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### Value Co-Creation in Travel Industry: Examining the Impact of Operand and Operant Resources on Actor Experience

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## Value Co-Creation in Travel Industry: Examining the Impact of Operand and Operant Resources on Actor Experience

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**Abstract:** The notion of value creation has now transformed into customer-centric approach. Its focus has been shifted towards the free will of customers and they are being engaged into value co-creation by means of different platforms. However, within this research, experiential innovation and human experiences have received little attention and very few studies have empirically investigated resource integration. This study explains the value of co-creation process within the travel industry by examining the impact of operand and operant resources on customers' experiences. Data was collected from 215 customers who had previously used the services of travel agents. The results indicate that both operand and operant resources are important in managing customers' experience. This study establishes the importance of human experience in creating value and guides modern firms to adopt service dominant logic instead of good dominant logic.

**Keywords:** Value co-creation; resource integration; operant and operand resources; travel industry.

## Introduction

Development in the societies has become a fundamental aspect at the global level about which many researchers have depicted numerous changes in the world. One such change is based on the experience economy where it is argued that the abundance of products and services would require the suppliers and customers to generate value for the clients in combined manner (Lin, Chen, & Filieri, 2017). The current study is also intended towards the exploration of the value co-creation which involves the contribution from clients and suppliers at the same time. In this context, the role of operand and operant resources is focused for the development of a better customer experience.

Customer's evaluation of goods and services has been a focus of research in the field of marketing, retailing, and service management literature, and for this purpose different measures such as customer satisfaction (P. Oliver, 2010), perceived service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988), and perceived value (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001)

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have been investigated. However within these studies, the role of the goods or services themselves in developing positive customer experience and value co-creation is under researched. Similarly, Service Dominant Logic postulates that all actors are integrator of resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). But very few empirical studies are related to resource integration. As a result, we do not know how customers integrate resources and how customers experience their resource integration. In most of the studies, effect of either operant or operand resources have been considered (Rihova, Buhalis, Moital, & Gouthro, 2015). Very few studies have made an attempt to study the effect of these two types of resources on customer's experience. Lastly, most of the researches on value co-creation have adopted qualitative approaches (Pera, Occhiocupo, & Clarke, 2016; Plé, 2016); while quantitative research is somewhat ignored.

Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2016) noted that "there has been very little discussion of experiential innovation through platform offerings and human experiences which is a significant opportunity gap in the literature, especially in attempts to bring service logic into the space of brand value co-creation" (p. 94, emphasis in original). Despite repeated calls for viewing value co-creation from the lens of customer's experience and its management, there is little work done in this field. By managing the human experience through platform offering, companies shape customer's experience and benefit from previously untapped potential.

This research is triggered by the question; What is the impact of operant and operand resources on customer's experience in value co-creation? This is sub-divided into how co-creation operators, co-creation firms, co-creation space and co-creation tools influence customer's experience? The purpose of this study is to measure the impact of both operant and operand resources on customer's experience regarding the service offering. This is done by conducting a quantitative study within the tourism industry of Pakistan with an aim to investigate how different factors of operant and operand resources influence customer's experience. This research is helpful in understanding how customers react to tangible and intangible aspects of the service offering? Tourism industry is selected as the knowledge about value and its co-creation is limited in this particular setting (Lin et al., 2017).

The contribution of this study is to provide empirical evidence regarding the role of operant and operand resources in shaping experience of customers. By doing so, this study highlights the importance of resource integration. The outcome of this resource integration is manifested as superior customer's experience. This study reaffirms the importance of human experience in creating value and establishes that modern firms can benefit more by adopting service dominant logic instead of good dominant logic. Another significant contribution of this study is establishing the role of service scape in affecting the customer's experience. Service scape is gaining interest among scholars; but, Pareigis (2012) suggests that this concept in services needs more attention. Lastly, this study uses a quantitative research approach. For this purpose, a scale was developed to measure the operant and operand resources in order to gauge their effect on customer's experience. This scale can be used in further studies.

## Literature Review

Since the seminal work of [Vargo and Lusch \(2004\)](#), service-dominant logic has experienced a huge appreciation among academics and practitioners. Service dominant logic marks a shift from focus on products to services ([Maglio & Spohrer, 2008](#); [Vargo & Lusch, 2008](#)). The most significant difference between service-dominant and goods-dominant logic lies on the basis of exchange. G-D logic focuses on the exchange of operand resources (tangible goods); whereas S-D logic focuses on the action of operant resources (intangible goods) ([Constantin & Lusch, 1994](#)).

