

FINAL PURCHASERS COOPERATION WITH OFFERORS VS TRUST IN PRODUCTS ACCORDING TO THE EXTENT OF PURCHASERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR PREPARATION

Agnieszka Izabela BARUK

Lodz University of Technology, Łódź, POLAND; agnieszka.baruk@poczta.onet.pl,
ORCID: 0000-0003-2864-509X

Purpose: This article aims to determine the significance of cooperation between final purchasers and offerors in the process of creating a marketing offer, as well as identify the dependencies between this cooperation and purchasers' trust in products, according to the scope of purchasers' involvement in their preparation.

Design/methodology/approach: The results of a cognitive-critical analysis of the world literature on the subject indicate a cognitive and research gap in this area. Until now, cooperation between final purchasers and offerors has not been examined in the context of mutual trust. In order to reduce the gap, empirical studies were conducted, in which a questionnaire was used to gather primary data. The data was subjected to a quantitative analysis, including statistical analysis.

Findings: The results made it possible to verify three research hypotheses and draw conclusions of cognitive and applicability value. Statistically significant dependencies were identified between respondents' trust in products and three analysed variables reflecting their attitudes towards cooperation with offerors and their presumptive behaviours. The relatively strongest dependence is visible between trust in products according to the scope of respondents' involvement in their preparation and respondents' willingness to cooperate with producers.

Research limitations/implications: The research has certain limitations, such as its subjective and objective scope. It comprised only adult final purchasers and the analysis comprised only selected aspects of cooperation between final purchasers and offerors.

Originality/value: The results of the research contribute to the theory and practice of marketing and consumer behaviour, reducing the cognitive and research gap in the analysis of this cooperation in the context of trust in products.

Keywords: cooperation, final purchaser, offeror, trust, involvement.

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

One of the key foundations in the functioning of the contemporary consumer market is the paradigm of shared value creation (Ramaswamy, and Ozcan, 2014; Galvagno, and Dalli, 2014), both of tangible and intangible values. Both value groups are part of a marketing offer of contemporary manufacturing, trading and service companies. The marketing offer of each of them includes products and their marketing attributes, such as, for example, packaging, as well as the image, reputation or brand, which often determine a purchase decision, although they are intangible. These values can be created independently by an offeror, which is equivocal with a classic approach to marketing. However, they can also be co-created with purchasers in accordance with the prosumer marketing orientation (Cova, and Cova, 2012), based on the aforementioned paradigm. Such cooperation brings a number of benefits to both parties as it allows, among other things, the creation of marketing values that better meet the purchasers' expectations, thanks to their active participation in creating these values. Offerors and purchasers also gain new experience, acquire and generate new knowledge, developing their current marketing potential. However, this requires an open attitude to such cooperation and mutual trust. It is also important to be aware of the advantages of cooperation and to know factors that favour or hinder it.

The results of the analysis of the literature on the subject, presented further in this article, indicate that cooperation between offerors and purchasers in the context of mutual trust is still not considered, and the relationship between these phenomena is not studied. This proves that there is a cognitive research gap in this regard. The primary goal of this study is, therefore, the pursuit to reduce the gap by presenting the significance of cooperation between final purchasers and offerors in the process of creating a marketing offer and identifying the dependencies between such cooperation and purchasers' trust in products, according to the scope of purchasers' involvement in their preparation.

2. Literature review

The key assumptions of contemporary management include joint value creation (Ranjan, and Read, 2016). Joint value creation on the consumer market can take place as part of cooperation between final purchasers and offerors (including manufacturers, traders and service providers), or between purchasers themselves (Tian, Shen, and Chen, 2017). In the first case, one can talk about prosumption in dealings with offerors, and in the second case about internet prosumption. Regardless of the subjective nature of cooperation, its effects are always felt both by purchasers and offerors. These effects can be measurable or non-measurable. However,

the condition for both parties to show an open attitude to cooperation is that the estimated value of the expected effects must exceed the outlays required for establishing mutual cooperation. In practice, it is also necessary for offerors and purchasers to show an appropriate level of market awareness, allowing both parties to break with the traditional division of roles, which was typical for the classic marketing orientation.

