

# How Do Consumers Perceive the Benefits for Businesses Arising from Their Active Involvement in Business Activities and Projects?

Monika Eisenhardt

University of Economics in Katowice, Poland

[monika.eisenhardt@ue.katowice.pl](mailto:monika.eisenhardt@ue.katowice.pl)

**Abstract:** Consumer collaboration with businesses has become increasingly prevalent, with consumers being actively involved in various projects aimed at providing their ideas, opinions, and knowledge. These collaborations often leverage digital technologies and occur without formal contractual agreements. While the benefits for consumers are well-documented, the advantages for businesses remain underexplored. This paper presents a study on the benefits businesses gain from the active involvement of consumers in business activities and projects, focusing on consumer perceptions. Using a model of business benefits derived from a systematic literature review, the study categorizes these benefits into four main groups: product-related, reputational, economic and social, and technological and informational benefits. The research, based on 375 consumer surveys, reveals that consumers most strongly associate their involvement with reputational benefits, such as a better understanding of customer needs, more effective promotional activities, and improved customer relationships. Product-related benefits, such as product personalization and tailoring offerings to consumer needs, were also identified as highly valuable. Additionally, technological and informational benefits, including access to emerging market trends and enhanced digital engagement, were seen as critical for driving innovation within companies. However, economic and social benefits, such as risk minimization and the establishment of new distribution channels, were perceived as less impactful by consumers. These findings offer valuable insights for businesses looking to harness consumer knowledge effectively, emphasizing the importance of leveraging consumer input to enhance brand reputation, product offerings, and technological advancements, while also considering potential risks and limitations.

**Keywords:** Consumer collaboration, Consumer engagement, Benefits for businesses, Product-related benefits, Reputational benefits, Economic and social benefits, Technological and informational benefits

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## 1. Introduction and the Research Gap

The primary focus of this paper is the concept of collaboration between consumers and businesses. Consumers are actively engaged in business projects and tasks aimed at gathering their ideas and knowledge. This collaboration is characterized by continuous variability and dynamism, built upon the utilization of specific knowledge sources and new technologies. It takes on an informal nature, meaning it is not regulated by contracts or formal documents. This collaboration often stems from consumers' willingness to share knowledge and their interest in utilizing new technologies in this regard.

Among the projects that engage consumers are those aimed at the development of applications and IT. A notable example is Apple in Poland, where users were involved in evaluating and providing ideas for product and service development. Additionally, both in Poland and the UK, consumers were engaged in co-designing the OS 11 operating system. Another example is IBM, which engaged customers in Poland in providing ideas for the development of the company's webpage, while at the same time in the UK, customers contributed ideas for additional testing and product development. These projects were carried out between 2018 and 2019 (Ziemba et al., 2022). Importantly, consumer involvement in such activities benefits both businesses and their customers (Eisenhardt, 2020).

The study utilizes a model of business benefits, developed based on a systematic literature review (Eisenhardt, 2024). A thorough analysis of the literature indicates that these benefits can be divided into four categories: product-related, reputational, economic and social, and technological and informational benefits.

The aim of this paper is to explore and evaluate how consumers perceive the benefits that businesses gain from their active involvement in business activities and projects, with a particular focus on identifying which types of benefits – product-related, reputational, economic and social, and technological and informational – are considered by consumers to be the most valuable for companies. The study seeks to provide a consumer-driven perspective on value co-creation and its perceived impact on organizational outcomes. To achieve this aim, the paper is organized into the following sections. It begins with an introduction that outlines the context and importance of consumer engagement in business activities, followed by the literature review, which presents relevant theoretical frameworks for the benefits companies gain from customer involvement. The methodology section details the research approach. The results section presents the empirical findings, highlighting the benefits most recognized by consumers across the four categories considered. Finally, the conclusions

summarize the key contributions, propose practical recommendations for business practice, and suggest avenues for future research.

## **2. Literature Review on Benefits Arising from Consumers' Activities**

This literature review adopts a systematic approach to identify, analyze, and synthesize scholarly research on the benefits of consumer engagement and knowledge sharing for businesses. In the context of consumer collaboration with companies, this approach is particularly relevant for understanding the advantages businesses gain from involving consumers. By actively engaging consumers in various business activities and related projects, companies can obtain valuable insights and strengthen their connection with customers, leading to a wide range of potential benefits (Braun et al., 2016; Hernández-Serrano et al., 2017). These benefits can be categorized into four main groups.

