Customer Citizenship Behavior in Customer Networks: An Analysis in the Lens of Network and Consumer Value Theories

Autoria

Renata Monteiro Martins - remonteiromartins@gmail.com

Mestr e Dout em Admin de Empresas /FGV/EAESP - Fundação Getulio Vargas/Esc de Admin de Empresas de São Paulo

Felipe Zambaldi - felipe.zambaldi@fgv.br

Mestr e Dout em Admin de Empresas /FGV/EAESP - Fundação Getulio Vargas/Esc de Admin de Empresas de São Paulo

Resumo

The emergence of peer-to-peer platforms in the virtual environment has not only challenged organizations to develop customer engagement strategies but has also leaded researchers to look at the active role of customers as co-creators of value. Within this context, the concept of customer citizenship behavior (CCB) appears to describe voluntary and helping actions individuals adopt during the service delivery process toward other customers and firms. Although there is an increasing research on this topic, most of the studies focus on the motivations that drive social exchange between parties, overlooking how networks? structures impact on this behavior. Drawing on the integration of network and consumer value theories, our objective is to propose a framework explaining how the relation between network settings and value encourage customers to help others. To do so, we conducted interviews and netnography in different customer networks based on a critical realist perspective. Our findings suggest that different motivations drive customer citizenship behavior, in such a way they are related to networks? structure and purpose. From data analysis, we elaborated four propositions amenable for future refinement, and from which we expect to contribute to literature on CCB and to managers on the construction of favorable network environments.

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Abstract

The emergence of peer-to-peer platforms in the virtual environment has not only challenged organizations to develop customer engagement strategies but has also leaded researchers to look at the active role of customers as co-creators of value. Within this context, the concept of customer citizenship behavior (CCB) appears to describe voluntary and helping actions individuals adopt during the service delivery process toward other customers and firms. Although there is an increasing research on this topic, most of the studies focus on the motivations that drive social exchange between parties, overlooking how networks' structures impact on this behavior. Drawing on the integration of network and consumer value theories, our objective is to propose a framework to explain how the relation between network settings and value encourage customers to help others. To do so, we conducted interviews and netnography in different customer networks based on a critical realist perspective. Our findings suggest that different motivations drive customer citizenship behavior, in such a way they are related to networks' structure and purpose. From data analysis, we elaborated four propositions amenable for future refinement, and from which we expect to contribute to literature on CCB and to managers on the construction of favorable network environments.

Keywords: customer citizenship behavior; customer networks; network theory; consumer value; service-dominant logic.

Introduction

The advent of Internet and online networks have changed not only the way people interact to each other but has also affected consumption behavior, given the more interactive nature of customer/firm relationships and the active role of customers as co-creators of value (Breidabach & Maglio, 2016; Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014; Vargo, 2008). To respond to such changes, whereas companies have been developing customer engagement strategies (i.e., involving them in advertising or product-related activities) to ensure a lifetime of profitable loyalty (Pansari & Kumar, 2016), they also face the challenge of coping with the increase of customer networks that go beyond word of mouth interactions – including the emergence of peer-to-peer social structures wherein customers give support to each other, share information and collaborate by generating innovative ideas (Libai et al, 2010).

Together with these new forms of customer networks, in marketing literature – mainly within the service-dominant logic perspective (Tommasetti, Troisi & Vesci, 2017; Yi & Gong, 2013) – the concept of customer citizenship behavior (CCB) emerges to describe a voluntary, discretionary and constructive behavior that goes beyond what is required from customers regarding the performance of a service delivery (i.e., assisting other customers, giving feedback to firms, etc.), and that, consequently, helps the organization (Balaji, 2014; Curth, Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2014; Groth, 2005; Yi & Gong, 2008). Most studies on CCB have investigated this phenomenon under the lens of social exchange theory (SET), focusing on how a party reciprocates benefits received from the other party (Anaza & Zhao, 2013; Balaji, 2014; Dang & Arndt, 2017; Van Tonder et al, 2018; Yi & Gong, 2008; Yi, Gong & Lee, 2013). However, SET is not enough to explain CCB in customer networks, as it does not take account the influence of the structural aspects of relations on social exchanges. Besides, researchers who investigate how this behavior occurs within networks focus on the role of community attributes

(i.e., social identification, rules of reciprocity, shared codes, etc.), neglecting the nature of more complex structures in which such attributes may not exist (Zaglia, 2013).

Because there are different network properties, we argue that network theory is more suitable as it consists of explaining how a certain network structure, interacting with a given mechanism, generates outcomes or impacts on individuals' behaviors (Borgatti, Mehra, Brass & Labianca, 2009; Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). This leads us to the following question: "Under which network conditions will customer citizenship behavior occurs?". Our main assumption is that it depends on customers' purpose or goals they expect to achieve (Lin, 2008). To complement, we undertake consumer value theory – specifically basing on an adaptation of Holbrook's (1999) typology –, assuming that CCB is driven by different sources of value (instrumental, hedonic, social and altruistic). Thus, by integrating both theories, our objective is to purpose a framework to explain how consumer value relates to network settings and motivates customer citizenship behavior. To corroborate this framework, we conducted a netnography in different networks (of a software, of a game, of a training app and of a philosophical-religious study group) and interviews with members of these networks.

