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Identifying the Dimensions and Components of Value Co-Creation in the Online Retail Industry: A Meta-Synthesis Approach

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ABSTRACT

Value co-creation in the online retail industry has emerged as an innovative approach in customer relationship management that emphasizes active interaction and the joint creation of value between customers and organizations. The objective of this study was to identify the dimensions and components of value co-creation in online retailing and to present a comprehensive conceptual model based on existing research evidence. This study was conducted using a qualitative approach and the meta-synthesis method. A total of 62 studies related to the research topic were systematically analyzed. Data were extracted through concept coding and subsequently organized into components and major dimensions during the synthesis stage. The analysis of the studies led to the identification of five main dimensions of value co-creation, including infrastructural and technological, behavioral and interactive, organizational and managerial, value creation and market, and sustainability and social responsibility dimensions. The first dimensions were identified as enabling factors, the behavioral dimension as the core component, the value creation dimension as the outcome, and the sustainability dimension as the moderating context of the model. The final model demonstrates that value co-creation in online retailing is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped through the integration of digital technologies, organizational capabilities, customer interactions, and commitment to sustainability. This model can serve as a theoretical framework and a practical guideline for enhancing customer experience and developing sustainable value-creating strategies.

Keywords: Value co-creation; online retailing; meta-synthesis; customer interaction; digital infrastructures; sustainability and social responsibility; market value creation.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies and the increasing penetration of the internet into everyday life have fundamentally transformed the structure and logic of contemporary retail systems. Online retailing is no longer merely a channel for product distribution; rather, it has evolved into a dynamic ecosystem in which customers, firms, technological platforms, and various stakeholders continuously interact to generate and exchange value. In such an environment, traditional perspectives on value creation, which considered organizations as the sole producers of value and customers as passive recipients, have gradually lost their explanatory power. Instead, the concept of value co-creation has emerged as a dominant paradigm in modern marketing and management literature, emphasizing collaborative interactions between firms and customers in the process of value generation (1, 2). This

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shift reflects a broader movement from product-centered logic toward interaction-centered and service-oriented logic in digital business ecosystems.

The increasing complexity of digital markets, together with the emergence of platform-based business models, has intensified the importance of collaborative and participatory mechanisms in shaping customer experiences and organizational performance. Online retail businesses increasingly rely on customer participation, digital engagement, and interactive communication to improve service quality, strengthen customer relationships, and sustain competitive advantage (3, 4). In this context, value is not embedded solely in products or services; rather, it is generated through continuous interactions, shared experiences, and mutual learning processes among market actors. Consequently, understanding the dimensions and mechanisms of value co-creation has become a strategic necessity for organizations operating in digitally mediated markets.

The concept of value co-creation has attracted substantial scholarly attention across various disciplines, including marketing, innovation management, information systems, healthcare, tourism, education, and entrepreneurship. Recent studies demonstrate that value co-creation is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by technological infrastructures, organizational capabilities, customer perceptions, social interactions, and environmental conditions (5, 6). Research in healthcare innovation networks has shown that collaborative interactions among actors facilitate the creation of shared value through collective goals and network-based relationships (5). Similarly, studies in higher education emphasize that co-creation processes strengthen engagement, knowledge exchange, and participatory learning among stakeholders (6). These findings indicate that value co-creation extends beyond commercial exchange and functions as a broader mechanism for collaborative value generation in contemporary ecosystems.

Digital transformation has further accelerated the importance of value co-creation by enabling real-time communication, personalized services, and data-driven interactions between firms and consumers. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, digital platforms, smart analytics, and the metaverse have created new opportunities for organizations to redesign customer experiences and develop interactive value propositions (4, 7). Artificial intelligence technologies, for instance, enable firms to analyze customer behavior, predict preferences, and offer personalized recommendations that enhance engagement and perceived value. Likewise, digital platforms facilitate collaboration among multiple actors and create interconnected ecosystems in which customers actively participate in innovation and service development processes (7, 8). Such developments have transformed online retailing into a participatory environment in which customers increasingly contribute to product evaluation, marketing communication, and value creation activities.

The evolution of digital business models has also reinforced the strategic role of customer interaction in organizational success. Contemporary online retail platforms depend heavily on customer-generated content, electronic word-of-mouth communication, online reviews, and social media engagement to shape brand image and influence purchasing behavior (9, 10). Studies have demonstrated that online interactions and trust-based relationships significantly influence customer purchase intentions and brand loyalty in digital environments (9). Moreover, electronic word-of-mouth communication has become a critical mechanism through which customers collaboratively create and disseminate value in online ecosystems (10). Consequently, organizations are increasingly required to develop communication strategies that facilitate transparency, dialogue, and interactive participation with consumers.

Customer participation represents one of the central dimensions of value co-creation in online retailing. Unlike traditional markets, digital environments allow customers to engage directly in product evaluation, service improvement, innovation activities, and brand communication. Customer engagement behaviors, including feedback provision, information sharing, online interaction, and community participation, contribute significantly to organizational learning and innovation outcomes (11, 12). Research indicates that customer participation behaviors positively affect perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty, thereby strengthening the long-term sustainability of digital businesses (12). Furthermore, customer engagement mediates the relationship between organizational innovativeness and value co-creation behaviors, highlighting the importance of active consumer involvement in digital ecosystems (11).

Another critical aspect of value co-creation concerns customer experience and perceived value. In online retail settings, customers evaluate not only functional product attributes but also emotional, relational, and experiential dimensions of service interactions. The quality of customer experiences significantly influences trust formation, brand attachment, and future behavioral intentions (13, 14). Research on tourism and banking services demonstrates that customer personality traits, perceived value, and experiential interactions play substantial roles in shaping value co-creation outcomes (13, 14). Similarly, studies in hospitality contexts show that perceived quality, transparency, and accessibility directly influence customers' willingness to participate in collaborative value-creation processes (15). These findings underscore the importance of designing customer-centered experiences that encourage active participation and emotional engagement.

Organizational and managerial factors also play a decisive role in facilitating value co-creation. Firms require supportive leadership, adaptive organizational cultures, knowledge management capabilities, and effective strategic alignment between business and information technology systems to successfully implement co-creation strategies (16, 17). Research has shown that the alignment between information technology and business strategy enhances organizational performance and strengthens the firm's capacity to engage customers in collaborative processes (17). Likewise, organizational learning and knowledge-sharing mechanisms contribute to innovation and facilitate the development of customer-oriented solutions (18, 19). Such capabilities are especially important in online retail ecosystems, where rapid technological changes require continuous adaptation and innovation.