The first category includes product-related benefits, which refer to the fact that engaging consumers in the development process enables companies to create more personalized products or services that are tailored to consumer needs (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Costa and do Vale, 2018; Dewalska-Opitek and Hofman-Kohlmeyer, 2021; Gligor and Bozkurt, 2021; Scarlett et al., 2022; Shi et al., 2023). Additionally, this collaboration can contribute to extending the product life cycle, ensuring that the product remains relevant over time (Katona, 2015). By co-creating products or values, businesses can align their offerings more closely with customer preferences, improving overall satisfaction (Abaidi, Cattel, and Abaidi, 2022). Furthermore, this involvement enables businesses to stay at the cutting edge of service modernity by testing and improving services through direct feedback from consumers (Chang and Hsu, 2022; He et al., 2022). This helps companies minimise last-minute changes and adapt quickly to market demands.

The second group are reputational benefits. The direct involvement of consumers in business activities contributes to more effective promotional and advertising strategies, as companies gain insights into consumer preferences and needs (Burnham et al., 2021; Klimontowicz, 2019). Understanding these needs more deeply leads to more targeted campaigns and better customer relationships (Kohli et al., 2021; Kumar and Kaushik, 2022; Kumar and Kumar, 2020; Sarkar and Banerjee, 2021; Voorhees et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). It also helps companies distinguish themselves from competitors by offering unique products and services. By building long-lasting relationships and improving customer retention, businesses can enhance brand loyalty and reputation (Abou-Shouk and Soliman, 2021; Bies et al., 2021; Haq et al., 2025; Jayasingh, 2019). Ahmed et al. (2022) and van Heerden and Wiese (2021) describe consumer engagement as a process through which customers develop connections with brands that extend beyond mere purchase transactions. In addition, involving consumers strengthens the alignment of customer interests with those of the company, resulting in a positive impact on the company's overall image (Boardman et al., 2016; Dessart et al., 2015; Lowe and Johnson, 2017). These interactions can also stimulate creative thinking within the business, leading to innovative solutions that further strengthen the company's position in the market (Bui et al., 2022; Narang and Tiwari, 2022). Recent research also shows that in immersive digital environments such as the Metaverse, Generation Z consumers actively participate in brand-related activities and value co-creation, driven by key psychological factors that enhance business–consumer engagement (Dewalska-Opitek and Szejniuk, 2024; Park and Chung, 2023).

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The third group identified are economic and social benefits (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Chi et al., 2022; Hook and Kulczynski, 2021; Lowe and Johnson, 2017; Nadeem et al., 2023; Odoom et al., 2017; Rondell et al., 2016; Sarkar and Banerjee, 2021). One of the primary economic advantages of involving consumers is the potential for increased profits, as consumers are often willing to pay premium prices for products and services that meet their specific needs (Grassi, 2020; Lee, 2022). This active involvement also helps minimise risks, as businesses can test products and services before full-scale release, ensuring that they meet customer expectations (De Bruyne and Verleye, 2023.; Stocchi et al., 2018). Furthermore, consumers can act as business partners, helping to establish new distribution channels (Khare et al., 2022). By building a community around the company and aligning with sustainable development goals and corporate social responsibility (CSR), businesses can cultivate a loyal and engaged customer base that supports long-term success (Lee, Kim, Kim, 2021; Lin, Nugraha, and Hsu, 2025; Park and Kim, 2022; Say et al., 2021; Wan et al., 2022).

Technological and informational benefits are no less important (Bui et al., 2022; Labrecque et al., 2022; McLean et al., 2021; Narang and Tiwari, 2022; Stancu et al., 2022; Stocchi et al., 2018). Direct feedback from consumers also facilitates the collection of valuable insights on emerging market trends, allowing businesses to adapt more quickly to technological advancements (Costa and do Vale, 2018; Davis et al., 2019; Demmers et al., 2020; Gligor and Bozkurt, 2021; Lee et al., 2018; He et al., 2022; Jimenez et al., 2019; Rohden, Tassinari, and Netto, 2023; Zor et al., 2022). Additionally, engaging consumers enables continuous improvement in IT infrastructure (e.g., websites, apps, and other digital platforms), which is critical for businesses that want to stay competitive. Investing in modern IT systems and leveraging diverse sources of information from consumers also helps businesses maintain a technological edge, improving operational efficiency and decision-making.