Our contributions are threefold. First, by bringing network theory to CCB literature, we show the extent to which customers' collaborative and helping behaviors depend on the network settings they are embedded in (Curth et al, 2014; Jung & Yoo, 2017). Second, by integrating network and consumer value theories, we propose not only the existence of different motivations for citizenship behavior, but also what may facilitate or constrain such behavior regarding each network properties (Lin, 2008). Finally, as networks have been seen as critical assets for organizations, we expect the results may help marketing practitioners in the construction of a better network environment for CCB to occur, as it reflects on opportunities to obtain superior service quality (Grabher & König, 2017; Gummesson, 2008).

We organized this study as follows: in the next three sections, we present a literature review on network and consumer value theories, followed by the proposal of a framework integrating both theories. Next, we describe the methodological procedures for data collection and analysis. We follow discussing the results, and, finally, we conclude presenting propositions on the findings.

Network Theory

Before going deeper into the main assumptions of network theory, we regard as important to understand what a network is, which are its main components, and what is its nature. Succinctly, a network entails a set of actors (or nodes) interconnected by ties of different types (i.e., strong or weak ties) that link directly and indirectly a node to another (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). Such ties consist of channels for information and resource flow, whereby, through social interactions, an actor can access and exchange resources with others (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). Because they are not about individual properties, but relationships among interdependent actors, their nature is relational – that is, the object of analysis is the system of nodes and the connections among them (Rowley, 1997).

As C2C interactions have given rise to customers networks – wherein actors are involved in a resource integration process and produce service together (Gummesson, 2008; Tax, McCutcheon & Wilkinson, 2013) –, and because customer citizenship behavior is related to the social support (i.e., resources, information, assistance) received from different connections (Zhu, Sun & Chang, 2016), we understand that network theory may help us to identify which network contexts facilitate or constrain such behaviors. This thinking of CCB as a consequence resides behind the concept of social capital, which includes the notion of actors' performance and rewards, and, when combined to internal structural characteristics (i.e., individuals' behaviors, attitudes and beliefs), can represents a typology of network theorizing

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(Borgatti et al, 2009; Bolgatti & Harlgin, 2011; Lin, 2008). In light of this, in this study, we deepen in social capital approach to analyze customer citizenship behavior.

Social capital is defined in terms of the resources embedded – that can be accessed or mobilized through ties – in individuals' networks, in the sense that the resources available depend on the social relations structure (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Lin, 2008). Adler and Kwon (2002) also posit that the main intuition behind social capital is the 'goodwill' (i.e., sympathy, trust) actors have toward each other, which is what boost the flow of information and solidarity among them. Thus, social capital is not only about resources embedded and network structure, but it also encompasses other aspects of social context, such as trusting relations and value systems (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998).

Regarding the role of social context, Nahapiet and Goshal (1998) suggests taking account what they called the three dimensions of social capital: structural, relational and cognitive dimensions. The structural dimension, as we have mentioned before, refers to the overall structure of the network. The relational dimension is about the kind of relationship that is formed after a historic of interactions (i.e., trust, respect, friendship, etc.), which impacts on actors' goal achievement. Finally, the cognitive dimension corresponds to resources that facilitate communication and that establish systems of meaning among parties (i.e., shared values). Based on this explanation, in this study, we regard Nahapiet's and Goshal's (1998) social capital perspective to identify how these dimensions, when combined, encourage customer citizenship behavior in a certain network. However, because relational and cognitive dimensions are closely interrelated – as trusting relationships facilitate the development of common goals and values (Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998; Tsai & Goshal, 1998) –, to simplify our further purposal of framework, we adapted it by combining the relational and cognitive dimensions into a single one, which we are going to name as 'commitment'. In the literature, commitment is understood as a force that creates psychological bonds among individuals based on short-term sacrifices in order to obtain long-term benefits on these relationships (Curth et al, 2014; Gundlach & Achrol, 1995). Besides, commitment drives the construction of trusting relationships and influences the development and maintenance of shared codes and norms that rule social exchange (Gundlach & Achrol, 1995).

In terms of network structure though, it is important to emphasize that there are two main approaches that contrast with each other in relation to which types of ties among actors present a greater impact on resource exchanging. On one hand, there is a view based on Coleman's works in which closed networks (or dense networks) are considered to be the source of social capital as social codes make individuals to think it is less risky to trust one another, facilitating access to information (Burt, 2000). In the literature, such dense networks, constituted by strong ties, are represented by confiding relations (also called as 'binding' or 'bonding' relations), in which actors provide mutual support to each other due to a sense of obligation to reciprocate exchanges and services (Lin, 2008). On the other hand, there is another perspective, based mainly on Granovetter's and Burt's works (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011; Burt, 2000), that recognizes that weak connections have the potential to provide access to information and resources that exist beyond one's social circle (Granovetter, 1983). Such relationships (also called as 'bridging' ties), in contrast to the homophily principle – wherein individuals exchange resources when they connect to the ones who are similar to themselves – are based on the heterophily principle, assuming that people obtain diverse, new and better resources when reach out their inner circle (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011; Lin, 2008).