Innovation itself constitutes a fundamental driver of value co-creation in digital environments. Open innovation practices, digital transformation initiatives, and technology-driven entrepreneurial activities create opportunities for organizations to collaborate with customers and stakeholders in developing innovative products and services (7, 20). Knowledge-based firms increasingly rely on collaborative innovation mechanisms to respond to market uncertainties and evolving customer expectations (20). In online retail ecosystems, innovation is not limited to technological advancements; it also involves new forms of interaction, communication, and business model design that enhance shared value creation among stakeholders (8). Consequently, innovation and co-creation are deeply interconnected processes within digital business environments.

The role of branding and relational quality in value co-creation has also received considerable scholarly attention. Brand image, customer trust, relationship quality, and perceived authenticity significantly influence customer engagement and participation in co-creation activities (21, 22). Studies suggest that relationship quality mediates the relationship between value co-creation and economic satisfaction in business interactions (22). In digital retail environments, where face-to-face interactions are limited, trust and relationship quality become even more critical in sustaining long-term customer relationships. Customers are more likely to participate in collaborative value-generation activities when they perceive brands as trustworthy, transparent, and aligned with their personal values.

The growing emphasis on sustainability and corporate social responsibility has further expanded the conceptual boundaries of value co-creation. Modern consumers increasingly expect organizations to create not only economic value but also social and environmental value. Consequently, firms are integrating sustainability principles into their value-creation strategies to strengthen legitimacy, trust, and stakeholder engagement (23, 24). Studies on stakeholder value creation highlight the importance of environmental, social, and governance dimensions in shaping sustainable business ecosystems (24). Similarly, research demonstrates that investments in corporate social responsibility and innovation contribute to the creation of shared value among firms, customers, and society (23). These findings suggest that sustainability and ethical responsibility have become integral components of value co-creation in digital retail ecosystems.

Despite the growing body of literature on value co-creation, several conceptual and methodological gaps remain. Existing studies often focus on specific sectors such as tourism, healthcare, education, or hospitality, while comprehensive integrative frameworks for online retailing remain limited (4, 8). Moreover, many studies examine isolated dimensions of value co-creation, such as customer engagement, digital technologies, or organizational capabilities, without systematically integrating these dimensions into a unified conceptual structure (2). The fragmented nature of existing findings makes it difficult to develop a holistic understanding of how different technological, behavioral, managerial, and market-related factors interact to shape value co-creation in online retail ecosystems.

In the Iranian context, studies on value co-creation have primarily examined customer participation, service innovation, relational capabilities, and marketing effectiveness in specific industries such as banking, tourism, sports services, and technology businesses (14, 25, 26). Research has shown that relational capabilities and marketing innovation positively influence competitiveness through customer value creation (26). Other studies emphasize the role of technological innovation, organizational capabilities, and customer perceptions in strengthening value co-creation processes (13, 19). Nevertheless, there remains a lack of integrative research synthesizing these fragmented findings into a comprehensive conceptual model specifically tailored to the online retail industry.

Furthermore, the rapid emergence of platform economies, startup ecosystems, and digital entrepreneurship has transformed the dynamics of value creation in online markets. Startups and platform-based firms increasingly depend on collaborative mechanisms to generate innovation, attract users, and sustain market competitiveness (27, 28). Contemporary management practices increasingly view organizations as designers of interaction mechanisms that facilitate collaborative value generation among stakeholders (28). Public digital services, healthcare platforms, and mobile applications similarly rely on participatory co-creation mechanisms to enhance user well-being and service effectiveness (3, 29, 30). These developments highlight the growing relevance of value co-creation across both commercial and public digital ecosystems.

Given the theoretical fragmentation of existing studies and the multidimensional nature of value co-creation in digital retail environments, there is a clear need for a systematic synthesis of previous findings capable of identifying the major dimensions and components shaping this phenomenon. Meta-synthesis provides an appropriate methodological approach for integrating dispersed qualitative and quantitative findings and developing a coherent conceptual framework grounded in previous research evidence (1, 2). Through systematic analysis and conceptual integration of prior studies, it becomes possible to identify the structural, behavioral, technological, and sustainability-related dimensions influencing value co-creation in online retail ecosystems.

Accordingly, the present study aims to identify and classify the dimensions and components of value co-creation in the online retail industry using a meta-synthesis approach and to develop a comprehensive conceptual model based on the synthesis of previous domestic and international studies.

Methods and Materials

This study employed a meta-synthesis approach to identify the dimensions and components of value co-creation in the online retail industry. Meta-synthesis, as one of the systematic approaches for integrating research findings, is used to achieve a deeper understanding and to construct a comprehensive theoretical framework from the fragmented results of previous studies. In the present study, based on the seven-step model proposed by Snyder (2019), the scope and research questions were initially defined. Subsequently, a systematic search was conducted in valid scientific databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect using predefined keywords such as value co-creation, online retail, and engagement platforms. After removing duplicate and irrelevant studies, the final articles were selected based on qualitative evaluation criteria. In the next stage, open, axial, and selective coding processes were conducted to identify concepts, categories, and relationships among them. Finally, the findings were analyzed and synthesized through an integrative–interpretive approach in order to extract a conceptual model of the dimensions and components of value co-creation within the context of online retailing. By enabling theoretical inference from the existing literature, this method provided the present study with strong conceptual validity and a robust scientific foundation.

Findings and Results

Step One: Formulation of the Research Question

The first step in any research process involves formulating a research question or objective. To formulate this question or objective, it is first necessary to determine “what” is to be examined. In this article, value co-creation in the online retail industry is investigated. In the next stage, the question of “who” specifies the population under investigation, which in this study includes databases and scientific journals. Subsequently, the question of “when” determines the temporal framework of the reviewed studies. In the present study, domestic studies published between 2013 and 2026 and international studies published between 2000 and 2025 were examined. The final question, “how,” refers to the method of data collection. To collect the data, previous studies conducted using scientific methods (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches) in the field of value co-creation were utilized. Based on the above considerations, the research question guiding the subsequent stages of the meta-synthesis was formulated as follows: “How can the dimensions and components of value co-creation in the online retail industry be categorized using a meta-synthesis approach?”