The modern approach to marketing is reflected, for example, in joint cooperation (Lewnes, and Keller, 2019), within which both parties play the role of a creator and recipient of specific marketing values. On the one hand, final purchasers co-create products and their material marketing attributes (including packaging) with their producers (Dellaert, 2019) and, on the other hand, manufacturers (as well as other offerors, including traders and service providers) use the knowledge (Cui, and Wu, 2015), creativity, experience, abilities and other elements of the intellectual potential of purchasers, thus becoming recipients of these values.

Mutual cooperation, therefore, leads to the generation of new knowledge, new experiences (Schmitt, 2011), new skills etc. from the point of view of both offerors and purchasers, and to an increase in the value of the market potential of each party and, consequently, to the generation of joint market potential, i.e. the development of new market opportunities (Galvagno, and Dalli, 2014). Offerors and purchasers become marketing partners, whose joint market potential may determine the competitive advantage of a company conducting its market activity not only for the purchasers, but also with them, through their active participation at various stages of the marketing process (Atakan, Bagozzi, and Yoon, 2014), including creating products (Ziembra et al., 2018), creating their marketing attributes and creating the image.

Therefore, redefining market roles requires significant changes in the scope of activity of each partner. Purchasers become prosumers, also referred to as “working purchasers” (Cova, and Dalli, 2009) or “smart purchasers” (Thaler, and Tucker, 2013), although the term “active purchasers” better reflects the scope of their growing involvement in market activities. In addition to shopping behaviour, their market activity includes non-shopping behaviour, which can be divided into communication and creation behaviour. A prosumer, therefore, does not cease to be a purchaser, but their activity definitely goes beyond the behaviour associated with buying products. In turn, the manufacturer, retailer or service provider does not cease to be an offeror, but their activities undertaken previously are accompanied by activities involving the activation of purchasers, inspiring them, stimulating their creativity and using its effects etc.

However, mutually beneficial cooperation is not possible without establishing relationships (Wereda, and Woźniak, 2019) based on mutual trust, which are rightly referred to as the supreme value in modern marketing, called Marketing 4.0 (Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2017). This results from the very essence of partnership, which is conditioned by the feeling of trust in one another (Duane, and Domegan, 2019).

Despite the key importance of trust in establishing and strengthening cooperation, the cooperation between offerors and purchasers in the context of trust is still not being analysed. Trust and cooperation are considered as separate categories or studied in relation to

other aspects. For example, trust in an offeror and/or the brand (Rajavi, Kushwaha, and Steenkamp, 2019; Sahin, Zehir, and Kitapçı, 2011; Delgado-Ballester, and Munuera-Alemán, 2001) is analysed as the basis for purchase loyalty of purchasers towards offerors. Aspects related to building purchasers' trust are also being investigated, for example through marketing communication activities (Bachnik, and Nowacki, 2018) and determinants of trust (Vega, 2015). In turn, in the case of cooperation between purchasers and offerors, its scope is being analysed (Darmody, Yuksel, and Venkatraman, 2017), especially the role of modern technologies in shaping the prosumer activity of final purchasers (among others: Rayna, and Striukova, 2016; Charitsis, 2016; Fine, Girona, and Petrescu, 2017) etc.

Therefore, this article attempts to achieve the following research goals:

G1: to define forms of prosumer communication activity considered by respondents as the most important,

G2: to identify products that inspire the greatest trust of respondents, taking into account the extent to which purchasers are involved in their preparation,

G3: to identify the extent of respondents' market activity to date,

G4: to define respondents' willingness to engage in cooperation with offerors,

G5: to study dependencies between the aforementioned variables.

In order to implement the goals, three research hypotheses were verified:

H1: there is dependence between trust in products and respondents' willingness to cooperate with producers,

H2: there is dependence between trust in products and opinions on forms of market activity considered by respondents as the most important,

H3: there is dependence between trust in products and the extent of respondents' market activity to date.

3. Methods

In order to achieve the research goals and verify the hypotheses, primary research was conducted. The research was implemented as part of research project B/HS4/00430 financed by the National Science Centre. The research was conducted in the third quarter of 2016 among 1,200 people representing Polish adult final purchasers from all over Poland. A total of 1,012 completed questionnaires qualified for statistical analysis. The survey population was 61% female, which corresponded to the structure of the general adult population of Poland (<http://www.polskawliczbach.pl/#ixzz4F3Nogl1N>). Non-random selection of a quota-type sample was applied. The research was direct in nature, requiring the interviewer's personal contact with respondents. This made it possible to obtain a high return rate of completed questionnaires.