Although strong ties are commonly related to high commitment among members, and weak ties to low commitment, we presume that, regarding the online context, this logic may not necessarily occurs in this way, as not all strong ties are formed by interpersonal intimacy among members (they may pertain to the same social circle or share the same interests, but do not effort in sustaining relationships in the long term), as well as not all weak ties lack in terms of

commitment (i.e., customers may not know each other, but they might try to get closer due to a sense of social identification). According to Lin (2008), what will define which type of social relations (i.e., strong or weak ties, high or low commitment) will provide sufficient or insufficient social capital – and thus, encourage or discourage customer citizenship behavior – is the purpose or goals individuals expect to achieve. For example, if a consumer seeks to be part of a brand community to reinforce his or her identity, probably he or she will establish bonding relationships with other consumers. Otherwise, if a consumer seeks to get information about products he or she is not familiar with, maybe he or she will try for bridging relations. Based on this, in the next section, we delve into consumer value theory to complement our understanding on the relationship between network settings and customers' goals, in order to further present an integrated framework of CCB in C2C interactions.

Consumer Value Theory: Holbrook's Typology

We base on the assumption that customer citizenship behavior depends not only on the network settings customers are embedded in, but also on the value they expect in return for giving up something else (i.e., money, time, etc.) (Gallarza, Gil-Saura & Holbrook, 2011; Holbrook, 1999; Lin, 2008). In this study, we adopt Holbrook's value typology, as this approach is comprehensive in capturing more diverse sources of value than do other frameworks, including economic, social, hedonic and altruistic aspects (Sánchez-Fernández, Iniesta-Bonillo & Holbrook, 2009).

In light of this, we base on Holbrook's (1999, pp. 5) definition of consumer value as "an interactive relativistic preference experience". It is interactive because it entails the interaction between a subject (a consumer) and an object (a product or service), in a sense that value depends on the involvement of the subject with physical or mental characteristics of the object. It is relativistic as consumer value is comparative (involving comparisons of one object in reference to another), personal (as it varies from one consumer to another), and situational (as it depends on the context in which evaluations are made in regard to time or location). It is preferential because consumer value represents a preference judgment, such as affect (pleasing vs. displeasing), attitude (like vs. dislike), evaluation (good vs. bad), etc. And finally, it is an experience, as value resides not in the object, but in the consumption experience(s) in relation to this object (Holbrook, 1999).

Based on this conceptualization, Holbrook (1999) proposes a framework that reflects three key dimensions of consumer value: (i) extrinsic (i.e., the focus is on the instrumental characteristics of objects) versus intrinsic (i.e., the focus is on consumption experience as an end itself); (ii) self-oriented (i.e., the effect of a consumption experience on the individual him- or herself) versus other-oriented (i.e, how other people react to or how a consumption experience of an individual affects other people); (iii) and active (i.e., the value is on the physical or mental manipulation of the object) versus reactive (i.e., the value is on the impact an object has on individuals). The combination of these three dichotomies results in a 2x2x2 classification that generates eight types of consumer value: (i) efficiency (self-oriented, active and extrinsic), which is the value related to the comparison between what consumers get (i.e., resources, skills, etc.) and what they give for the purchase (i.e., money, time, etc.); (ii) excellence (self-oriented, reactive and extrinsic), which value is given by the appreciation of an object to accomplish some goal or to perform its function; (iii) status (other-oriented, active and extrinsic), which is the value on the manipulation of an object to make good impression on others; (iv) esteem (other-oriented, reactive and extrinsic), which is the value based on the prestige an object gives to someone; (v) play (self-oriented, active and intrinsic), which value is on the fun and on the enjoyment aspects of consumption; (vi) aesthetics (self-oriented, reactive and intrinsic), which value is related to the beauty aspects of an object; (vii) ethics

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(other-oriented, active and intrinsic), which value is on the virtue, justice or morality aspects that encompasses the consumption experience; and, finally, (viii) spirituality (other-oriented, reactive and intrinsic), which value is on the sense of faith, sacredness or adoration in relation to others (Holbrook, 1999; Sánchez-Fernández et al, 2009).

In this study, however, we adapted Holbrook's typology to a more parsimonious classification that bypass the active vs. reactive dichotomy, as it permits simpler adaptations due to the difficulty to distinguish some value types that are closely interrelated given the common characteristics they share (Gallarza et al, 2017; Sánchez-Fernández et al, 2009). Thus, we consider the four major value types proposed by Gallarza et al (2017): instrumental (or economic), represented by the combination of efficiency and quality, as both refer to the value on the functionality or performance of an object; social, which is the combination of status and esteem, as both are based on impressing others and on the social image; hedonic, given by the combination of play and aesthetics, as both have their value on the fun, enjoyment or beauty aspects of consumption experience; and, finally, altruistic, which results from the combination of ethics and spirituality, as both are values oriented to a group, community or society welfare. In the next section we propose an integration with network theory to proceed with the analysis of customer citizenship behavior in customer networks.

Customer Citizenship Behavior: Integrating Network and Consumer Value Theories

Before presenting a proposal of framework integrating both network and consumer value theories, we find important to briefly discuss the main assumptions involving customer citizenship behavior. In general terms, CCB is defined as a voluntary behavior that goes beyond what is required from customers in regard to the service delivery process, in such a way that this behavior generates benefits for organizations (Balaji, 2014; Curth et al, 2014; Yi & Gong, 2008). CCB manifests through several activities, such as helping other customers with the usage of products or to solve problems; helping firms by providing them feedbacks or useful information in order to improve future products (or service) performance; establishing a close and positive relationship with the firm; recommending products or the service of a firm to other customers; or participating in activities organized by the firm or its employees (Balaji, 2014). In this study, we concentrate on helping behaviors individuals adopt in customer networks, which we assume that depends on the motivations and goals they attain to achieve (Oyedele & Simpson, 2011).