Step Two: Systematic Search of Sources

In this study, during the implementation of the systematic review and meta-synthesis process, which follows a standardized and structured procedure, the time period from 2000 to 2025 was specified for selecting studies. To conduct a systematic search of articles published in journals, scientific periodicals, and various databases, relevant keywords such as *innovation* and *value co-creation* were searched.

Table 1. Information Databases Searched

English Databases	Persian Databases
Emerald	Iran Journals Database (Magiran)
ScienceDirect (Elsevier)	Scientific Information Database (SID)
ResearchGate	IranDoc
Google Scholar	ISC Database
ProQuest	Noor Specialized Journals Database (Noormags)

In this study, five English-language and five Persian-language databases (a total of 10 databases) were searched using the predefined keywords.

Step Three: Searching and Selecting Appropriate Texts

At this stage, after several rounds of reviewing and refining scientific articles and dissertations, a number of sources were excluded and were not included in the meta-synthesis process.

A. Sampling Framework for Selecting Studies

The sampling method used in this study was purposive sampling. Two criteria, namely “inclusion criteria” and “exclusion criteria,” were employed to select appropriate texts. These criteria were used to determine the accuracy, validity, and significance of the studies and to ensure a more precise evaluation and selection process. After four stages of screening, 107 studies were excluded from a total of 169 studies, and 62 studies were ultimately selected for data analysis.

B. Inclusion Criteria

In this article, inclusion criteria refer to the conditions based on which a study is entered into the review process. The criteria were established according to scientific principles and standards, as well as the opinions of researchers and experts.

C. Exclusion Criteria

The second filter in selecting appropriate studies consisted of the exclusion criteria.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Sources

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Published scientific-research articles and dissertations indexed in IranDoc within the relevant field	Studies that did not report sufficient information regarding the objectives of this research
Articles and studies conducted using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed scientific research methods	Studies conducted with identical titles and objectives
Studies that reported sufficient data and information related to the research objectives	Studies lacking an appropriate methodological framework
Studies that underwent peer-review by expert referees and were published either online or in full-text format	Studies lacking sufficient scientific quality due to publication in low-quality journals
Articles and studies published in the relevant field between 2018 and 2023	Review and library-based studies
Articles and studies that scientifically examined the intended topic	Studies published before 2000 and before 2013 in the Persian calendar equivalent

The screening and review process based on the aforementioned inclusion and exclusion criteria is summarized in Figure 1.

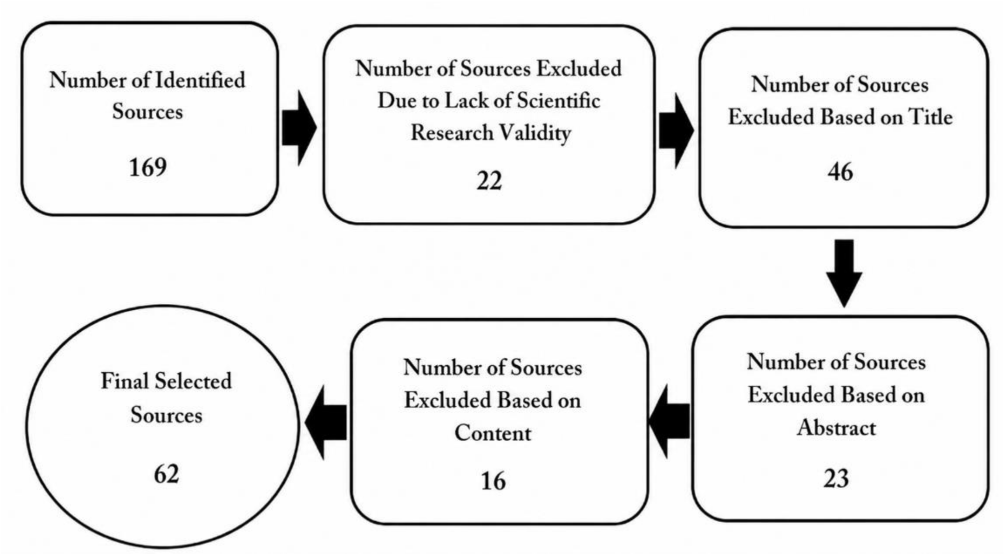

Figure 1. Stages of Selecting the Checklist of Reviewed Studies from the Selected Information Databases

Step Four: Extracting Information from the Texts

To extract the variables affecting value co-creation, the following table presents and classifies the related layers and indicators identified in recent domestic and international studies.

Table 3. Components Identified in Previous Domestic and International Studies

No.	Sources	Theme
1	Movahedifar et al. (2022)	Expert human resources, training, knowledge orientation, technical achievements, idea creation, and innovation
2	Radpour et al. (2023)	Process readiness, process value network, and process outcomes
3	Shafiei et al. (2022)	Service experience, attachment to service and service image, customer personality characteristics, and service image
4	Bahrami et al. (2022)	Customer participation behavior and customer citizenship behavior
5	Khaleghi et al. (2021)	Provision of facilities, support and participation of senior managers, appropriate planning, and expertise in information technology
6	Amirdivani and Mohaghegh (2021)	Communication capabilities and marketing innovation
7	Hosseini et al. (2021)	Needs assessment, interactive processes, increased satisfaction, and alignment with customers' needs and thoughts
8	Fartash et al. (2021)	Familiarity with emerging technologies and market knowledge
9	Kajouri et al. (2021)	Customer mental image, customer value, customer experience, and customer motivation
10	Ahmadpour Daryani et al. (2022)	Managerial characteristics, business characteristics, strategic orientations, and contextual factors in firm performance, including financial, market, and customer performance
11	Akbari et al. (2020)	Brand preference and brand preference
12	Rezvani et al. (2020)	New service innovation, new service processes, technological systems, and word-of-mouth marketing
13	Khodayari et al. (2019)	Effectiveness criteria, continuous acquisition of new customers, and customer participation in the value creation process
14	Aghazadeh et al. (2019)	Improving public image through social actions, reducing risks and costs through environmental protection measures, increasing revenue by creating business opportunities arising from solving social problems, and increasing revenue by improving benefits transferred to a stakeholder group
15	Hamidi and Shams (2019)	Value conceptualization, creation platform, resource planning, value actors affecting value co-creation processes, learning, value conceptualization, and value co-creation and learning processes