The scope of the research included the following: (a) respondents' opinions reflecting their trust in products based on the extent of purchasers' involvement in the preparation of the products, (b) respondents' opinions on the cooperation with producers reflecting their willingness to jointly create a marketing offer; (c) respondents' opinions on the significance of selected forms of purchasers' communication activity; (d) the extent of respondents' market activity to date.

The primary data collected during the research was used in further stages of the research process, namely statistical analysis using the following methods and tests: cross-table analysis, Pearson's chi-square independence test and V-Cramer contingency coefficient. The chi-square test was used to determine if there were statistically significant dependencies between the analysed variables and the V-Cramer coefficient was used to determine the strength of relationships between the analysed variables. The V-Cramer coefficient is used when at least one variable has more than two values (King, Rosopa, and Minium, 2018), i.e. if the contingency table has dimensions of at least 2×3 .

4. Research results

Communication is an important group of final purchasers' behaviour in the field of cooperation with other market entities. As clearly seen in Table 1, for the largest proportion of respondents, the most important form of activity in this area was sharing positive opinions about producers and elements of a marketing offer with other purchasers. Spreading negative insights of other purchasers was considered the most important form of activity by a much smaller percentage of respondents, both in relation to producers and in relation to an offer. However, when sharing opinions with producers, the situation was different. Firstly, each of the analysed forms of communication activity involving the transmission of respondents' insights to producers was indicated by a much smaller proportion of respondents (less than 10%). Secondly, a relatively larger proportion of respondents believed that the most important thing was to provide producers with negative feedback, rather than positive feedback. This was evident both in relation to the opinions about the producers themselves and the opinions about the offer they directed to purchasers.

It is worth noting, that an almost four times higher percentage of respondents considered sharing positive opinions about producers as the most important in communicating with other purchasers (the largest proportion of respondents) compared to communicating with producers (the smallest proportion of respondents). In the case of positive opinions about an offer, the ratio was smaller, but also large, amounting to 3:1. On the other hand, when it came to the significance attributed to communication activity involved in sharing negative opinions, the discrepancies between the transmission of observations to other purchasers and the

transmission of observations to producers were definitely smaller. However, also in this case respondents attributed more importance to forms of activity undertaken in dealings with purchasers than in dealings with producers.

Table 1.

Forms of activity considered the most important by respondents (%)

Forms of activity considered the most important by respondents		Ratings (%)	
Forms of activity in dealings with other purchasers	Sharing positive opinions about producers	23.3	69.9
	Sharing negative opinions about producers	12.9	
	Sharing positive opinions about products and other elements of an offer	21.1	
	Sharing negative opinions about products and other elements of an offer	12.6	
Forms of activity in dealings with producers	Sharing positive opinions with producers about them	6.0	30.1
	Sharing negative opinions with producers about them	7.8	
	Sharing positive opinions about products and other elements of an offer	6.5	
	Sharing negative opinions about products and other elements of an offer	9.8	
Total		100.0	100.0

Source: own study based on research results.

Since respondents attributed greater importance to communication behaviours exhibited in dealings with other purchasers, the question arises: what products generated their greatest trust, taking into account the extent of purchasers' involvement in their preparation? It turns out that the largest proportion of the total number of respondents trusted the most the products based on the results of purchaser surveys, i.e. as part of the classic marketing approach (Table 2). It is true that almost every third respondent felt the greatest trust in products created jointly by manufacturers and purchasers, i.e. as part of the prosumer approach to marketing, yet this percentage was almost 15% lower. It is worth noting, that an even smaller proportion of respondents trusted the most the products prepared without any participation of purchasers, which is tantamount to the fact that manufacturers do not apply assumptions of the marketing concept.

It should be noted, that for seven out of eight analysed forms of communication activity, the largest proportion of respondents trusted the most the products prepared as part of the classic marketing approach. The only exception was a form of activity undertaken in dealing with producers consisting in sharing positive opinions about them (F5). In addition, in the case of three forms of communication activity, more respondents trusted the most the products prepared by manufacturers without any participation of purchasers, than was the case of products prepared jointly. This concerned two forms of activity undertaken in dealings with other purchasers (F1 and F2) and one form of activity undertaken in dealings with producers (F6). Therefore, the question may be asked whether there is dependence between trust in products and forms of communication activity considered the most important. The answer will be given later in this article.