Taking the consumer value typology presented in the previous section, we assume that CCB is driven by different sources of value. For example, customers may help other customers due to its 'instrumental' value, which intentions are mostly related to exercising personal skills or abilities regarding a product or service (i.e., one may help other customers with their shopping for bikes because he or she is a biker and has expertise on this issue) (Johnson, Messiah & Allan, 2013). Customers may also help others due to its 'hedonic' value, when it results in a fun or pleasant consumption experience (i.e., one may help others with their shopping for bikes because he or she wants to enjoy the experience of riding a bike with them) (Finkelstien, 2009). Helping behaviors can also be given by 'social' value, when one believes it will increase his or her self-esteem or social image (i.e., one may help other customers with their shopping for bikes because he or she feels that it will enhance his or her social recognition as a biker) (Lacetera & Macis, 2010). And finally, customers may help others due to 'altruistic' value, when their purpose concentrates on others' welfare (i.e., one may help other customers with their shopping for bikes because they want them to do the best choice, or because they think the more people riding bikes, the better for the environment) (Batson & Powell, 2003).

We also regard that network settings align to each source of value. We presume that when customers help others for 'instrumental' value, they are more prone to adopt citizenship

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behaviors in networks composed by weak ties and low commitment for two reasons: first, because they are more concerned in attend their personal purposes (self-oriented value), they hardly feel a sense of obligation to others in terms of communal aspects (i.e., shared interests or common identity); and second, because they are more interested in the functionality of a product or service (or in enhancing their skills in relation to a product or service), they tend to engage in networks whereby they can access additional or new resources – which, as mentioned before, are characteristics of weak ties networks. When customers help others for 'hedonic' value, we expect CCB to occur mostly in networks with strong ties, as fun and enjoyment experiences tend to favor emotional connections among individuals strengthening their social identification (Hsu, Chiang & Huang, 2012). However, the commitment is low, as it is based on a self-oriented value, that is, consumers are concerned in attaining their final goals, not to bonding with others to sustain relationships in the long-term. When customers help others for 'social' value, they are more prone to engage in weak ties networks, whereby they can obtain additional resources that may enhance their prestige or social image. Nonetheless, there is a high commitment, as they are moved by a sense of belongingness and social identification with the community. Finally, when customers help others for 'altruistic' value, CCB is more prone to occur in networks with strong ties and high commitment, as they feel a sense of obligation to other customers and they seek to preserve some resources for the community welfare (i.e., sustaining reciprocity among members) (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Gallarza et al, 2017; Holbrook, 1999; Lin, 2008).

Based on this framing, in Table 1 we present the proposed integration of network and consumer value theories in a 2x2 cross-tabulation, in which each value (instrumental, hedonic, social and altruistic) is classified according to the network's structural (strong vs. weak ties) and commitment (high vs. low) dimensions.

Table 1:
Framework of the integration of network and consumer value theories

	High commitment	Low commitment
Strong ties	Altruistic	Hedonic
	Customers help others because of a sense of reciprocity and because their final goal is the preservation of the community welfare.	Customers help others when it results in fun or enjoyment experiences, but, although they develop trusting relationships, their goals are self-oriented and the efforts to create a sense of community are low.
Weak ties	Social	Instrumental
	Customers help others to obtain new or additional resources that may enhance their social image, but establishing social bonds, as they are moved by a sense of belongingness.	Customers help others to exercise or enhance their skills in relation to a product or service, but without the intention of establishing social bonds.

In light of this framework, we propose that there are different types of customer citizenship behavior that vary according to the purpose individuals seek to attain in helping, and to the settings of the networks they are embedded in. In the next section, we discuss about the methodological procedures used to understand the phenomena.

Method

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Our focus in this paper is to analyze how customer citizenship behavior occurs in customer networks. Because our framework requires the analysis of CCB in both network and individual levels, we adopted a multimethodological approach, consisting of the triangulation between netnography (as most of these networks are located mainly in the virtual environment) and interviewing data.

Netnography is a qualitative method that "adapts ethnographic research techniques to study the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications" (Kozinets, 2002, pp. 62). Our intention to do a netnography is to identify the structural and commitment aspects of networks. For this, until this moment of research, we selected four customer networks: of a software, of a game, of a training app and of a philosophical-religious group. The criteria for the selection of such networks were: (i) they are online groups or communities created by consumers (or ambassadors) of a specific product, service or idea; (ii) they present characteristics of customer citizenship behaviors, such as consumers helping each other in solving problems, making suggestions, etc.; (iii) they have a high number of posts (and recent posts); and (iv) they distinguish among themselves in terms of the nature of the product/service/idea, as we expect them to attend different purposes to give us a whole picture of the proposed framework.

We did not previously establish a period of analysis, as each group or community has a different quantity of daily posts. Instead, we collected data classifying them according to each type of content that is posted (i.e., asking for help, recommendations, news sharing, etc.) and stopped after we have found we had enough information and that new categories would not emerge. From data collected within these groups and communities, we generated a document with 71 pages. In regard to ethical procedures, in this study, we chose to not reproduce comments extracted for analysis, because, as some groups and communities are public, members' posts can be easily found using searching tools.

To complement with customers' motivations to adopt citizenship behaviors within the networks they are embedded in, we conducted interviews with respondents that are members of the groups and communities we are analyzing in this study. To select respondents, we observed who helped other customers more than once within their respective networks, and then, we sent them an invitation for interviewing. Until the present moment, we conducted four interviews (more will be done until theoretical saturation is achieved). The characteristics of our sample is presented in Table 2.