16	Yousefi et al. (2019)	Role of reputation, importance and value of acceptance, responsibility, and compensatory actions
17	Amirsadat et al. (2020)	Behavioral and emotional motivations, financial and social benefits, perceived risk, technical factors, collectivism, perceived performance, social learning, informational factors, personal goal orientation, psychological factors, and financial expectations
18	Ghorsi et al. (2018)	Increasing revenue through creating business opportunities arising from solving social problems, increasing revenue by improving benefits transferred to a stakeholder group, improving public image through social actions or modern philanthropy, reducing risks and costs through environmental protection measures, and traditional philanthropy
19	Beyranvand et al. (2018)	Human resources, spiritual resources, and physical resources
20	Hamidi and Shams Gharneh (2018)	Value conceptualization, creation platform, resource planning, and value actors
21	Keshavarzian (2018)	Customer value, customer loyalty, and trust in employees
22	Hosseininia and Yaghoubi (2016)	Information search, information sharing, responsible behavior, personal interaction, feedback, consultation, assistance, tolerance, and new product development
23	Hashemi and Tavakoli (2013)	Participation potential in the stage of understanding customer needs, commercialization stage, operation and maintenance, end-of-life management stage, current level of customer participation at all stages, and the gap between participation potential and actual participation
24	Umland et al. (2025)	Corporate social responsibility, organizational innovation, organizational commitment, and organizational culture
25	Paglietto and Manella (2025)	Multi-actor value co-creation, healthcare innovation networks, organizational goals, social objects, actor roles, intra-organizational conditions, extra-organizational conditions, innovative collaboration, bridging-in mechanism, bridging-out mechanism, object-oriented perspective, network collaboration activities, changing social structures, and community need conditions
26	D'Souza et al. (2024)	Corporate social responsibility, internal employee responsibility, external environmental responsibility, ethical/governance responsibility, CSR investments, product innovation, service innovation, value co-creation, intensity and pattern of CSR–innovation relationships, and firm size
27	Barajas and Lamm (2024)	Value co-creation, coworking spaces, startups, different stages of startup development, narrative literature review, netnography, case studies, six categories of coworking-space services, 36 provided services, differences in service importance according to startup maturity level, systematic approach to coworking-space services, digital transformations in coworking environments, and changes resulting from digitalization in coworking spaces
28	Dang and Nguyen (2023)	Emerging digital technologies, artificial intelligence, metaverse, personalized experience, improved interactions, ethical challenges, improved customer relations, organizational performance, and future research domains
29	Bonamigo et al. (2022)	Value creation, interaction, actor behavior, customer, and participation
30	Solakis et al. (2022)	Perceived quality, perceived price, transparency, risk, access, value co-creation, and the effect of quality on price
31	Battisti et al. (2022)	Meta-organizations, technology entrepreneurship, data-driven platforms, value co-creation, social innovation, AI-based platforms, and critical success factors
32	Mecham Slyma et al. (2021)	Communication, governance, competence, and participation
33	Rao et al. (2021)	Value co-creation, perceived trust, brand image, word-of-mouth marketing, and purchase intention
34	Signori et al. (2021)	Stakeholder value creation, environmental, social, and governance criteria, and comparison of corporate value added
35	Schiavone et al. (2021)	Digital business models, service value drivers, multilevel benefits, social outcomes, and digitalized ecosystem
36	Menghwar and Daood (2021)	Value co-creation, strategic social responsibility, opportunity cost, transaction cost, and internal and external factors affecting value creation
37	Hasan Noor and Sari (2021)	Brand value creation, interaction, online communication, social networks, trust, commitment, and online communities
38	Grimaldi et al. (2021)	Data-driven value creation, smart service systems, data-flow sharing, and redefinition of service experience
39	Matarazzo et al. (2021)	Digital transformation, dynamic capabilities, business model innovation, new distribution channels, and organizational learning
40	Costa Climent and Haftor (2021)	Value creation in e-commerce, business model themes, business model evolution, responses to imitators, and environmental factors
41	Tapaninaho and Kujala (2020)	Stakeholder value creation, legitimation of sustainable business, and sustainability-based value creation strategy
42	Barreda and Stollehurst (2020)	Customer engagement, brand trust, brand loyalty, motivation to enter online communities, and brand value creation
43	Chesbrough et al. (2020)	Open business model, business model innovation, collaboration with startups, and business model validation

44	Al-Manol and Al-Hilali (2020)	Improving quality and efficiency, sharing knowledge and information, and improving communication
45	Babu et al. (2020)	Value creation through sustainable social innovation
46	Yin et al. (2020)	Innovation, joint value-creation behaviors, customer interaction, and monitoring customer behavior
47	Andreas Kuckertz et al. (2019)	Technology-oriented, socially oriented, and organizationally oriented factors
48	Kuckertz et al. (2019)	Environmental startups, social, technological, and organizational value creation, sustainability, and CrunchBase data
49	Chuang (2018)	Integrated market orientation, customer and seller value creation, and e-marketing as a mediator
50	Vidgen et al. (2017)	Business analytics, analytics ecosystem, data-driven management, and sociotechnical conceptual model
51	Moon and Lee (2017)	Organizational cohesion and organizational commitment
52	Lim (2016)	Organizational loyalty and organizational commitment
53	McColl-Kennedy et al. (2014)	System management, practical adaptation, passive compliance, and isolated control
54	Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2014)	DART model, dialogue, access, risk, and transparency
55	Aarikka-Stenroos and Jaakkola (2012)	Need diagnosis, design and production of solutions, solution implementation, management of value conflicts, and organization of processes and industries
56	O'Cass and Ngo (2012)	Firm capabilities, B2B value creation, customer satisfaction, and sustainable relationships
57	Kerr et al. (2006)	Framework, system, and process
58	Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004)	Access, dialogue, transparency, and risk
59	Ramaswamy and Gouillart (2010)	Theme of interactions, mindset, experience, network relationships, and interaction platform
60	Gordon (2003)	Market segment, exchange, value transaction, value exchange, value proposition, value activity, revisiting value activity, connection, and value interface
61	Amit and Zott (2001)	Value creation in e-commerce, efficiency, complementarities, lock-in, and novelty
62	Zott et al. (2000)	Value creation strategies, efficiency, and stickiness in e-commerce