Table 2.

Products that inspire the greatest trust of respondents and respondents' opinions about the significance of final purchasers' selected forms of activity (%)

Products that inspire the greatest trust of respondents	Forms of activity considered the most significant by respondents (%)								Total
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	
Prepared by producers themselves, based on their own ideas	33.9	29.8	6.5	16.5	16.4	30.4	12.1	16.2	20.9
Prepared by producers based on research results on customer expectations	35.2	55.7	50.9	48.8	34.4	36.7	42.4	45.5	44.4
Prepared by producers jointly with purchasers	29.2	13.7	40.2	29.9	42.6	26.6	30.3	22.2	29.6
Prepared by purchasers only with technical assistance by producers	1.7	0.8	2.3	4.7	6.6	6.3	15.2	16.2	5.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

where: F1 – sharing positive opinions about producers with other purchasers; F2 – sharing negative opinions about producers with other purchasers; F3 – sharing positive opinions about products and other elements of an offer with other purchasers; F4 – sharing negative opinions about products and other elements of an offer with other purchasers; F5 – sharing positive opinions with producers about them; F6 – sharing negative opinions with producers about them; F7 – sharing positive opinions about products and other elements of an offer with producers; F8 – sharing negative opinions about products and other elements of an offer with producers.

Source: own study based on research results.

One of the key issues related to cooperation with offerors is an attitude towards the joint creation of a marketing offer. The results of the research indicate that 40.8% of all respondents were willing to engage in the preparation of products, advertisements and other elements of an offer jointly with producers. Thus, almost 60% of all respondents did not represent an open attitude in this regard. As clearly seen in Table 3, trust in products felt by respondents who were willing to participate in the preparation of an offer was characterized by the same structure as for all respondents. On the other hand, among respondents who did not show an open attitude to cooperation with offerors, more of them trusted the most the products prepared by the producers themselves, without taking into account the expectations of purchasers, in comparison with the percentage of people who felt the greatest trust in products prepared as part of the prosumer approach to marketing. Therefore, another question arises as to whether there are dependencies between both analysed variables.

Table 3.

Products that inspire the greatest trust of respondents and respondents' willingness to engage in the preparation of products, advertisements and other elements of a marketing offer (%)

Products that inspire the greatest trust of respondents	Willingness to involve in the preparation of products, advertisements and other elements of an offer (%)		
	yes	no	total
Prepared by producers themselves, based on their own ideas	10.6	28.0	20.9
Prepared by producers based on test results of purchaser expectations	44.7	44.3	44.4
Prepared jointly by producers and purchasers	41.3	21.5	29.6
Prepared by purchasers only with technical assistance of producers	3.4	6.2	5.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own study based on research results.

Despite the fact that almost 41% of all respondents were willing to actively participate in the preparation of products and other elements of a marketing offer, only less than 3% had previously consciously joined the marketing activities on their own initiative or under the influence of the offerors' suggestions (Table 4). The vast majority of respondents undertook communication activity, combining it with shopping behaviour. Moreover, the percentage of those respondents was clearly higher than the percentage of respondents who limited their market activity to shopping behaviour only.

Table 4.
The scope of respondents' market activity to date (%)

The scope of respondents' market activity to date		Ratings (%)	
Shopping behaviour	Shopping	44.5	44.5
Shopping behaviour and communication behaviour	Shopping and sharing opinions with other purchasers	48.7	52.6
	Shopping and sharing opinions with producers	3.9	
Shopping behaviour and creation behaviour	Shopping and joining actions organized by producers to jointly prepare products and/or other elements of an offer	1.5	2.9
	Shopping and joining on one's own initiative the process of jointly preparing products and/or other elements of an offer	1.4	
Total		100.0	

Source: own study based on research results.