Table 2:
Respondents' profile

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Family status	Network	Time of product/service/idea usage/adoption	Time of network participation
John	30	TV producer	Single	Training app	4 years	4 months
Ash	23	Student	Single	Game app	3 years	7 months
Kevin	25	Data analyst	Single	Philosophical religion	9 months	9 months
Rebecca	36	Planning analyst	Divorced	Software	15 years	2 years

These interviews took a semi-structured form, as it allows researchers to identify specific theoretical aspects while also open space for interviewees to construct meanings on the topic of research (Galetta, 2013). We began with an open-ended question – "*Tell me how you started to use this product/service/idea*" –, as suggested by Galetta (2013), to encourage respondents to narrate their experience. We also formulated probe questions to encourage them

to contribute with more details in relation to the network they are part of and their interactions with other members. The interviews were recorded (total of 96 minutes) and transcribed.

We analyzed data from netnography and interviews conjointly, adopting a critical realist approach. From this perspective, theories are always being revaluated during data collection through a process of coding and recoding (Smith & Elgar, 2014). After all, propositions are stipulated on the existence of possible structures that explain social actions of a concrete event (Roberts, 2014). Based on this approach, we present the findings in the next section.

Data Analysis

Our analysis on CCB in customer networks suggests that the purpose customers seek to attain in helping others is related to the structural and commitment aspects of groups or communities they join. Relying on a critical realist perspective, we identified patterns and tendencies through coding, related them to theory and stipulated propositions based on causal mechanisms that emerged through this process (Roberts, 2014). We present the codes generated in our analysis in Table 3 and, in the next subsections, we discuss about each of them and how they are related with network settings and consumer value.

Table 3:
Framework of analysis of customer citizenship behavior in customer networks

	High commitment	**Low commitment**
Strong ties	Altruistic value network	Hedonic value network
	Helping for the love for others	Helping for having fun/enjoyment
	Natural reciprocity	Necessary reciprocity
	The community as a home	Interactions restricted to a purpose
Weak ties	Social value network	Instrumental value network
	Helping for getting closer	Helping for exchange knowledge
	Being an example to others	Teaching/learning logic
	Representing the brand	Objectivity in helping

Instrumental value: Networks of weak ties and low commitment

To illustrate an instrumental value network, we analyzed a Facebook group of a specific software that has, in total, 7,167 members. This group is not sponsored by the company, it was created by a consumer with the intend of 'learning and teaching' the software's functionalities. In terms of content, the great majority of posts (78.56%) is about members' doubts in relation to the software functions. The other posts, in a smaller quantity, are about technical problems with the software and requests for models, manuals, study books, etc.

We found evidence of weak ties network settings in observing that: (i) there is a lack of reciprocity (members who ask for help generally do not help others), that is, they do not feel obligate to reciprocate, which is a characteristic of strong ties networks; (ii) the group is open for anyone who wants to join, which means that members do not necessarily share interests in common or share a common identity; and (iii) the purpose of the group is extrinsic and product-related (interactions among members and the information that is shared are restricted to the software functionalities). We also found evidence of low commitment in noticing that the two requests for the creation of WhatsApp group (that appeared during data collection) were ignored by the other members. This is because WhatsApp offers a more private space, is more personal

and facilitate intimate connectedness (Chambers, 2016). In this sense, we can presume that members of this group are not interested in bonding with others.

From data analysis, three main topics emerged: helping for exchange knowledge, teaching/learning logic and objectivity in helping. We consider the group analyzed as a space restricted to knowledge and information exchange, in the sense that its purpose is not to create a sense of community or strengthening a social identity, but to clear up doubts, to ask members' opinion on how they can solve a specific problem, to know more about the software's functionalities, etc. Such topic also emerged during Rebecca's interview, who affirmed that knowledge exchanging was the reason why she first decided to join the network.

We observed the group is mostly divided into two types of consumers: the 'experts' one, composed by members who have an advanced expertise in the software usage (some of them are specialized consultants and offer trainings in relation to the software usage); and the 'novices' one, composed by members who are still learning the basic functions of the software. Such division was also reinforced in Rebecca's interview:

> I see them as people who are seeking knowledge. There are people who are in a more advanced level, who are interested in learning and sharing, there are some people who are more focused only on learning, and there are some people who want us to do their work ((laughs)).

By identifying some experts and novices, and by following their behavior within the group, we also noticed that the novices are the ones who usually ask for help, while the experts are the ones who help them. In other words, novices generally do not reciprocate the help they received in helping others back. A possible explanation is that they do not feel capable enough to do so. This expert/novice dichotomy is also connected with the teaching/learning logic. 'Teaching and learning' is not only the purpose of the group, but an element that emerged within some members' posts. For example, when a group participant asks for help in relation to a given function of the software, it is common that members answer by using step-by-step lists of instructions, photos or videos. So, members help not only indicating the function that must be used, but how it should be used. Besides, we also observed that some participants usually write "ac" in other members' posts – a Portuguese abbreviation for 'following' –, which may indicate they are also interested in learning on the other members' doubts.

Finally, the objectivity in helping is an element present in all posts within this group. In general, both aid requests and answers are straight to the point, that is, they are objective and bluntly. In some posts, for example, when a member's request was not clear, other members ask him or her to reformulate the questions or tried to correct him or her to make the question clearer. Besides, when a group participant has his or her problem solved (through the help provided by other member), they are suggested to write "[Solved]" at the beginning of their posts. This is for closing discussion on the topic or for alerting others that no more help is needed.