Service dominant logic is not only restricted to exchange of services. Rather, it is equally applicable to manufacturing sector as well. It is because goods and services stem from competencies of an individual or firm. These are termed as operant resources; which work on the other resources normally referred to as operand resources. Therefore, at the highest system level, every economy is a service economy, where everything that is being exchanged, is produced from knowledge and skills. This exchange occurring between two actors, for instance a customer and a supplier's interaction, forms the base for value creation. Goods Dominant (G-D) logic focuses on the exchange of operand resources (where an act is performed on, such as goods); whereas Service Dominant (S-D) logic focuses on the action of operant resources (those that act upon other resources) ([Vargo, 2008](#)). By looking at the [Constantin and Lusch \(1994\)](#) categorization of resources, there are two key resources existing for an organization; operand and operant resources. Operand resources are tangibles and are the means for service distribution; whereas operant resources are intangible.

The operand resources are mainly associated with the factor of production which is very necessary to develop the business products. Without the operand resources no one can do a business even based on the service delivery ([Waseem, Biggemann, & Garry, 2018](#)). There is always a need for the tangible assets for performing different business activities in order to add value for the customers. Hence, for improving the customers' experience, the development of the operand resources is also expected in the current study.

On the other hand, operant resources are known as the ones which act on other resources in order to produce effects which means that they themselves operate on other things. They are intangible and dynamic in nature. Operant resources are known to be the most difficult to transfer and hence is the basis of sustained competitive advantage. According to [Capon and Glazer \(1987\)](#), knowledge and technology are the most essential operant resources. Service, technology and innovation are interlinked concepts because the practical application of knowledge is technology. S-D logic gives emphasis to the application of specialized skills and knowledge for the actor's benefit itself or the actor to actor benefit ([Lusch & Nambisan, 2015](#)).

Based on fundamental propositions given in [Vargo, Maglio, and Akaka \(2008\)](#), value is created when at least two actors exchange services between them. Researches on value co-creation began in the late nineties ([Ciccantelli & Magidson, 1993](#); [Dolan & Matthews, 1993](#); [Urban et al., 1997](#)). These authors concentrated on consumer involvement in providing services and product innovation. Later researches [Payne, Storbacka, and Frow \(2008\)](#); [Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody \(2008\)](#), contended that the process of value creation has now

transformed into customer-centric approach. Its focus has shifted towards the free will of customers and they are being engaged into value co-creation with the help of different platforms. In this context, value is created when a customer is depending on the service potential which is embedded in the resources to complete a job. As such, value does not come amid acquisition of good (value-in-exchange). Rather, it is created during job completion (value-in-use). This moves the traditional perspective of the customer as a passive receiver of value to an active creator of value during value co-creation (Pera et al., 2016). Hence, brand equity is now considered to be rooted in the interaction between producer and buyer (Rashid & Zeeshan, 2018).

One of the main objectives of value co-creation is the utilization of applied knowledge of others as a resource. Value is, accordingly, created over the utilization or integration and application of operand resources and occasionally operant resources. It has been discussed that the customers “co-create value through the integration of firm-provided resources with other private and public resources” (Vargo, 2008), which can either be operand or operant resources. Resource integration is characterized as the utilization of resources for the advantage of another party. Resource integration is a mean by which actors involved in this process make value for themselves and for others involved in it. Value is co-created in collaborations with other actors through integration of resources (Plé, 2016). Service dominant logic proposes that the reliance of actors on each other’s resources is the basis of value co-creation.

In an earlier work, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) demonstrated that customers are not always rational decision makers. Customers get involved with the offerings emotionally and give subjective meanings to these. R. Oliver and Westbrook (1993) describe customer’s experience as “subjective consciousness of customers as they interact with the goods and services”. Similarly, Meyer, Schwager, et al. (2007) describe it as “the internal and subjective reaction consumers have towards any direct or indirect interaction with a company”. Consumption experience does not only involve the cognitive responses after using the offering; but it also includes the perception of sensory, emotive, imaginative, and aesthetic responses towards the offering.

## **Hypothesis Development and Research Framework**

### **Operant Resources and Customer’s Experience**

Skills and previous experiences are discussed to be important factors within operant resources (Edvardsson, Tronvoll, & Gruber, 2011). Knowledge and skills are used during the entire process of value co-creation and plays a central role in the whole process. Firm network including supplier and customers was also observed as a resource and it also facilitated in the process of resource integration among the participants (Rashid, 2015).