Using the meta-synthesis approach as a systematic qualitative method, a broad range of domestic and international studies in the field of value co-creation were examined. The purpose of this analysis was to aggregate and synthesize fragmented findings and present a coherent structure of the dimensions and components that play a role in the online retail ecosystem. Accordingly, after extracting the initial codes from the selected studies in the fourth stage of meta-synthesis, the next step toward achieving an integrated conceptual model was to synthesize and combine these concepts. At this stage, which is also known as concept synthesis or axial coding, the initial codes were first categorized into homogeneous components by examining their similarities and differences. These components were then classified into broader and more abstract main dimensions based on deeper thematic and conceptual relationships. The aim was to develop a coherent theoretical structure for value co-creation in the online retail industry that would both cover a wide range of findings from previous studies and possess strong explanatory coherence. The results of this classification and axial coding process, which led to the identification of five main dimensions and their related components, are presented in detail in the following tables. In these tables, in addition to presenting each component and its corresponding dimension, the studies from which these concepts were extracted are also cited to ensure transparency and credibility.

Table 4. Components Identified in Previous Domestic and International Studies

Dimension	Main Component	Aggregated Codes	Related Studies (Author/Year)
Infrastructural and technological	Digital and technological infrastructure	Emerging technologies, technological systems, AI, metaverse, IT expertise, digital platform	Khaleghi et al. (2021); Fartash et al. (2021); Dang and Nguyen (2023); Battisti et al. (2022); Rezvani et al. (2020)
Infrastructural and technological	Data orientation and intelligent analytics	Data management, business analytics, data sharing, analytics ecosystem	Vidgen et al. (2017); Grimaldi et al. (2021); Battisti et al. (2022)
Infrastructural and technological	Digital platform and ecosystem	Interactive platform, digital ecosystem, coworking spaces	Ramaswamy and Gouillart (2010); Schiavone et al. (2021); Barajas and Lamm (2024)
Infrastructural and technological	Technological innovation	Business model innovation, service innovation, technical innovation	Rezvani et al. (2020); Matarazzo et al. (2021); Movahedifar et al. (2022)
Behavioral and interactive	Customer interaction and participation	Participation behavior, customer interaction, active participation	Parsa et al. (2022); Yin et al. (2020); Bonamigo et al. (2022)
Behavioral and interactive	Customer experience and perception	Customer experience, perceived value, mental image	Shafiei et al. (2022); Kajouri et al. (2021); Solakis et al. (2022)
Behavioral and interactive	Trust, loyalty, and commitment	Brand trust, customer loyalty, commitment	Keshavarzian (2018); Barreda and Stollehurst (2020); Lim (2016)
Behavioral and interactive	Communication and dialogue	Dialogue, transparency, feedback, online communication	Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004); Hosseininia and Yaghoubi (2016); Hasan Noor and Sari (2021)
Behavioral and interactive	Motivation and social behaviors	Behavioral and social motivations, citizenship behavior	Amirsadat et al. (2020); Parsa et al. (2022)
Organizational and managerial	Organizational resources and capabilities	Human resources, organizational capability, competence	Beyranvand et al. (2018); O'Cass and Ngo (2012); Mecham Slyma et al. (2021)
Organizational and managerial	Leadership and managerial support	Managerial support, planning, managerial characteristics	Khaleghi et al. (2021); Ahmadpour Daryani et al. (2020)
Organizational and managerial	Organizational culture and commitment	Organizational culture, cohesion, organizational loyalty	Umland et al. (2025); Moon and Lee (2017); Lim (2016)
Organizational and managerial	Learning and knowledge management	Organizational learning, knowledge sharing, knowledge orientation	Movahedifar et al. (2022); Al-Manol and Al-Hilali (2020); Hamidi and Shams (2019)
Organizational and managerial	Processes and systemic management	Process readiness, organizational control, system management	Radpour et al. (2022); McColl-Kennedy et al. (2014); Kerr et al. (2006)
Value creation and market	Value co-creation	Value co-creation, value exchange, customer value creation	Ramaswamy and Gouillart (2010); Khodayari et al. (2019); Rao et al. (2021)
Value creation and market	Brand value and market orientation	Brand image, brand preference, market orientation	Ebrahimpour Azbari et al. (2020); Chuang (2018); Hasan Noor and Sari (2021)
Value creation and market	E-commerce and business model	E-commerce, open business model, digital value	Amit and Zott (2001); Chesbrough et al. (2020); Costa Climent and Haftor (2021)
Value creation and market	Competitive advantage and efficiency	Efficiency, customer stickiness, market performance	Zott et al. (2000); Ahmadpour Daryani et al. (2020); Amit and Zott (2001)
Value creation and market	Value network and relationships	Value network, network communications, value interface	Gordon (2003); Paglietto and Manella (2025); Ramaswamy and Gouillart (2010)
Sustainability and social responsibility	Social and ethical responsibility	CSR, social actions, ethical responsibility	Aghazadeh et al. (2019); D'Souza et al. (2024); Menghwar and Daood (2021)
Sustainability and social responsibility	Environmental sustainability	Environmental protection, sustainable value, ESG	Ghorsi et al. (2018); Signori et al. (2021); Babu et al. (2020)
Sustainability and social responsibility	Social value creation	Solving social problems, stakeholder benefits	Tapaninaho and Kujala (2020); Babu et al. (2020); Kuckertz et al. (2019)
Sustainability and social responsibility	Organizational legitimacy and reputation	Reputation, business legitimacy, social acceptance	Amirsadat et al. (2019); Tapaninaho and Kujala (2020)

As shown in the tables above, the process of axial coding and concept synthesis led to the identification of five key dimensions for explaining value co-creation in the online retail industry. These dimensions include infrastructural and technological, behavioral and interactive, organizational and managerial, value creation and market, and sustainability and social responsibility. Each of these dimensions consists of a set of related components extracted through content analysis of 62 foundational studies, collectively providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the phenomenon under investigation. This classification not only helps organize fragmented findings but also provides a basis for developing the final conceptual model. The identified dimensions indicate that value co-creation in this industry is a multidimensional phenomenon that requires strong technological and managerial foundations, relies on interactive and participatory behaviors of customers and firms, and must remain committed to economically and socially value-creating outcomes. The analysis of these dimensions and the relationships among them will be examined more deeply in the subsequent stages of the study in order to develop the final model and provide practical recommendations.

