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Brand value co-creation as the structure of power

Tadas Limba
E-mail: tlimba@mruni.eu
ORCID: 0000-0003-2330-8684
Affiliation: Faculty of Public Governance and Business, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania
ROR: https://ror.org/04g0z3h23

Giedrius Romeika
E-mail: giedrius.romeika@knf.vu.lt
ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0001-9852-7107
Affiliation: Kaunas Faculty, Vilnius University, Kaunas, Lithuania
ROR: https://ror.org/05xg1k929

Aurimas Šidlauskas
E-mail: aurimas868@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-4580-2173
Affiliation: Faculty of Public Governance and Business, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania
ROR: https://ror.org/04g0z3h23

Eglė Juozėnaitė
E-mail: egjuozenaite@stud.mruni.eu
ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0002-4166-5709
Affiliation: Faculty of Public Governance and Business, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania
ROR: https://ror.org/04g0z3h23

Annotation. Brand value co-creation is one of the most influential concepts in modern marketing. The involvement of consumers in a range of active activities, including development, feedback, advocacy, and support, can co-create brand value. Brands engage consumers in brand value co-creation by satisfying their needs. The benefits of brand value co-creation for companies include increased sales, market share, brand awareness, brand satisfaction, and consumer loyalty. The present article analyses brand value co-creation through Pierre Bourdieu"s approach to the structures of power. The investigative problem of this study is expressed through the following research question: *What power structures do brands use in the brand value co-creation?* The main objective of this paper is to analyse brand value co-creation through Pierre Bourdieu"s approach to the structures of power. The methods employed include scientific literature review, systematic and comparative analyses, semi-structured interviews, and generalization. The results of the study reveal that brand value co-creation functions as a power structure. This power manifests through the satisfaction of consumer desires and needs. In the case of the BMW brand, the brand allows consumers to express and create their identity, improve their image, belong to a community, and feel part of it. The BMW brand creates an attractive image that influences consumers" thinking and behaviour in the direction desired by the brand, and consumers do not directly experience the effects of this power structure, as it exists in a way that is not directly understood. The study conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with members of the BMW brand community. It is revealed that most informants associated the brand with exclusivity, power, and high status. By internalising brand values and conforming to community norms, consumers may unconsciously recreate and reinforce brand power structures. This may involve symbolic violence, as the pressure to conform to brand-related standards may reinforce social inequality. Thus, brand value co-creation may function not only as a collaborative process but also as a mechanism that recreates power structures.

Keywords: brand value, co-creation, power structure.

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Introduction

Brand value co-creation is one of the most influential concepts in modern marketing. Consumer involvement in a range of active activities, including development, feedback, advocacy, and support, can collectively create consumer perceptions of brand equity. Value co-creation for consumers may include quality, emotional, price, and social value dimensions (France *et al.*, 2020). It also involves multiple stakeholders integrating their resources to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes (Ramaswamy, Ozcan, 2018). Co-creation is a fundamental activity for generating value for both organisations and consumers (Gómez-Suárez *et al.*, 2017). A brand can be created based on associations of perception, symbolic meaning, relationships, and the social impact of a product, service, idea, place, organisation, person, or community, and/or the financial assets and liabilities of the brand (Parris, Guzmán, 2023). Value co-creation remains a central issue in the era of marketing 4.0 (Rubio *et al.*, 2020).

Brand value co-creation contributes to firms either directly (e.g., buying behaviour) or indirectly (e.g., referring brand to others, influencing others to use the brand) (Hussain *et al.*, 2021). A well-known brand name can generate more money than those with a less well-known name. Strong brands enhance business performance primarily through their influence on three key stakeholder groups: customers, employees, and investors. They influence customer choice and create loyalty; attract, retain, and motivate talent; and lower the cost of financing for the companies (Faria, 2025). Consumer engagement behaviour is the key premise for the realisation of value co-creation, and it has received increasing attention both academically and practically (Wu *et al.*, 2024). Consumer engagement is crucial in the process of value co-creation because it calls for active consumer participation in interactive, value-generating co-creation processes (Piligrimienė *et al.*, 2015).

Consumers and marketing institutions interact within the constraints of power relations (Heath & Heath, 2016). Marketing is a field that has the power to shape ideas, change behaviours, and create future visions for what the world could be (Akama, 2017). Consumers also have power over and impact on businesses (Moraes *et al.*, 2011). Individuals performing the role of consumers may seek to influence and address societal concerns, but market-based power relations influence consumer sovereignty (Moraes *et al.*, 2011). This article follows Pierre Bourdieu"s approach to the structures of power in the field. Bourdieu (1986) focuses on the distribution of power in society and how individuals navigate the changing landscape of power dynamics by negotiating their status (symbolic power) through economic, cultural, and social resources. Thus, this article analyses brand value co-creation through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu"s notions of capital, the field, *habitus*, and symbolic violence.

The investigative problem of this study is expressed through the following question: *What power structures do brands use in the brand value co-creation?*

The main **objective** of this paper is to analyse brand value co-creation through Pierre Bourdieu"s approach to the structures of power.

Research object is brand value co-creation as the structure of power.

The objectives are as follows: (1) to review the concept of brand value co-creation; (2) to analyse the brand value co-creation through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu"s approach to the structures of power; and (3) to identify the power structures the BMW brand uses in the brand value co-creation.

Methods employed in the article include scientific literature review, systematic and comparative analyses, semi-structured interviews, and generalization.