By leveraging these four categories of benefits, businesses can enhance their innovation capabilities, build stronger relationships with their customers, and ultimately improve their market position. This research will investigate how these benefits manifest in the context of consumer-business collaboration and how companies can maximise the value of consumer engagement.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Questions and Theoretical Framework

The focus of the current study is to explore the benefits for businesses associated with consumers' knowledge, based on consumers' perspectives. In other words, it aims to understand how consumers perceive the advantages that companies may gain through their active involvement in business activities and projects. This includes examining consumers' views on how businesses can leverage their knowledge to enhance product development, marketing strategies, customer service, and overall business performance. By exploring these aspects, the study seeks to provide valuable insights for companies looking to effectively harness the power of consumer knowledge.

In this context, the study attempts to answer the following research question

**RQ:** How do consumers perceive the benefits that businesses gain from their active involvement in business activities and projects, and which categories of benefits do they consider the most valuable?

To answer the main question, four sub-questions were developed:

- Which product-related benefits are perceived by consumers as the most valuable for businesses?
- To what extent do consumers recognize reputational benefits for businesses resulting from their active involvement?
- How do consumers evaluate the economic and social benefits of their engagement for businesses?
- What is the perceived value of technological and informational benefits for businesses?

Based on the conducted systematic literature review (SLR), a comprehensive framework of benefits for enterprises resulting from active consumer engagement in business activities and projects has been proposed (a reference will be provided after the review process). This study focuses exclusively on the benefits for enterprises arising from consumer engagement, as presented in Table 1. The variables have been grouped into four categories of benefits: product-related, reputational, economic and social, and informational and technological.

**Table 1: Theoretical framework for further studies**

Benefits to companies	Variables
Product-related benefits	Personalisation of products/services according to customer needs Product life extension Co-creation of products/values Higher level of service modernity Tailoring the offer to customer needs Product and service testing by customers Brand loyalty Faster adoption of emerging market trends Reduction of last-minute changes

Benefits to companies	Variables
Reputational benefits	More effective promotional and advertising activities Better understanding of customer needs Offering products and services that stand out from the competition Building long-lasting relationships with customers Improved customer retention rates Loyalty to the company and brand Aligning customer interests with the company's goals Enhanced company image and reputation Increased out-of-the-box thinking within the company Participation of well-known individuals in promotional campaigns Trend forecasting Improved customer service quality
Economic and social benefits	Financial benefits, e.g., increased company profits Customers' willingness to pay a higher (premium) price Risk minimization New product distribution channels Gaining customers as business partners Building a community around the company/brand Improving business processes within the company Actions supporting sustainable development and corporate social responsibility
Technological and informational benefits	Direct posts and comments from customers Developing social media profiles (fan pages) Developing company mobile applications Access to emerging market trends Continuous improvement in IT areas (e.g., website, blog) Investing in modern IT systems Diversity of information sources

Source: own elaboration.

### 3.2 Research Procedure

To answer the research questions, a research instrument was developed. The instrument utilized the groups of benefits and associated variables, as presented in Table 1. For each item listed in the sections, respondents were asked to select one of seven responses on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (7) definitely yes—indicating that the benefit is very important to companies—to (1) definitely not—indicating that the benefit is not important to companies.

Data collection is an ongoing process, starting in December 2024 in Poland. The primary assumption for the sample was that consumers are capable of sharing opinions on company-related issues. Furthermore, Gen Z was chosen as the target group, as they are more willing to share knowledge with businesses and engage in activities that provide benefits for companies. Additionally, they have greater experience in using various applications. The questionnaire was anonymous, and participation was voluntary. Google Forms were used for the survey. After screening the responses, 375 valid responses were collected by March 2025 [research-in-progress] and used for analysis. The demographics of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Demographics of the research sample**

	Total number	Total in [%]
<b>Gender</b>		
<b>Females</b>	238	63.5

	Total number	Total in [%]
<b>Males</b>	137	36.5
<b>Not specified</b>	0	
<b>Age</b>		
<b>18 – 27 (Z Gen.)</b>	350	93.3
<b>Older than Z</b>	25	6.7
<b>Past experience related to collaboration with companies</b>		
<b>Positive experience</b>	214	57.1
<b>No-opinion</b>	108	28.8
<b>Negative experience</b>	53	14.1

Source: Own elaboration. Reference for Age: (Beresford, 2025)

The data were stored in Microsoft Excel. Since the research is still ongoing, it was decided to limit the analysis to basic methods and statistics, such as descriptive statistics and frequency analyses.

