimensions of CCB (i.e., helping other customers, feedback, recommendation, and tolerance).

Customers have a wide range of options to perform citizenship behaviors due to its discretionary engagement (Bettencourt, 1997). When analyzing the Efficiency or Quality category, we found that values encompassing Money, Time, and Convenience were critical to understanding CCB during the service experience. As instrumentals goals to help customers to achieve the “long run to self-interest” (Trivers, 1971; Hamilton, 1964), customers will perform citizenship behaviors to attain extrinsic benefits for themselves. The subcategory Understanding, one of our contributions, also highlighted a salient and underexplored facet of CCB. To practice an unused or underdeveloped competence, knowledge or skill, customers will engage in helping other customers and elaborate feedback to the firm (e.g., exercising another language or handing a new technology). Interestingly, the mechanism of help per se may assist customers in the future. For example, a participant that reported that the process of providing feedback to the firm changed and supported her to address subsequent feedbacks issued by her and directed to her - *She [bank manager], to achieve her sales goal, registered two private pension plans in my account. I requested a chargeback and she asked me if she could do it only in the next month. Since I needed the money and knew what was happening there, I gave feedback to the Ombudsman of the bank (David).*

**P1: Citizenship behaviors based on efficiency or quality motivations will enhance the self-oriented value.**

Individuals are continually choosing alternatives to build on their rewards and sanctions to operate complex social situations combining others' and self-interest (Tomasello & Vaish, 2012, Izuma, Saito, & Sadato, 2009). Based on Social or Esteem category, we noticed the pattern with different types of CCB. Helping other customers and providing recommendations allow customers to publicly demonstrate concerns regarding others while



communicating self-identity aspects (Shavitt, 1990). Since helping, providing feedbacks, and making recommendations require active effort from customers, these behaviors may also assist on perceived values related to reputation building both with the firm and social groups, such as other customers, family, and friends. Based on the essence of extrinsic and other-oriented values, these behaviors are fundamentally connected to impression management. Furthermore, the establishment and development of social bonds (i.e., Networking and Reputation) would help customers achieve personal / professional benefits-*Today, I have many friends that I met there. One thing that binds me to the gym is their employees (Rebecca).*

**P2: More active or effortful citizenship behaviors (i.e., helping other customers, providing feedback, and making recommendations) will be more related to reputation building and social bonding compared to more passive CCB (e.g., tolerance).**

The “compresence” (Holbrook, 1994, 1999) of these intrinsic/self-oriented perceived values with other dimensions was recurrent in performing CCB. The compresence also provides us essential hints about cognitive dissonance on citizenship behaviors. For example, in the case reported by Loren, despite the lack of quality of service - *And then I had to pay full price because he didn't give me any discount. I ended up letting go - she was tolerant due to the anticipated guilt of being prejudicial to a worker with humble origins.*

**P3: The feeling of anticipated guilt will increase the willingness to help other customers (CCB-C) and employees (CCB-E) of the firm.**

It should be noted that helping the company, employees, and other customers is not a straightforward process with direct results. Although CCB has been associated with positive antecedents and outcomes (e.g., Groth, 2005, Bove et al., 2009), customers may engage in displays of tolerance to cope with their protective function or feelings of impotence towards the service experience (Clary et al., 1998). These behaviors are beneficial to the firm in the short term but may harm customer-company relationship due to its passive and reactive nature. With a perceived low control regarding extrinsic gains, customers tend to seek more intrinsic values on performing CCB.

**P4: When confronted with low control regarding service settings, customers will focus on intrinsic values on performing CCB.**

An emergent issue on our study was the inconsistency between helping employees and helping the company. Occasionally, being able to help employees (e.g., cover for their mistakes in front of other customers - *I saw that no one was able to help him, on the spot (Carl)* - may be detrimental to the firm's performance maintenance in the long run. The gap

of interests between these two parties may trigger perceptions of low cohesiveness regarding the company/brand and cause damages to the customer–company identification. Furthermore, conflicts regarding perceived value may arise: being benevolent or being fair?

**P5: Conflicts with other-oriented values of CCB will trigger perceptions of low cohesiveness and customer-company identification.**

The salience of social norms in a private context, as used in the study by Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicious (2008), may help firms to control citizenship behaviors related to extrinsic and self-oriented benefits. Furthermore, marketers can influence the perceived low control of customers by ensuring them with physical evidence and guarantees to attempt to mitigate problems in their relationship with the brand. Since the variance of service quality may be an issue, marketers could work with cues connected to ego-related perceived values to improve tolerance, feedback, and help during the service encounter (e.g., communications signaling empowerment). Lastly, as a suggestion, managers should also develop communications channels at different levels in the organization and institutionalize more points of contact with customers to discourage undesirable and incoherent behaviors from other customers and employees.

Future studies may explore the value of CCB by helping customers and employees of the firm. The CCB literature remains concentrated on customers who help, rather than the ones helped. Other types of citizenship behaviors, such as advocacy, cooperation, and facilitation, may comprehend different perceived values and sources of motivation than those explored in this study. Furthermore, studies could examine how negative behaviors of the firm, such as reduced performance of employees and negligence during service delivery, may trigger citizenship behaviors. For example, customers may assume the role of a salesperson observing employee’s lack of abilities to communicate with other customers. Furthermore, referring to the “dark side of CCB”, studies could attempt to understand how intangibility and heterogeneity may negatively affect the service’s outcomes (e.g., imprecise information) through CCB. Another stream of research is to investigate factors or mechanisms that would increase the propensity of customers to engage in voluntary behaviors (product category, and group entitativity) and minimize potential barriers for helping (e.g., low self-efficacy, self-awareness or self-esteem).

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