The results of the above classification indicate that value co-creation in the context of online retailing has a multidimensional and dynamic nature that begins with behavioral interactions between the customer and the organization and extends to infrastructural layers and strategic objectives. The continuity among these dimensions reflects the fact that success in creating shared value is not merely a function of technological tools; rather, it requires balance among organizational capabilities, stakeholders' subjective perceptions, and participatory processes. This structure not only helps clarify the key concepts in this field but also serves as the main foundation for formulating the conceptual model of the study and enables platform-based businesses to facilitate the transition from traditional marketing toward value-creating ecosystems by focusing on the identified indicators.

Application of the Identified Variables in the Online Retail Ecosystem

To adapt and contextualize the components extracted from the research literature to the online retail context, this study used a combination of methodological approaches so that the process of selecting and refining the components would be based on a scientifically defensible logic. Accordingly, within the framework of the meta-synthesis method, the concept translation approach was first used. This means that the concepts and codes extracted from different studies were compared and interpreted in order to identify their conceptual equivalents in the context of e-commerce and online retailing. At this stage, by examining the definitions, examples, and applications of each concept in previous studies, the researcher attempted to reinterpret their operational meaning in digital environments. This process made it possible to converge similar concepts and transform them into conceptual categories compatible with the online retail environment.

In the second step, directed content analysis was used to ensure the compatibility of the concepts with the structural and operational characteristics of online retailing. At this stage, the extracted components were evaluated based on a set of conceptual criteria related to digital environments. In other words, the concepts were examined in terms of their degree of alignment with the main characteristics of online retailing, and only components compatible with the nature of online interactions, platform-based contexts, and digital user experience were retained in the final framework. This stage contributed to the refinement of concepts and helped focus the model on elements relevant to the e-commerce ecosystem.

To strengthen the theoretical foundation of the model and explain the logic of the relationships among the components, the service-dominant logic framework was employed. According to this perspective, value is created through the interaction between the service provider and the customer and within the process of service use, while organizations merely play a facilitating role in this process. Based on this theoretical approach, the identified components were rearranged in the form of organizational and customer resources and value-creating interactions, thereby providing the basis for a coherent conceptual framework to explain value co-creation in online retailing.

Table 5. Approaches Used to Adapt the Components to Online Retailing

Methodological Approach	Purpose of Use in the Study	Application in the Study
Concept translation in meta-synthesis	Reinterpreting concepts extracted from different studies	Comparing and interpreting similar concepts across different studies and identifying their equivalents in the online retail context
Directed content analysis	Refining and filtering concepts based on the characteristics of the research context	Examining the compatibility of components with the characteristics of online retailing, such as digital interactions, platform-based environments, and online user experience
Service-dominant logic	Establishing a theoretical framework for organizing the components	Explaining the role of the customer and the organization in the value co-creation process and rearranging the components in the form of value-creating interactions

Accordingly, the combination of these methodological approaches made it possible to systematically identify, refine, and organize the components related to value co-creation in the online retail context. In other words, concept translation in meta-synthesis contributed to the convergence of concepts extracted from different studies, directed content analysis provided the basis for refining and selecting components aligned with the characteristics of digital interactions, and the theoretical framework of service-dominant logic offered a theoretical basis for explaining the relationships among these components. The outcome of this analytical process was the formation of a coherent conceptual framework for explaining value co-creation in online retailing, in which the identified dimensions and components were organized within a conceptual model. By emphasizing value-creating interactions between the organization and the customer in digital environments, the proposed research model seeks to systematically explain the process through which shared value is formed in the online retail ecosystem.