#### 4. Results on Benefits for Companies Arising from Consumers’ Activities

To answer the main research question: How do consumers perceive the benefits that businesses gain from their active involvement in business activities and projects, and which categories of benefits do they consider the most valuable? descriptive statistics were used. The results for the key benefits are presented in Table 3. For each group of benefits, we have highlighted in bold the three benefits with the highest mean values.

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics of perceived benefits of consumer engagement in business activities.**

Variables	Average	Median	Mode	Variables	Average	Median	Mode
<b>P1.</b>	5.82	6	6	<b>R1.</b>	5.90	6	7
<b>P2.</b>	4.98	5	5	<b>R2.</b>	6.13	6	7
<b>P3.</b>	5.37	6	6	<b>R3.</b>	5.40	6	6
<b>P4.</b>	5.47	6	6	<b>R4.</b>	5.83	6	7
<b>P5.</b>	6.17	6	7	<b>R5.</b>	5.36	5	6
<b>P6.</b>	5.51	6	6	<b>R6.</b>	5.65	6	6
<b>P7.</b>	5.53	6	6	<b>R7.</b>	5.38	6	6
<b>P8.</b>	5.67	6	6	<b>R8.</b>	5.71	6	6
<b>P9.</b>	4.57	5	4	<b>R9.</b>	5.27	6	6
				<b>R10.</b>	5.30	6	6
				<b>R11.</b>	5.39	6	6
				<b>R12.</b>	5.88	6	7
<b>E1.</b>	5.55	6	5	<b>T1.</b>	5.77	6	7
<b>E2.</b>	5.22	5	5	<b>T2.</b>	5.79	6	6
<b>E3.</b>	4.85	5	5	<b>T3.</b>	5.61	6	6
<b>E4.</b>	5.26	5	6	<b>T4.</b>	5.72	6	6
<b>E5.</b>	4.96	5	6	<b>T5.</b>	5.56	6	6
<b>E6.</b>	5.80	6	6	<b>T6.</b>	5.30	6	6
<b>E7.</b>	5.18	5	5	<b>T7.</b>	5.51	6	6
<b>E8.</b>	4.91	5	5				

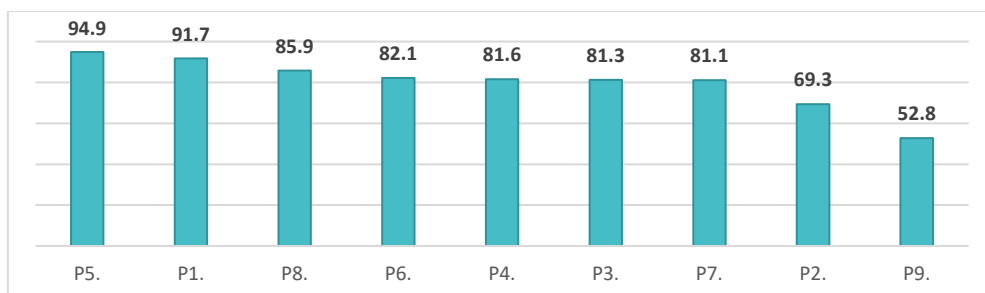
The descriptive statistics showed in Table 3 reflect how respondents evaluated various benefits for companies arising from consumer engagement in business processes and projects. In the product-related benefits, the highest-rated items were ‘Tailoring the offer to customer needs’ (P5) with an average score of 6.17, and

‘Personalisation of products/services according to customer needs’ (P1 – 5.82) indicating that personalization is considered a key value. On the other hand, reduction of last-minute changes (P9 – 4.57) received the lowest mean score, suggesting this benefit is less strongly perceived by participants.