As seen in Table 5, for two analysed forms of activity (A3 and A5), the largest proportion of respondents trusted the most the products jointly prepared by producers and purchasers, and the rating amounted to 50% among those, whose activity meant shopping and sharing their opinions with producers. It is also worth noting that the largest percentage of respondents trusted the most the products prepared without purchasers' participation, among those, whose previous market activity was limited only to shopping behaviour. The structure of trust in products according to the extent of purchasers' participation in their preparation was analogous to the structure identified for all respondents in the case of two groups of respondents: those who go shopping and share their opinions with other purchasers (A2) and those who go shopping and join actions organized by producers involving joint preparation of products and/or other elements of an offer with the producers (A4). Therefore, the next question may be asked: whether there is a dependence between trust in products and the scope of respondents' market activity to date.

Table 5.
Products that inspire the greatest trust of respondents and the scope of respondents' market activity to date (%)

Products that inspire the greatest trust of respondents	The scope of respondents' market activity to date (%)					Total
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	
Prepared by producers themselves, based on their own ideas	27.1	15.8	17.5	13.3	21.4	20.9
Prepared by producers based on test results of purchaser expectations	45.2	45.6	32.5	40.0	14.3	44.4

Cont. table 5.

Prepared by producers jointly with purchasers	20.4	36.1	50.0	26.7	42.9	29.6
Prepared by purchasers only with technical assistance of producers	7.3	2.4	0.0	20.0	21.4	5.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

where: A1 – shopping; A2 – shopping and sharing opinions with other purchasers; A3 – shopping and sharing opinions with producers; A4 – shopping and joining actions organized by producers to jointly prepare products and/or other elements of an offer; A5 – shopping and participating on one's own initiative the process of jointly preparing products and/or other elements of an offer.

Source: own study based on research results.

Table 6.

Analysis of dependencies between respondents' trust in products based on purchasers' involvement in their preparation and variables reflecting respondents' attitudes, opinions and behaviours referring to cooperation with producers

Analysed dependence	Chi-square test value	V-Cramer coefficient value	Level of significance ("p")
Trust in products and respondents' willingness to cooperate with producers	71.605	0.266	0.000
Trust in products and opinions about forms of activity considered the most important by respondents	143.325	0.217	0.000
Trust in products and the scope of respondents' market activity to date	73.183	0.155	0.000

Source: own study based on research results.

In order to check whether there are statistically significant dependencies between the variables analysed in this article, statistical testing was conducted. It turns out that the existence of such dependencies is observed in the case of trust in products and each of the three analysed variables (Table 6). H1, H2 and H3 hypotheses are, therefore, valid for respondents. Considering the V-Cramer coefficient values, it can be concluded that the identified compounds are, however, not strong. The values of the aforementioned coefficient are in each case less than 0.3, i.e. the limit value between the weak and medium strength of dependence between the analysed variables (King, Rosopa and Minium, 2018). The relatively strongest dependence occurs between trust in products and respondents' willingness to cooperate with producers and the weakest between trust in products and the scope of respondents' market activity to date.

5. Conclusions

The results of the research indicate that respondents attributed much more significance to sharing opinions with other purchasers than with offerors. Thus, in their opinion, communication behaviours exhibited as part of internet prosumer consumption are more important than such behaviours exhibited in dealings with offerors. The largest proportion of respondents trusted the most the products prepared as part of the classic approach to marketing, but almost every third person felt the greatest trust towards products jointly created by

producers and purchasers. This may indicate that this part of respondents appreciated creative behaviour exhibited by purchasers. More than half of the respondents have, so far, combined shopping activity with communication activity, and only less than 3% of respondents, in addition to shopping behaviour, also undertook creative behaviour. Feeling the greatest confidence in products jointly prepared by offerors and purchasers did not, therefore, reflect the actual activity of respondents in this respect.

It should be emphasized that statistically significant dependencies have been identified between trust in products according to the extent of purchasers' participation in their preparation and the three analysed variables: (a) respondents' willingness to cooperate with producers; (b) opinions on forms of activity considered the most important by respondents; (c) the scope of respondents' market activity to date. Thus, it can be concluded that the H1, H2 and H3 research hypotheses are valid for respondents.

The results of the research contribute to the theory and practice of marketing and consumer behaviour, reducing the cognitive and research gap in the analysis of cooperation between offerors and purchasers in the context of trust in products. Obviously, the research has certain limitations, such as, for example, its subjective and objective scope. It comprised only adult final purchasers, and the analysis comprised only selected aspects of cooperation between final purchasers and offerors. These limitations will be eliminated in future stages of the research on the activity of contemporary purchasers planned by the author.

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