In this sense, we can assume that, when the purpose of the network is instrumental, customers help each other with the intend to teach (exercising their skills and abilities) and learn (obtaining new skills and abilities) in relation to a product or service (Gallarza et al, 2017; Holbrook, 1999). Because reciprocity is not common in networks composed by weak ties and low commitment (Lin, 2008), these groups may be divided into the ones who asks for help (or 'novices') and the ones who help (or 'experts'). Besides, because helping within this type of network is product-related, objectivity rules over interactions.

Hedonic value: Networks of strong ties but low commitment

As an example of hedonic network, we analyzed a WhatsApp group of a game app composed by 93 members. This group is also not sponsored by the company, it was created by some friends with the purpose of sharing tips and creating collaboration among members to

gain advantages within the game. The messages exchanged are mostly about members' missions and achievements (44.74%), followed by requests for collaboration within the game (21.05% – i.e., going to a mission together). There are also some help tips regarding the app usage and game instructions, indications of places to go for missions, etc.

We can describe this group as a network characterized by strong ties because: (i) it is a closed group (characteristic of dense networks), in such a way that to join the group, participants must be invited or indicated by a member, differently from the software group (i.e., the first author could only join the group because she is a friend of a member and only after the groups' administrator approval); (ii) there are also several groups related to this game on Facebook, but hardly occurs information sharing within them – while in the WhatsApp group we analyzed, there are more than 100 messages exchanged daily –, which indicates that interactions happen in more closed groups; and (iii) there is evidence of reciprocity among members, as we observed individuals who sometimes asked for help were also helping others (i.e., although within this game there is a difference of levels among players, members help others regardless their expertise on the game). This third argument is reinforced in Ash's interview, in which he explained that, at the beginning, the game was too monotonous, and this made him stop playing. He only returned to the game after a year and half when it became more interactive due to the community of players. According to him, it is the interactions among members of the community that make the game attractive. So, regardless their levels within the game, they feel obligated to help others:

> (…) you need the community to grow. The less players you have, the more lagged the game gets, and the lower is the likelihood of having the company's support, until the moment the game does not keep up and ends. (…) They [the players] feel stimulated to play when there is someone to help them.

However, although there is evidence of strong ties within the group, we also noticed elements that indicate low commitment in two moments. First, in our netnographic analysis, we saw that sometimes, when members start talking about something else besides the game, the administrator ask them to stop reinforcing that the group's purpose is to discuss only about the game. The second moment was during Ash's interview, in which he mentioned that relationships among members are casual, as it is only about the game. In his words, 'you do what you need to do, and you leave'. This happens even when people meet in person to play (as, in this game, if a player does not have a level high enough to score, he or she must join others in a mission). Besides, the Ash's speech in the excerpt above also indicates low commitment, as the purpose of helping resides not on the welfare of the community (it is not other-oriented), but on the maintenance of the game's attractivity. In this sense, although the group is constituted by strong ties and, somehow, members trust one another (to not be sabotaged or stolen within the game), they do not effort in establishing social bonds that will bring them social returns in the long-term (they only interact to each other because of the game, so, in the short-term).

From both netnography and interview analyses, three topics emerged: help for fun/enjoyment in return, necessary reciprocity and interactions restricted to a purpose. As we mentioned above, the first topic takes helping as a crucial element to maintain the game's dynamic or attractivity. This is connected to a 'necessary reciprocity', as members, regardless their expertise or level as players, feel the need to help others from the community of players, but with the purpose of keeping the support of the game's company. Finally, because their final goal is sustaining the game's attractivity and not preserving the community welfare, interactions within this network is restricted to this purpose.

Based on these three elements, we can assume that, when the network value is hedonic, customers help each other in order to have a return on their consumption experience (Gallarza et al, 2017; Holbrook, 1999). To achieve this purpose, reciprocity is needed, which signs the

existence of strong ties (Granovetter, 1983; Lin, 2008). However, because interactions are restricted to an intrinsic and self-oriented goal (i.e., having fun or enjoyment), the level of commitment is low (Curth et al, 2014; Gundlach & Achrol, 1995), as members are not concerned about bonding to sustain a long-term relationship, but about helping to sustain the game's attractivity.

Social value: Networks of weak ties but high commitment

To illustrate a social value network, we analyzed a Facebook group of a training app (total of 7,638 members), created by consumers who are also ambassadors of the company. Within this group, the great majority of the posts is of members showing pictures or videos of their trainings, or of their physical transformations (75.82%), followed by posts of doubts or tips in relation to trainings (24.69%), posts of articles' links that directed members to the company's blog (10.07%), and other posts about motivation and nutrition tips, doubts about technical problems or the app usage, proposal or doubts about the group's competitions, etc.

In terms of network settings, this group is characterized to have weak ties because: (i) there is some reciprocity, but its level is low (through the netnographic analysis, we observed that only few members who have been helped usually help others); (ii) as the software group, this one is also open for anyone who wants to join (and almost every day there is a new member), which means that it is not composed by closed connections; and (iii) as an element that emerged in John's interview, the only thing that people who are part of the group have in common is the training app, which hampers interactions beyond the app. However, although this network is constituted of weak ties, the level of commitment is high, as: (i) there is an effort to create an identity for the community, in such a way that the group has mottos ("Anyplace, anytime, no excuses!" and "Together we are stronger!") that are reproduced in some posts; (ii) although posts in such groups are restricted to the training app, its purpose is getting people united to create a strong community (they also encourage members to engage in parallel groups of people from the same city); and (iii) as John also mentioned in his interview, what motivates individuals to join this community is to get closer to others who also use the training app.