These resources can be categorized into two identifiers i.e. co-creation operator and co-creation firm. Co-creation operator means that a firm needs to have better communication through good interactions and relationships (Glynn & Lehtinen, 1995). Past experiences, knowledge, skills and personal relationships combine together to forms of co-creation operator resources. Further, firm that establishes a collaborative working environment

for co-creation operator to perform better. Suppliers and customers both participants acknowledged the collaborative culture in the firm and given feedback in the process of co-creation. Collaborative culture in a firm developed friendly environment among staff and motivates them towards participation and learning.

Effectuation theory shed light about the ability of the organizational behavior to maximize the value offered to the customers (Sarasvathy, 2001). The theory posits that with an intense focus on operand resources, the company can develop a positive attitude at the organizational as well as at customer's end which supports the S-D logic leading towards the value co-creation (Kohtamäki & Rajala, 2016). Based on the above discussion, we hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 1: Operand resources have an impact on customer experience of value co-creation process in a business-to-customer (B2C) context.*

This hypothesis is further segregated into two sub-hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 1A: Co-creation operator of operand resource has an impact on customer's experience in value co-creation process.*

*Hypothesis 1B: Co-creation firm of operand resource has an impact on customer's experience in value co-creation process.*

### **Operand Resources and Customer's Experience**

The advancements in the technology bring changes to the operand resources on continual bases. These advancements help the businesses to perform their tasks more effectively and efficiently. So, in order to remain competitive in the market, the companies have to focus on the development of the operand resources. It can lead them towards the manufacturing of up to dated products and services resulting in the better customer experience and huge target market (Kleinaltenkamp, Plewa, Gudergan, Karpen, & Chen, 2017).

Looking at one section of operand resources, co-creation space entails meeting rooms, presentation aids and stationeries; whereas co-creation tools comprises of software, computers and internet which helps participants to do official communication and share new ideas, discuss new approaches and build creativity (Rashid, 2015). Atmosphere inside an organization is crucial to influence purchase intention of customers. Bitner (1992) in his research has explained how these affect the cognitive minds of the customers in making a purchase. When customers enter the organization, they perceive its atmosphere. The physical aspects are processed through four sensory aspects i.e. sight, sound, scent, and touch. The concept of service scape asserts that the physical environment plays a crucial role in the organization's development and activates the emotions or cognitive minds of customers in perceiving the organization. Atmosphere in the organizations influence customers based on the design and space which influences customer's cognitive emotions to increase purchases.

*Hypothesis 2: Operant resources have an impact on customer experience in a business-to-customer (B2C) context.*

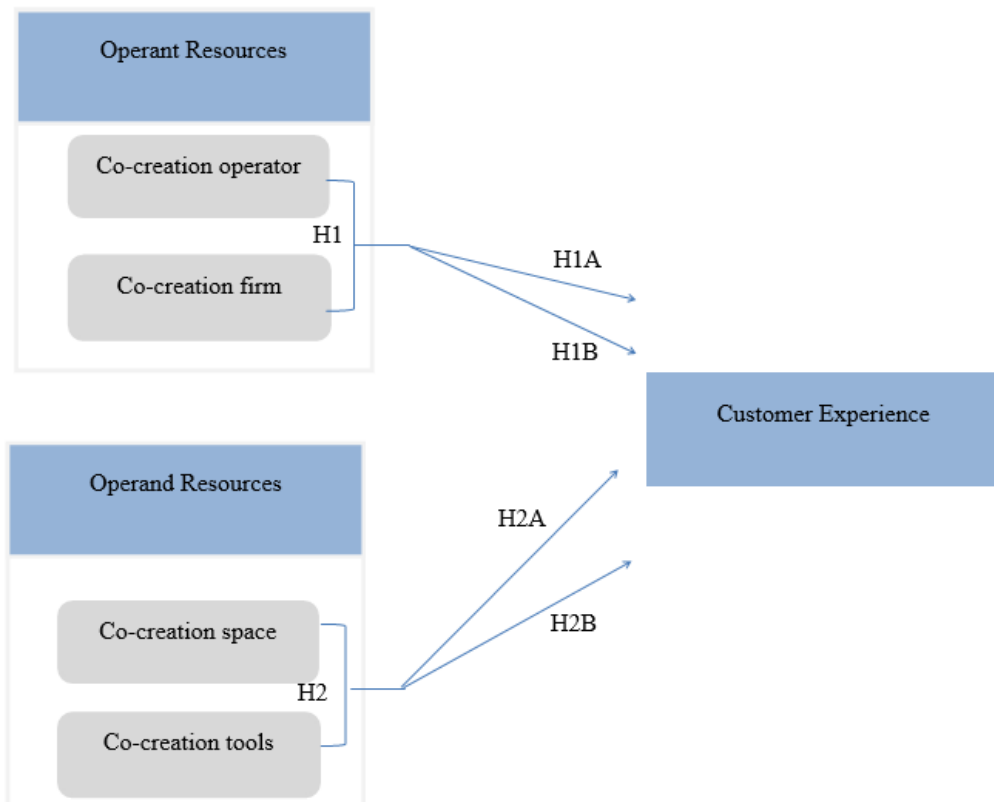
Similarly, the sub-hypotheses includes:

*Hypothesis 2A: Co-creation space of operand resource has an impact on customer's experience in value co-creation process.*

*Hypothesis 2B: Co-creation tool of operand resource has an impact on customer's experience in value co-creation process.*

Hence, by evidencing the association of value co-creation, organizational offerings and customer's experience, the following model is being developed for the current research study.

**Figure 1**  
Theoretical Framework



## Research Methodology

This study uses a cross-sectional survey design; wherein information is gathered at a single point in time and from more than one case. The study uses B2C context because the service centric view is customer centric and also driven by the market (Sheth, Sisodia, & Sharma, 2000). The targeted population consisted of customers of travel agencies who had previously used their services in past as they could give better insights about the value realization process. Hence, the questionnaire was filled by customers who had used the services of travel agents in the form of packages within or outside Pakistan. Convenience sampling was used as the sampling technique decided for targeting the participants because the targeted population was not easily available.

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{z^2 * p(1 - p)}{e^2} / 1 + \left( \frac{z^2 * p(1 - p)}{e^2 N} \right)$$

Where:

N = Population Size: 500

e = margin of error = 5 %

z = z-score: 1.96 as per 95 % confidence interval

By putting values to the formula, the sample size comes out to be 218.

## Survey Design and Process

Since no prior questionnaire was available to test the impact of operant and operand resources on the customer's experience, a questionnaire was developed with the help of literature. In the pilot testing phase, face and content validity of the questionnaire was tested before actual data collection. At the initial stage, questionnaire had 27 items; but after pilot testing the same was reduced to 25 items. Afterwards, discriminant and convergent validity was also tested by applying Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in SPSS. EFA was applied through principle component method. As a result, one item was excluded from customer experience. Finally, the verified survey instrument was used for data collection from targeted sample.

## Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were applied in order to develop an insight into the data collected. Factor analysis was applied in order to classify the patterns underlying in the relationships (Child, 2006) amongst the three constructs i.e. operant resources, operand resources and customer experience. Factor analysis proved the conceptual verification of the three constructs used in this research. Afterwards, multiple regression analysis was applied to test both hypothesis. Analysis was applied to test the impact of operant resources (independent variable) and customer experience (dependent variable). Likewise, to test the impact of operand resources (independent variable) and customer experience (dependent variable). Furthermore, multiple regression was applied



in order to measure on what extend does the sub-concepts (co-creation operator (H1A) and co-creation firm (H1B)) of operand resources have an impact on customer experience. Likewise, same test was run on the sub-concepts (co-creation space (H2A) and co-creation tools (H2B) of operand resources (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2005).

## Demographic Analysis

The response rate has remained 99% as the data collection is performed by face to face meeting and 215 out of 218 questionnaires were got filled. The demographic characteristics of the respondents such as their gender, age and education are described in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Demographics of respondents

Gender %	
Male	49.3
Female	50.9
Education %	
Primary	0.5
Secondary	4.2
Undergraduate	57.2
Postgraduate	35.3
Doctorate	2.8
Age %	
10-20 years	27.9
21-30 years	52.6
43-50 years	3.3
Above 50	6

## Factor Analysis

In order to analyze the three main constructs, factor analysis was used by using the correlation matrix. In this study, varimax rotation test was performed to get the most desired faction solution. Kim and Mueller (1978) suggested using Varimax rotation if they seek orthogonal rotation. Results of the factor analysis are given in Table 2.

As a result of factor analysis, we had to drop one item from co-creation firm and had to add the same to the variable co-creation space. The literature puts “collaborative culture” in co-creation firm but after performing factor analysis, “collaborative culture” (sub-variable of co-creation firm) was put in component-3 i.e. co-creation space. This is because the respondents find a collaborative culture in the space of the organization provided by the service provider. Respondents see collaborative culture to be one of the aspects in co-creation space.