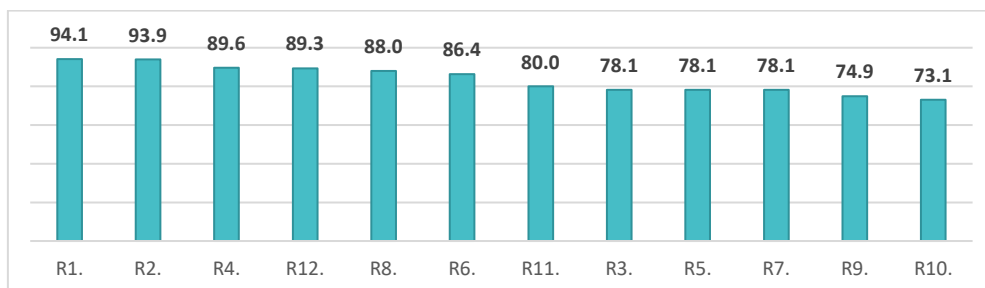
In the reputational category, the leading benefit was ‘Better understanding of customer needs’ (R2 – 6.13), closely followed by effective promotional activities (R1 – 5.90) and improved service quality (R12 – 5.88). These results indicate that customer engagement significantly supports communication and relationship-building. The consistent medians and modes (mostly 6 and 7) show high consensus among respondents.

The economic and social benefits show a more moderate perception overall. While building a community around the brand (E6 – 5.80) and financial benefits (E1 – 5.55) are rated fairly high, benefits like risk minimization (E3 – 4.85) and CSR activities (E8 – 4.91) scored lower. In the technological and informational dimension, results were consistently high, with social media engagement (T2 – 5.79) and direct customer feedback (T1 – 5.77) leading the category, reflecting the strong impact of digital interaction on business value. Overall, the findings highlight that customer engagement is most strongly appreciated in areas of personalization, communication, and digital feedback, while its role in operational efficiency or sustainability is perceived as less prominent.

The results presented in Table 3 highlight the varying perceptions of evaluated benefits for companies arising from consumer engagement in business processes and projects across four benefits categories. Therefore, it was decided to conduct a detailed analysis to provide a comprehensive overview. Respondents evaluated each item using a 7-point Likert scale, with scores of 5 to 7 indicating a positive assessment of the benefit’s relevance to companies. The analysis focuses on the frequency of these positive responses, and the results are presented using percentage values to reflect the proportion of respondents who positively evaluated each benefit. The findings are shown in two separate figures: Figure 1, which illustrates the perceived importance of product-related and reputational benefits, and Figure 2, which covers the perceived importance of economic and social as well as technological and informational benefits.



a) Product-related benefits

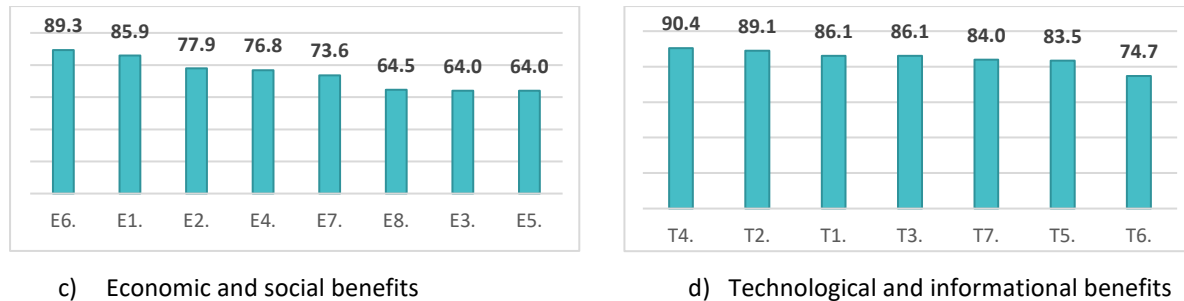


b) Reputational benefits

**Figure 1: Perceived Importance of Product-Related and Reputational Benefits of Consumer Engagement**

Figure 1 presents consumer perspectives on the importance of product-related and reputational benefits resulting from their engagement in business processes and projects. The results, expressed as percentages of respondents who rated each item positively (scores 5–7 on a 7-point Likert scale), reveal that product personalization (P1 – 91.7%) and tailoring the offer to customer needs (P5 – 94.9%) are seen as the most valuable contributions consumers make to businesses. Also notable are faster adoption of emerging market trends (P8 – 85.9%) and product and service testing by customers (P6 – 82.1%), highlighting the perceived role of consumers in supporting innovation and agility. At the lower end, product life extension (P2 – 69.3%) and reduction of last-minute changes (P9 – 52.8%) received comparatively modest support, suggesting these operational efficiency aspects are less visible or appreciated by consumers.