In analyzing data collected from the interview and netnography, the following topics emerged: helping for getting closer, being an example to others and representing the brand. The first one is evidenced not only in the description of the group – which purpose is encouraging people to interact in order to clear their doubts, to share experiences, to meet new people and to 'get more followers' in their personal network accounts –, but also in the motivations that guide individuals' choices of joining the group, as mentioned in John's interview. In this case, John decided to join the group to meet new people with whom he could work out together, reducing the feeling of being alone.

However, because John does not identify himself as similar to the other members of the group, he emphasized he only helps people who seems 'normal' to him, the ones who he described to have 'normal problems, normal doubts', and who are not 'fitness freaks'. For him, it takes courage to ask something that is 'obvious' for others and, because of this, he seeks to retribute this 'courage'. Nonetheless, John recognizes being afraid of helping someone and being judged as, according to him, they may think it is not his place to answer anything because they see him as fat.

> (...) In the training app group, no, everybody wants to see who has a more marked belly than the others, right? Then, because of this, sometimes I avoid, avoid joining, avoid interacting, because, like, do you know that fear from childhood? "What is this paunchy talking to me? Go eat sweet, go!". And like, you have, you have this little fear that maybe some fitness freak gives me the evil eye in social networks.

John's concerns in regard to his social image is related to the second topic, 'being an example to others'. This is possibly because a great quantity of members participates in the group by posting photos or videos of their training or physical transformation with motivational messages for the other members. Besides, 'being an example' is reinforced when some participants post their doubts in relation to a training and others answer with videos showing how they execute the moves or which techniques they adopt to do so.

Finally, 'representing the brand' was a topic that appeared in netnographic analysis in three moments. First, members who posts photos or videos of their trainings/transformation generally use a 'hashtag' ('#') of the training app brand, which is a sign commonly used in social media to identify posts or messages of a specific topic. Second, members usually post their photos with the brand's watermark (and there are also requests of people asking members to help them to insert the watermark in their photos). And third, consumers pay out of their own pocket to customize T-shirts with the brand's logo to go to meetings or competitions promoted by the brand's ambassadors of their cities.

Through this example, we can assume that, when the purpose of the network is social, customers help each other seeking to get closer to create a sense of community (Gallarza et al, 2017; Holbrook, 1999). Although this network is not closed (it is not composed by strong ties), members interact moved by a sense of belongingness (and, because of this, commitment is high) (Curth et al, 2014; Gundlach & Achrol, 1995). Besides, there is a high commitment not only with the community, but with the brand, as this is what get people united. Thus, customer citizenship behavior is more prone to occur when individuals have a strong social identification.

Altruistic value: Networks of strong ties but high commitment

To exemplify a network of altruistic value, we chose a group of a philosophical-religious study, which interactions among members occur not only face-to-face but also within online groups or communities. To gain access to such group, a friend of the first author asked permission to the group's administrator, who is also a conductor of the in-person meetings. The first author could only join the group for visitors in Facebook. According to Kevin, there are two others, one for members who are initiating their studies, and other for members who are more advanced on them. This is an indicative of a strong ties network, as relationships are closed. Besides, even the group for visitors is secret, that is, members need to be invited to join it (as it is not possible to find these groups using Facebook's searching tool).

The group for visitors has 267 members and its purpose is for accessing information in regard to their worships, meetings, and to 'build bonds and keep in touch' with each other. There is not a lot of interactions within this group (Kevin confirmed that this is because most of them occurs in the other two groups). Its content is composed by posts of reflection texts (52.73%), followed by the ones discussing their rituals (21.82%), and others related to disclosing of meetings and lecturers, literature indications, etc. Although the level of interactions is low within the visitors' group, we observed the existence of high commitment in all the acknowledgement posts, in which members open their hearts to express feelings of gratitude toward the community and of a personal sense of obligation to retribute. This element also emerged in Kevin's speech:

> My relationship with people there is of helping. I receive a lot of help and I talk a lot about what I've lived. So, it [relationship] is about friendship. (…) I saw that I've bonded with these people and I don't know how to explain it. I think it was a matter of identification. (…) They are people who like each other, who want to help, and who live together to help each other.

From data analysis, three topics emerged: 'helping for the love for others', 'natural reciprocity' and 'the community as a home'. Some indications that consumers help for the love for others appeared in the content of posts of the group for visitors (the great majority of them

are messages of unconditional love and positivity), and in the reaction of members to these posts, which generally express a great feeling of gratitude. This theme was reinforced in Kevin's interview, in which he affirmed that, when members get together within groups like this one, they work on issues of coexistence as a society, fraternity and love for others.

Differently from the hedonic value network, in which consumers reciprocate to achieve a personal final purpose (i.e., to have fun), in altruistic network, reciprocity occurs naturally, in such a way that what encourage individuals to help others is a feeling of gratitude and an obligation to reciprocate for the welfare of the community as a whole (Holbrook, 1999). This topic appeared in both netnography and interview analysis. In an acknowledgement post, for example, a member thanks the community for the activities they did during the weekend, and for all the loving involved, and, as a form of expressing his feeling of gratitude, he emphasized he will try to retribute 'in the best way possible'. This need to retribute all the support and caring received from the other members is also present in Kevin's speech. Linked to this, a sense of 'the community as a home emerges'. Kevin sees the group as a place where he feels warmth because of the 'positive energy' that is created when people get together.