One of the sub variables of component-5 (customer experience) was excluded i.e. collaboration and idea exchange. It was the sub-variable of knowledge value in customer experience as explained by Rashid (2015). The respondents did not feel it to be an im-

**Table 2**  
Factor Loadings

No. Items	CoCrOp	CoCrFi	CoCrSp	CoCrTo	Cus.Exp
1. I preferred skillful service provider with better services.	0.694				
2. The service provider was keen to develop a long term relationship with me	0.605				
3. The service provider incorporated his/her previous experiences to address my concerns	0.604				
4. The service provider gave me different price alternatives according to my expectations	0.562				
5. The service offerings price was decided after incorporating my views.	0.464				
6. The service provider completed his/her task in given timeline.		0.782			
7. The service provider actions motivated me to develop trust		0.743			
8. The service provider had dedicated and customized software for trip locations, weather, hotel and airline bookings etc.		0.546			
9. The service provider had network partners spread-out through which the service offering was executed.		0.501			
10. In order to develop the best possible offering, I spent time in collaboration with the service provider		0.500			
11. The meeting rooms had proper stationary.			0.733		
12. The physical set up of the meeting rooms were properly managed.			0.614		
13. The meeting rooms were equipped with proper visual aids i.e. multimedia, posters, projectors etc.			0.596		
14. The network partners of the service provider were very helpful			0.594		
15. The service offering helped me to increase my personal learning.			0.584		
16. I felt the culture among the staff members of the organization was conducive			0.471		
17. The service provider utilized laptops, computers or tablets to give me proper guidelines.				0.752	
18. The service provider used internet to develop the service offering.				0.749	
19. The service offering I selected was based on the competitive prices in the market				0.487	
20. I was given a clear outline about my service offering before its usage through emails, messages etc.					0.779
21. I made personal connections with the network partners of service provider					0.719
22. The final service provided by the provider had no operational flaws. i.e. difficulty in accessing hotel reservations etc. (or other technical difficulties)					0.636
23. The service provider was open and helpful in resolving the operational flaws (cancellations, hotel availability etc.)					0.530
24. The service provider was very keen in listening to my views about the service offering					0.465

portant variable in customer experience which caused as they had not experienced idea exchange while discussing travel packages with travel agents.

One of the most used and popular methods to determine which factors could be retained is Cattell's Scree tests (Cattell, 2012). The quantity of data-points over the break (excluding the point at which the break happens) is the quantity of variables to retain. The test showed that the data-points are not disturbed much, which will be looked further through regression analysis.

## Hypothesis Testing

For this study, multiple regression analysis approach was adopted to check the relationship between the dependent and the independent variable. Results of this test are summarized in Table 3.

## Regression Analysis of Operant and Operand Resources with Customer Experience

In Model No. 1 of Table 3, regression analysis was carried out to test the relationship of Operant and Operand Resources with Customer Experience. This model can be explained with the following equation:

$$Cus\_Exp = 0.819 + 0.235 * Opt\_Res + 0.509 * Opd\_Res$$

This shows that with one unit increase in operant resources, the customer experience will increase with 0.235. Likewise, with one unit increase of operand resources the customer experience will increase or is positively affected by 0.509. Moreover, Operant and

**Table 3**  
Regression Models

Name of Variable	Model No		
	1	2	3
Operant resources	0.235** -0.094	-	-
Operand resources	0.509*** -0.09	-	-
Co-creation operator	-	0.491*** -0.077	-
Co-creation firm	-	0.086 -0.075	-
Co-creation space	-	-	0.384*** -0.073
Co-creation tool	-	-	0.282*** -0.058
VIF Value	1.658	1.317	1.198
Value of R2	0.306	0.235	0.289

Note: Values represent un-standardized coefficients while those in parenthesis are standard deviation of unstandardized coefficients.

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Operand Resources are statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$  respectively. Hence,  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  are accepted with the help of above analysis.

### Regression Analysis of Co-creation Operator and Co-creation Firm with Customer Experience

Model No. 2 in the Table No. 4 can be explained as follows:

$$Cus\_Exp = 1.410 + 0.491 * Cocrop + 0.086 * Cocrfi$$

With one unit increase in co-creation operator, the customer experience will increase with 0.491 likewise, with one unit increase of co-creation firm the customer experience will increase or will be positively affected by 0.086. Although, co-creation operator (Cocrop) is significant at  $p < 0.01$ ; but co-creation firm (cocrfi) is insignificant as it gives the significance value is greater than 0.05. Therefore,  $H1A$  is accepted; whereas  $H1B$  is rejected because co-creation firm is not significantly related with customer experience.