Reputational benefits were consistently rated very highly. Respondents strongly agreed that better understanding of customer needs (R2 – 93.9%) and more effective promotional and advertising activities (R1 – 94.1%) are key outcomes of consumer engagement. These are followed closely by building long-term customer relationships (R4 – 89.6%) and improved customer service quality (R12 – 89.3%), indicating that consumers recognize their role in shaping company reputation, brand loyalty, and communication effectiveness. These results underscore the consumer belief that their participation helps companies align more closely with market expectations and customer priorities.



**Figure 2: Perceived Importance of Economic, Social, Technological, and Informational Benefits of Consumer Engagement**

Figure 2 illustrates the perceived value of economic, social, technological, and informational benefits arising from consumer engagement. Among economic and social benefits, the most appreciated was building a community around the company or brand (E6 – 89.3%), followed by financial benefits (E1 – 85.9%). These responses suggest that consumers recognize their influence on brand growth and financial outcomes. However, items such as risk minimization (E3 – 64.0%) and gaining customers as business partners (E5 – 64.0%) were less positively evaluated, indicating a lower perceived relevance of consumer engagement in strategic and structural business functions.

In contrast, technological and informational benefits were broadly recognized. Access to emerging market trends (T4 – 90.4%) and developing social media profiles (fan pages) (T2 – 89.1%) received particularly strong support, suggesting that consumers value their interactive role in shaping digital presence and market insight. Additionally, direct posts and comments from customers (T1 – 86.1%) and developing mobile applications (T3 – 86.1%) reflect the importance of ongoing digital feedback loops. Even the lowest-rated item in this category, investing in modern IT systems (T6 – 74.7%), still received a majority of positive responses, emphasizing a general awareness of the importance of digital infrastructure.

Taken together, the results in Figure 2 demonstrate that while technological and informational benefits are widely recognized and strongly supported by consumers, economic and social benefits are viewed as somewhat less direct or immediate outcomes of their engagement.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into how consumers perceive the benefits that companies can gain through active customer involvement in business activities and projects. Based on both descriptive statistics and frequency analysis, the results highlight that consumers most strongly associate their engagement with reputational benefits, product improvements, and technological advancements for companies.

From the consumer perspective, reputational benefits were rated highest, with particularly strong agreement on statements related to better understanding of customer needs, more effective advertising, and building long-term relationships. This suggests that consumers are not only aware of the impact their participation can have on brand perception, but also believe that their voice helps businesses align more closely with market expectations. The high ratings reflect the perception that engagement builds trust, enhances credibility, and strengthens brand identity. Product-related benefits were also perceived as significant. Consumers identified tailoring the offer to customer needs and personalisation of products/services as core areas where their involvement adds value for companies. These findings indicate that consumers view themselves as co-creators of value and recognize their role in shaping business offerings to be more relevant and responsive.

The study also reveals that consumers see clear technological and informational advantages for businesses, particularly in terms of accessing market trends, gathering direct feedback, and expanding digital presence through social media. These results suggest that consumers acknowledge their digital interactions as an

important asset for firms in making informed, data-driven decisions and enhancing innovation. Conversely, economic and social benefits were rated slightly lower, though still positive. Consumers appeared less convinced about the immediate financial returns or risk mitigation effects of their involvement. Elements such as risk minimization, CSR support, and gaining customers as business partners were among the least strongly associated with their engagement. This may indicate that while consumers see their input as shaping communication, innovation, and brand strength, they may not fully link their participation to more abstract or indirect organizational outcomes.

To sum up, consumers perceive their engagement as highly valuable for companies – particularly in building reputation, improving products, and enhancing innovation through digital channels. These insights can guide businesses in designing strategies that foster meaningful customer participation and communicate its mutual value. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of consumer-driven value creation and highlights the areas where companies can benefit most from active consumer involvement, as seen from the consumers' own point of view.

## 6. Limitations

While this study focused on benefits, future research could explore perceived barriers, limitations, or risks of consumer involvement in business processes. What is more, future research could compare the perceptions of consumers with those of other stakeholders, such as managers, employees, or investors, to identify alignment or divergence in the perceived value of consumer engagement. This would help determine whether businesses fully understand the areas of value consumers believe they contribute to.

**Ethics declaration:** The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the present study. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the survey.

**AI declaration:** A Generative AI tool was employed to assist in the language revision process for this study. The tool was utilized to improve the clarity, coherence, and overall quality of the text, ensuring that the language used throughout the document is free from grammatical errors.

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