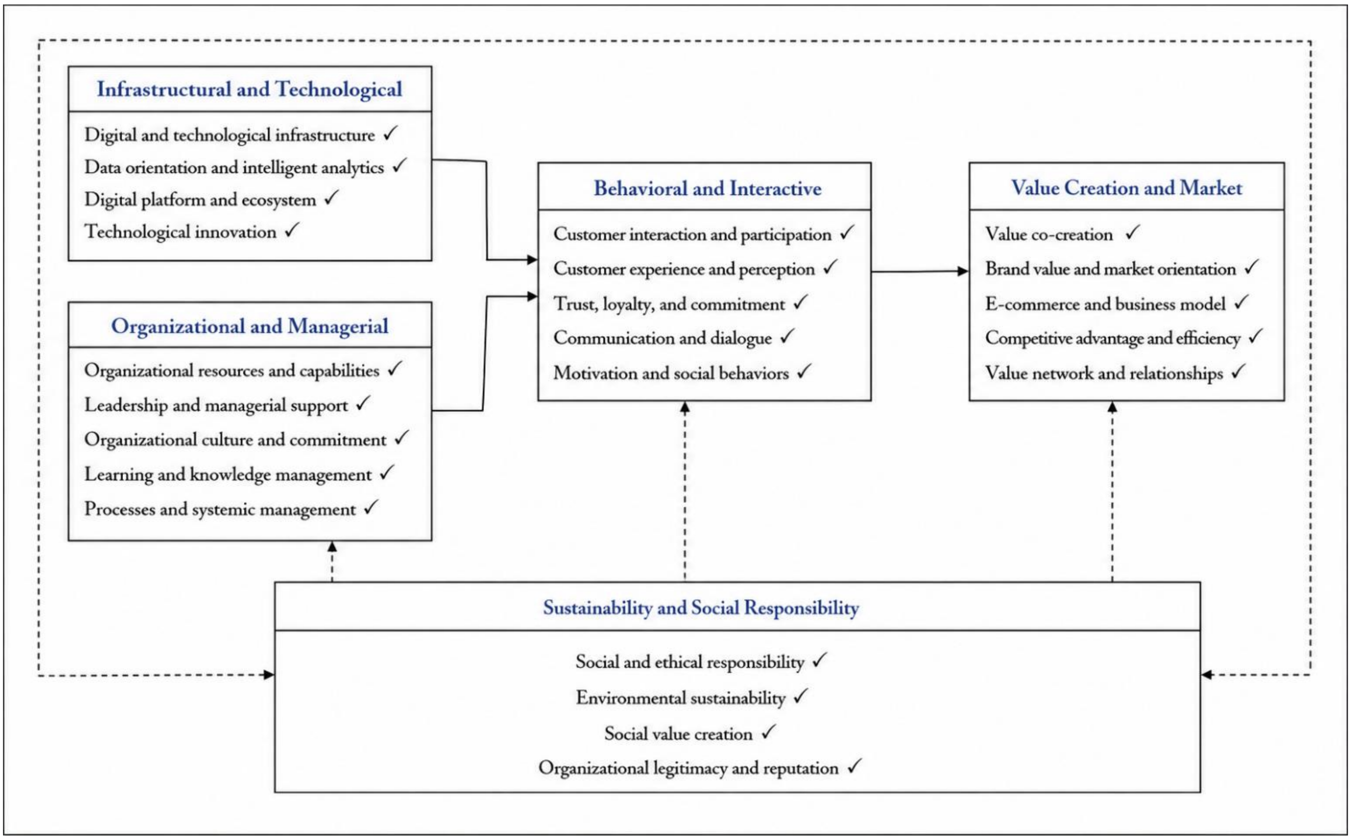

Figure 2. Conceptual Model of the Study

The conceptual model presented to explain the dimensions and components of value co-creation in the online retail industry was designed based on the logic of a causal and process-oriented system in which a set of infrastructural, organizational, behavioral, and market-related factors interact within a context of sustainability and social responsibility. In this model, the two dimensions of “infrastructural and technological” and “organizational and managerial” are considered the primary enabling factors that provide the necessary conditions for the formation of the value co-creation process. The infrastructural and technological dimension includes components such as digital and technological infrastructures, data orientation and intelligent analytics, digital platforms and ecosystems, and technological innovation, which enable extensive and continuous interaction between customers and firms in the online environment. Alongside this, the organizational and managerial dimension, with components such as supportive organizational culture, leadership and managerial support, learning and knowledge management, and participation management strategies, provides the managerial and cultural foundation required for accepting customer participation in the value creation process.

These two dimensions interact with each other and lead to the formation of the “behavioral and interactive” dimension, which constitutes the core of the model. This section includes components such as customer participation and interaction, customer experience and perception, trust, loyalty and commitment, communication and dialogue, and social and technological interactions. These components indicate that in the online retail environment, customers move beyond the role of mere consumers and become active actors in the value creation process. As a result of these interactions, the outcomes emerge in the form of the “value creation and market” dimension, which includes components such as brand value and loyalty, joint value creation for the customer and the organization, improvement of customer experience and competitive advantage, and development and improvement of the business model. This dimension shows that effective interaction between the organization and customers ultimately leads to sustainable competitive advantage, increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, and improved market performance.

At the same time, this entire process is formed within a context of “sustainability and social responsibility,” which is considered the foundation of the model. This dimension includes components such as corporate social responsibility, attention to environmental dimensions, ethical and social values, and organizational accountability and transparency. The positioning of this dimension at the base of the model indicates that, in the online retail ecosystem, the creation and continuity of the value co-creation process require attention to the principles of sustainability and social responsibility, because these factors strengthen organizational trust and legitimacy in the eyes of customers and provide the conditions for their more active participation in value-creating processes. Accordingly, the proposed model shows that value co-creation in online retailing results from the dynamic interaction among technological infrastructures, organizational managerial capabilities, customers’ interactive behaviors, and market-oriented outcomes, all of which gain meaning within the framework of sustainability and social responsibility principles.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study demonstrated that value co-creation in the online retail industry is a multidimensional phenomenon composed of five interconnected dimensions, including infrastructural and technological, behavioral and interactive, organizational and managerial, value creation and market, and sustainability and social responsibility. The synthesis of previous domestic and international studies revealed that these dimensions collectively form a coherent framework through which organizations and customers collaboratively create value in digital retail ecosystems. The identified dimensions indicate that value co-creation is not limited to customer participation or technological interaction alone; rather, it emerges from the integration of organizational capabilities, digital infrastructures, customer engagement mechanisms, and socially responsible business practices. This finding is consistent with recent conceptual studies emphasizing the systemic and multidimensional nature of value co-creation in contemporary digital environments (1, 2). The results also reinforce the argument that value in online environments is generated dynamically through continuous interaction among multiple actors within interconnected ecosystems.

One of the central findings of the study was the significance of the infrastructural and technological dimension as a foundational driver of value co-creation. Components such as digital infrastructure, data orientation, intelligent analytics, digital ecosystems, and technological innovation were identified as essential prerequisites for facilitating collaborative value creation in online retailing. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing the transformative role of emerging digital technologies in enhancing customer interactions and enabling platform-based value creation (4, 7). Digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, analytics systems, and interactive platforms enable organizations to personalize customer experiences, predict customer needs, and create flexible communication channels that support co-creation processes. The findings also correspond with the work of (8), who argued that digital ecosystems and business model innovation significantly influence the effectiveness of value co-creation in multi-stakeholder environments. Likewise, studies on technological alignment and organizational digital readiness indicate that the integration of business strategy with information technology capabilities strengthens organizational performance and facilitates interactive value generation (16, 17).

The results further revealed that the behavioral and interactive dimension constitutes the core mechanism through which value co-creation occurs in online retailing. Customer interaction, participation, communication, trust, loyalty, and social motivations emerged as central elements within the conceptual model. This finding is strongly supported by studies emphasizing customer engagement as a critical determinant of value co-creation outcomes (11, 12). In digital retail environments, customers no longer act as passive consumers but actively contribute to value creation through feedback, content generation, online interaction, and participation in innovation processes. The significance of customer engagement identified in this study is consistent with findings demonstrating that participatory customer behaviors positively influence satisfaction, perceived value, and organizational performance (12). Furthermore, the importance of communication and dialogue identified in the present study aligns with the service-centered perspective proposed in co-creation literature, which views interaction and dialogue as fundamental mechanisms for collaborative value generation (3, 9).

Another important finding concerned the role of customer experience and perception in shaping value co-creation processes. The study demonstrated that perceived value, emotional engagement, customer experience, and trust significantly contribute to the effectiveness of co-creation activities in online retail ecosystems. This finding corresponds with previous studies conducted in hospitality, tourism, and banking contexts, which found that experiential interactions and perceived service quality positively affect customers' willingness to engage in collaborative value generation (13-15). Customers who perceive greater transparency, accessibility, and relational quality are more likely to participate in value-creating interactions with organizations. Moreover, trust and loyalty emerged as essential mediating mechanisms linking customer participation with long-term organizational outcomes.

