

Customer Value Co-Creation Through Self-Service Technology: Qualitative Research on Sat In Large Chain Supermarkets

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Abstract

Self-service technologies (SSTs) have transformed service delivery in the retail sector, enabling faster transactions, increased autonomy, and new opportunities for customer engagement. This study explores how SSTs contribute to customer value co-creation in large chain supermarkets, using a qualitative methodology grounded in the Service-Dominant (S-D) Logic framework. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with ten regular SST users and observational studies conducted in a high-traffic East London supermarket. Thematic analysis revealed four key dimensions of value co-creation: Value-Driven Efficiency, Autonomous Value Co-Creation, Value-Enriched Shopping Experience, and Value-Driven Refinement. Findings suggest that SSTs empower consumers to engage more actively in the service process, fostering convenience and informed decision-making. However, technological challenges and the need for occasional human assistance indicate that successful value co-creation requires a balance between automation and support. This study contributes to both theory and practice by illustrating how SSTs reshape the roles of customers and service providers in co-creating value. The implications are relevant for retailers, technology designers, and scholars seeking to enhance service experiences in increasingly automated retail environments.

Keywords: Self-Service Technology, Value Co-Creation, Retail Innovation, S-D Logic, Customer Experience, SST Adoption, Supermarkets.

Introduction

The increasing adoption of self-service technologies (SSTs) in retail environments, particularly in large chain supermarkets, reflects a growing emphasis on efficiency, autonomy, and customer empowerment. SSTs, such as self-checkout kiosks and mobile payment systems, enable customers to perform service tasks independently, minimizing interaction with service personnel. While SSTs are praised for reducing operational costs and streamlining the customer journey, their broader role in shaping customer experiences and enabling value co-creation is less explored. This study addresses that gap as an exploration of the usability of SSTs and their impact on consumer engagement and satisfaction is still needed [1].

Value co-creation is a collaborative process where customers and service providers interact to generate beneficial outcomes. In the context of SSTs, this process is particularly dynamic as the customer takes on a more active service role, often completing transactions without any staff involvement. Grounded in the Service-Dominant (S-D) Logic framework, this research investigates how SSTs influence the process of value co-creation in supermarket settings. The study focuses on consumer experiences in East London, offering insights into the practical and theoretical implications of SST integration in retail.

Research Questions:

- How does SST impact consumers' experiences in supermar-

kets?

- How is value co-created through the integration of SST in supermarkets?
- How do consumers navigate SSTs in supermarkets?

Literature Review

The literature on SSTs in retail highlights their transformative impact on service delivery and customer engagement. Early studies examined customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with SSTs, noting improvements in convenience and efficiency [2, 3]. More recent work has focused on behavioral intentions, technology adoption and emotional responses [4, 5].

Value co-creation is a central theme in service research, often explored through the lens of S-D Logic [8, 9]. This framework shifts focus from goods to services and emphasizes the active role of customers as resource integrators. Several studies have linked SSTs with value co-creation, highlighting the importance of autonomy, efficiency, and personalized experiences [9, 10]. However, the integration of SSTs in physical retail environments, especially supermarkets, presents unique challenges and opportunities for co-creation. Issues such as usability, demographic variability, and the need for occasional human assistance complicate the process. This study builds on existing research by focusing on real-world SST use in a multicultural, high-tech urban environment.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs Service-Dominant (S-D) Logic to explore value co-creation through SSTs. S-D Logic posits that service is the basis of all exchanges and that value is co-created through interactions between providers and customers. Its foundational premises include the notions that customers are always co-creators of value and that value is phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary [11]. By applying S-D Logic, the research shifts the analytical focus from the technology itself to the interactional context in which SSTs are used. It allows us to understand how customers use SSTs to achieve desired outcomes and how their roles evolve in these automated service environments.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted to explore consumer interactions with SSTs. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with ten frequent SST users and observational studies conducted in a large East London supermarket equipped with both SSTs and traditional checkouts.

Interviews

Ten participants, aged 20 to 52, were selected using snowball sampling. Interviews lasted 25 to 35 minutes and focused on participants' experiences, preferences, challenges, and perceptions of SSTs.

Observations

Over one week, 74 observations were conducted at various times of the day to capture diverse behaviors. An observation protocol recorded customer navigation, interaction with technology, and instances of human assistance.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns. The

analysis was both inductive, allowing themes to emerge from the data, and deductive, informed by the S-D Logic framework.

Findings

Thematic analysis revealed four core dimensions of value co-creation in SST usage

Value-Driven Efficiency

Participants appreciated the speed and convenience of SSTs, especially for small or routine purchases. SSTs were seen as effective tools for avoiding queues and saving time.

Autonomous Value Co-Creation

Consumers expressed satisfaction in independently navigating the shopping and payment process. SSTs enabled a sense of control and personal accomplishment.

Value-Enriched Shopping Experience:

Some participants noted that SSTs enhanced their shopping experience by offering faster service and less social pressure. Multilingual options and intuitive interfaces also contributed to inclusivity.

Value-Driven Refinement

Challenges included technical glitches, barcode errors, and difficulty with age-restricted items. These pain points highlighted the importance of on-site human support to ensure seamless value co-creation.

Discussion

The findings align with S-D Logic's view of consumers as active participants in value creation. SSTs empower customers by granting autonomy and enhancing convenience. However, value co-creation is contingent upon technology working as intended and the availability of responsive support.

This study underscores the need for retailers to invest in both technology and human resources. While SSTs facilitate customer engagement, they must be supported by reliable infrastructure and trained staff to address technical issues. The results also reveal that co-creation is not a uniform experience; it varies with user demographics, shopping context, and prior familiarity with SSTs.

Conclusion

SSTs offer significant potential for value co-creation in retail environments. By allowing consumers to take a more active role in service delivery, they enhance autonomy, speed, and satisfaction. However, their success depends on thoughtful design and the strategic inclusion of human support. This study contributes to the theoretical development of S-D Logic by demonstrating its applicability in SST contexts. Practically, it provides insights for retailers aiming to improve SST implementation and enhance the customer experience. Future research could explore longitudinal effects of SST adoption and cross-cultural variations in value co-creation.

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