Based on this illustration, we presume that, when the network has an altruistic purpose, customers help each other for feelings of loving for others and gratitude. Because the members are moved by a sense of community, and their actions are other-oriented, altruistic networks are composed by strong ties and high commitment (Curth et al, 2014; Gallarza et al, 2017; Gundlach & Achrol, 1995; Holbrook, 1999). Thus, customer citizenship behavior occurs with the final goal of preserving the community welfare.

General Discussion

Our objective was to explain how the relationship between network settings and consumer value encourages customer citizenship behavior. For this, drawing on a literature review, we proposed a framework integrating network and consumer value theories, generating a 2x2 cross-tabulation wherein we assume that CCB is driven by four different sources of value (instrumental, hedonic, social and altruistic), which are classified according to structural (strong vs. weak ties) and commitment (high vs. low) dimensions of networks. Our findings suggest four propositions that are amenable for future research.

First, in networks with instrumental value, customer citizenship behavior is extrinsic and product-related (Gallarza et al, 2017; Holbrook, 1999), in a sense that customers help each other to exercise their skills or abilities in regard to a product or service (i.e., by teaching). Generally, such behavior occurs in networks composed by weak ties and low commitment, in which reciprocity is not common. Because of this, a division between consumers who ask for help (i.e., 'novices') and the ones who help them (i.e., 'experts') may happen. Besides, objectivity is a crucial element in the interaction between members of the network. On this observation, we elaborate our first proposition:

P1: In instrumental value networks, ties are weak, commitment is low, and customer citizenship behavior is facilitated (constrained) when customers consider themselves experts (novices) in relation to the network's respective product/service.

Second, in hedonic value networks, customer citizenship behavior occurs based on an expectation that consumers will have fun or enjoyment in return (Gallarza et al, 2017; Holbrook, 1999). To achieve this purpose, reciprocity is needed, which strengthen ties among members (Lin, 2008). However, because they interact only to reach this goal, the level of commitment is low, as they help each other moved by a self-oriented value, and not for bonding. Based on this, we formulated our second proposition:

P2: In hedonic value networks, ties are strong, commitment is low, and customer citizenship behavior is facilitated (constrained) when customers perceive (do not perceive) they can obtain fun or enjoyment in return.

Third, in social value networks, we can assume that, when the purpose of the network is social, customers help each other seeking to get closer to create a sense of community (Gallarza et al, 2017; Holbrook, 1999). Although this type of network is not closed (it is not composed by strong ties), members interact to each other moved by a sense of belongingness, and, because of this, commitment is high (Curth et al, 2014; Gundlach & Achrol, 1995). Thus, customer citizenship behavior is more prone to occur when individuals have a strong social identification.

P3: In social value networks, ties are weak, commitment is high, and customer citizenship behavior is facilitated (constrained) when customers have a high (low) level of social identification in relation to the other customers that are part of the network.

Finally, in altruistic value networks, we presume that customer citizenship behavior happens moved by a sense of preserving the welfare of the community. This is because consumers help each other not to attain personal goals, but for the loving for others. Reciprocity, in this sense, occurs naturally and is other-oriented. Such behavior generally occurs in networks composed by strong ties and high commitment (Lin, 2008). Thus, our fourth proposition is:

P4: In altruistic networks, ties are strong, commitment is high, and customer citizenship behavior is facilitated (constrained) when the purpose of helping is for the welfare of the community (is selfish).

Through these propositions, and by bringing network and consumer value theories together, we seek to advance in CCB literature by showing the extent to which customers' voluntary and helping behaviors depend on the structure and on the purpose of the network they are embedded in (Curth et al, 2014; Jung & Yoo, 2017; Lin, 2008). Thus, understanding network settings is important to identify which factors may facilitate or constrain CCB within forums, groups or communities (Lin, 2008). In terms of managerial implications, assuming networks are critical assets for organizations, practitioners should focus their attention on the construction of a network environment conducive for helping behaviors and interactions among customers, as previous research shows that such behaviors impact on the service perceived quality (Grabher & König, 2017; Gummesson, 2008). Thus, for example, investing in gamification sounds interesting in instrumental value networks – wherein an expert/novice dichotomy is evident –, but it may be harmful for social value networks, as it may create a social distance among members and constrains citizenship behaviors.

It is relevant to point out some limitations of this study. First, for the online context, the definition of strong and weak ties proposed by Granovetter (1983) may be outdated. This is because it is possible to find strong ties networks wherein friendship relationships do not exist and, at the same time, find weak ties networks through which people can meet each other and become friends. We opted to interpret the existence of strong or weak ties by the level of reciprocity inside the groups (for example, looking whether members who once were helped have also helped others), which may contradict previous works based on Granovetter's definition. And second, because this is a working paper, data collected is still not enough, which may have impeded other topics or issues to emerge. As well, the networks contexts analyzed in this study are still not enough to validate the proposed framework. Based on the insights and limitations of this study, for future research, besides exploring and testing the propositions indicated above, scholars should propose a redefinition of strong and weak ties in the online context, as there is an increasing number of studies on networks.

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