This finding supports the argument presented by (9) that trust beliefs and brand image significantly mediate the relationship between customer interaction and purchase intention in digital environments.

The findings also highlighted the importance of organizational and managerial capabilities in facilitating value co-creation. Organizational culture, leadership support, knowledge management, organizational learning, and process management were identified as essential enabling factors that shape firms' capacity to engage customers in collaborative activities. These findings are consistent with studies suggesting that organizational alignment, learning orientation, and adaptive managerial practices strengthen the effectiveness of value co-creation strategies (18, 19). Organizations that develop supportive cultures and invest in knowledge-sharing systems are better positioned to integrate customer feedback into innovation processes and sustain long-term interactive relationships. Similarly, the significance of leadership and managerial support identified in the present study supports previous findings emphasizing the strategic role of managers in facilitating customer participation and innovation-oriented organizational behavior (20). In online retail environments characterized by rapid technological and behavioral change, managerial flexibility and strategic coordination become critical for sustaining collaborative ecosystems.

The value creation and market dimension identified in the study further demonstrated that value co-creation contributes directly to organizational competitiveness, customer loyalty, and market performance. Components such as brand value, market orientation, digital business models, competitive advantage, and value networks indicate that collaborative interactions generate both relational and economic outcomes. This finding is consistent with the literature on digital business ecosystems, which suggests that value co-creation enhances firms' capacity to differentiate themselves in competitive markets through customer-centered innovation and relationship development (8, 27). Moreover, the findings support previous research demonstrating that electronic word-of-mouth communication, online interaction, and social engagement strengthen brand value and customer purchase intentions in digital environments (10, 21). The identification of value networks and ecosystem relationships also confirms the argument that value co-creation increasingly occurs through interconnected digital structures rather than isolated organizational activities.

A particularly important contribution of the present study concerns the integration of sustainability and social responsibility into the conceptual framework of value co-creation. The findings revealed that social responsibility, environmental sustainability, social value creation, and organizational legitimacy constitute fundamental dimensions supporting long-term co-creation processes in online retail ecosystems. This result is aligned with recent studies emphasizing the role of ESG principles, stakeholder value creation, and corporate social responsibility in shaping sustainable business models (23, 24). Customers increasingly evaluate organizations not only based on product quality and price but also according to ethical conduct, environmental responsibility, and social contribution. Consequently, firms that integrate sustainability principles into their co-creation strategies are more likely to gain customer trust, legitimacy, and long-term engagement. The findings also correspond with the work of (1), who argued that shared value creation requires balancing economic objectives with social and environmental responsibilities.

The conceptual relationships identified among the five dimensions suggest that value co-creation in online retailing operates as an integrated and dynamic system rather than a set of isolated organizational activities. Infrastructural and organizational dimensions create the enabling conditions for customer interaction and participation, which subsequently generate market-oriented and value-creating outcomes within a sustainability-oriented framework. This systemic perspective is supported by contemporary co-creation literature emphasizing the importance of interconnected actors, technologies, and institutional structures in shaping collaborative ecosystems (5, 6). The study therefore contributes to the theoretical development of value co-creation by presenting a holistic framework that integrates technological, behavioral, managerial, and sustainability-related dimensions within the context of online retailing.

Another important implication of the findings concerns the changing role of customers in digital retail ecosystems. The results indicate that customers increasingly act as active collaborators, innovators, and participants in organizational processes rather than merely consumers of products and services. This transformation reflects broader changes in digital economies, where interaction, personalization, and engagement have become central determinants of competitive advantage (28, 29). Online retail platforms now depend heavily on customer-generated content, participatory communication, and interactive feedback mechanisms to create value and maintain competitiveness. Consequently, firms must adopt collaborative management approaches that empower customers and encourage participation across different stages of the value creation process.

The study also demonstrated the importance of innovation and digital entrepreneurship in facilitating co-creation processes. Emerging digital platforms, startup ecosystems, and data-driven business models create new opportunities for organizations to collaborate with customers and other stakeholders in generating value (7, 27). Innovation-oriented firms are better equipped to design interactive systems that support personalization, customer participation, and collaborative learning. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing that digital transformation and innovation capabilities are critical determinants of organizational adaptability and competitiveness in online ecosystems (4, 20).

Overall, the findings of the present study indicate that successful value co-creation in online retailing requires an integrated balance among technological infrastructures, customer engagement mechanisms, organizational capabilities, market-oriented strategies, and sustainability principles. The study extends previous research by synthesizing fragmented findings from different domains into a unified conceptual framework specifically tailored to the online retail context. Through identifying the multidimensional structure of value co-creation, the study provides a clearer understanding of how organizations can develop collaborative ecosystems that generate both economic and social value in digital environments.

One limitation of the present study concerns its reliance on secondary research sources and previously published studies. Although the meta-synthesis approach enabled the integration of diverse findings, the study depended on the conceptual and methodological quality of prior research. In addition, differences in research contexts, methodologies, and industry settings across the reviewed studies may have influenced the consistency of the extracted concepts and dimensions. Another limitation is that the proposed conceptual model was developed theoretically and was not empirically tested within a specific online retail context. Consequently, the practical applicability and causal relationships among the identified dimensions require further empirical validation.

Future research could empirically test the proposed conceptual model using quantitative or mixed-method approaches in different online retail contexts. Researchers may also examine the moderating effects of cultural, technological, or demographic variables on value co-creation processes. Comparative studies across industries, countries, or digital platforms could provide deeper insight into how contextual differences influence the structure and outcomes of value co-creation. In addition, future studies may investigate the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and immersive virtual environments in reshaping collaborative value creation mechanisms in digital ecosystems.

From a practical perspective, online retail organizations should invest in advanced digital infrastructures, intelligent analytics systems, and interactive platforms that facilitate customer participation and engagement. Managers should also strengthen organizational learning, communication, and knowledge-sharing capabilities to support collaborative relationships with customers. Developing transparent, ethical, and sustainability-oriented business practices can further enhance customer trust and long-term loyalty. Finally, organizations should adopt customer-centered innovation strategies and encourage active consumer involvement in product development, service design, and digital communication processes in order to strengthen competitive advantage and sustainable value creation in online retail ecosystems.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adheried in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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