### Regression Analysis of Co-creation Space and Co-creation Tools with Customer Experience

Model No. 3 shows the relationship of co-creation space and co-creation tools with Customer experience Regression equation for this model is:

$$Cus\_Exp = 1.112 + 0.384 * Cocrsp + 0.282 * Cocrto$$

With one unit increase in co-creation space, the customer experience will increase with 0.384 likewise, with one unit increase of co-creation tools the customer experience will increase or will positively be affected by 0.282. Furthermore, both predictors are positively associated with the outcome variable at  $p < 1\%$ . Hence,  $H2A$  and  $H2B$  both are accepted from above equation.

Overall, the result of regression analysis depicts a positive and significant relationship of different resources used in value co-creation in with positive customer experience. It means that value co-creation does not only depend upon the quality of relationship between the customers and service provider; but it is also affected by the tangible and intangible resources applied by the organization during the process of service offering.

### Discussion

Above results show that operand resource has an impact on customer experience during value co-creation process within a business-to-customer (B2C) context. Through regression, the results signify presence of positive impact of operand resources on customer experiences. Co-creation operator of operand resources has a significant impact on customer experiences in value co-creation process. Although the literature explains that co-creation firm does have an impact on customer experience (Rashid, 2015); results show that co-creation firm of operand resource has a little or no impact on customer experience

in value co-creation process. This means that respondents did not experience helpful or collaborative culture within travel agencies. A possible reason of this can be attributed to respondents. The data was collected more from younger people. Results depict that young people have different mindset in consuming services. They are more technology driven and avoid getting information which is readily available on the internet. So, they look for information and experiences which is not readily available (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013). This means that customers do not give importance to the network, collaboration and helpful environment as compared to the other components.

Results also verify that co-creation space of operand resources has a significant impact on customer experiences. Resources like presentation aids, meeting rooms and proper stationary items are held considerable by customers while getting services from travel agents. Similarly, co-creation tool of operand resources are positively related with customer experiences in value co-creation process. Co-creation tools involve software usage, availability of computers and the internet connection. This might be because customers are more concerned with the package outcome and the outcome comes out faster with more options with these tools. For example, the use of internet enables customers to shop online without restriction of time (Javed & Khan, 2014). Therefore, the results are aligned with the literature that both operant and operand resources have an impact on customer experience (Rashid, 2015).

**Table 4**  
Hypothesis Testing

No.	Description of the Research Hypothesis	Results
H1	Operant resource has an impact on customer experience of value co-creation process in a business-to-customer (B2C) context	Proved
H1A	Co-creation operator of operand resource has an impact on customer experience in value co-creation process	Proved
H1B	Co-creation firm of operand resource has an impact on customer experience in value co-creation process	Not Proved
H2	Operand resources has an impact on customer experience in a business-to-customer (B2C) context	Proved
H2A	Co-creation space of operand resource has an impact on customer experience in value co-creation process	Proved
H2B	Co-creation tools of operand resource has an impact on customer experience in value co-creation process	Proved

## Recommendations for Future Research

The study explains that there is a link between operant and operand resources with customer experience which marketing practitioners can use in their service offerings while keeping demographics in mind. Each field or service sector is different and hence it is possible to have different results for each sector. This research could be replicated in different contexts. This research is limited to studying and taking the point of views of only the customers but later studies could use the experience, processes involved and the point of views from business perspective as well. This research studies customer experiences while using travel agent's services, later studies could research the perspectives of travel agents as well by interviewing them and filling surveys for them. This research has provided a survey instrument which can be applied in any other organization as well. Later

studies could use this survey instrument and see what the results come out to be.

## **Conclusion**

This paper demonstrates that operant and operand resources have an impact on customer experience within the value co-creation process in a business-to-customer (B2C) context. By running regression, the results stated significant impact of operant resources on customer experience. Many companies do not constitute the intangible or the operant resources and do not know how to manage them. Customer experiences the environment, space or the tools of the organization more which are tangible as compared to the intangible resources. Intangible resources (operant resources) do help the customers, but the experience of customers with travel agents is more directed towards the tangible resources. On the other hand, operand resources have an impact on customer experience in a business-to-customer (B2C) context. Therefore, this paper asserts the importance of different types of resources and resource integration on customer's human experience. This study also highlights the importance of modern firms to shift from good dominant logic to service dominant logic.

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