This article expands the analysis of brand value co-creation by shifting it from a predominantly managerial and marketing-oriented perspective to a critical sociological framework grounded in the theory of Pierre Bourdieu. Existing literature has largely conceptualised brand value co-creation as a mutually beneficial and inherently positive process in which consumers and organisations collaboratively generate value, thereby satisfying the needs of all participating actors (Merz *et al*., 2009; Ramaswamy, Ozcan, 2018; Gómez-Suárez *et al*.; Guzmán, 2023; Faria, 2025). However, such approaches insufficiently account for the power relations embedded within this process. There remains a notable gap in research that examines brand value co-creation as a structure of power characterised by unequal distributions of capital, asymmetrical power positions, and the operation of symbolic domination. This article addresses this particular gap by critically analysing consumer participation in brand value co-creation processes. Specifically, it demonstrates how consumer engagement in brand value co-creation may contribute to the reproduction of existing hierarchies. Within this framework, brand value co-creation can be understood as a subtle form of symbolic violence, whereby consumers, through their voluntary participation, inadvertently reinforce brand dominance.

Therefore, the relevance of this study extends beyond academic discourse. By critically interrogating the assumptions underpinning brand value co-creation, the present article also offers practical insights into the ethical implications of brand strategies that rely on consumer participation, thereby contributing to a more reflexive and socially responsible approach to brand management.

1. Literature Review

1.1 The Concept of Brand Value Co-Creation

Brand is „a name, symbol, design, or mark that enhances the value of a product beyond its functional purpose“ where the added value of these enhancements to the basic product are often broadly termed „brand equity“ (Farquar, 1989). Brand value is viewed as a significant intangible corporate asset (Yeung, Ramasamy, 2008). In business relations, value is created and evaluated based on the perspectives of the customer, the supplier, and the customer-supplier relationship, thanks to the combination of resources and reciprocal processes (Burki *et al.*, 2022). Value is realised collaboratively during the interaction (Vargo, Lusch, 2004).

Value co-creation, introduced by Prahalad and Ramaswamy in 2004, is a theoretical framework emphasising collaborative value creation between businesses, customers, and stakeholders. It marks a shift from competitive to collaborative strategies, particularly on platforms. The concept focuses on interaction and collaboration in the value creation process, involving dialogue, acquisition channels (access), risk mitigation, and transparency (Zhang *et al*., 2021). Brand value co-creation theory posits that companies can collaborate with customers to co-create value for both parties. By providing personalised service and solutions, companies can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to improved brand value (Prahalad, Ramaswamy, 2004). The idea of value co-creation is rooted in the resource-based view, which posits that value is co-created through active customer engagement (Harmeling *et al.*, 2017). Companies endeavour to co-create value with customers by leveraging numerous resources, such as „customers“ knowledge, persuasion capital/skills, creativity, and network-assets/connectedness“, which customers have invested in specific brands and communities (Merz *et al.*, 2018).

Therefore, the goal of brand value co-creation is to strive for maximum consumer engagement and to achieve brand sustainability through resource integration where the quality of engagement is essential (Cheung, To, 2021). Keller (2020) suggests that the benefits consumers enjoy from a brand are monetary, functional, and symbolic. Consumers are active creators of brand value; they establish affective relationships with brands, which gives consumers the opportunity to express themselves, to define and improve themselves, and to broaden their self-perception. The co-creation of brand value can be manifested through consumers" engagement behaviour in brand activities (Gong, 2017). Brand value co-creation is shaped by complex social forces, which require an understanding of the role of social structures and systems (Simmons, Durkin, 2023). Social forces operate through social media and are reproduced in what can be termed techno-social systems (Fuchs, 2021).

Brand consists not only of its tangible, functional value, but also of its intangible assets: consumer perceptions, associations, awareness, and loyalty. Brand value co-creation is a process that enables all parties involved to create brand value. This process is realised through the exchange of resources, which results in a certain hierarchical structure.

1.2 Capital

The classical concepts of symbolic and cultural capital were formulated by Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002). Bourdieu seeks to investigate one or another phenomenon through the relations between different actors, institutions, or even fields, and uses three key concepts: field, capital, and *habitus*, or the „conceptual triad" (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 2003). Bourdieu was also concerned with the nature, causes, and consequences of power, privilege, prestige, and inequality (Elias, 1991). In Bourdieu"s approach, the main types of capital are economic (monetary or property ownership), cultural (education, knowledge), and social (habits of speech and behaviour).

Any unequal distribution of goods or services tends to be perceived as a symbolic system, i.e., as a system of distinctive marks: distributions, such as that of automobiles, places of residence, sports, parlour games, and so on, are, for common perception, symbolic systems within which every practice (or non-practice) receives a value. The sum of these socially pertinent distributions sketches the system of lifestyles, the system of differential distances engendered by taste and apprehended by it as signs of good or bad taste and, by the same token, as titles of nobility capable of bringing a profit of distinction all the greater when their relative scarcity is higher or as a mark of infamy (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 2013). As a fundamental operation of social alchemy, the transformation of any species of capital into symbolic capital, as legitimate possession founded upon the nature of its possessor, always presupposes a form of labour, a visible expenditure of time, money, and energy, a *redistribution* that is necessary to ensure the recognition of the distribution, in the form of the recognition granted by the one who receives to the one who, being better situated in the distribution, is in a position to give, a recognition of indebtedness which is also an acknowledgement of value (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 2013).

In brand management, brands are understood not only as functional, but also as symbolic artifacts full of meanings, values, and ideas that provide psychological satisfaction to the consumer (Romanello *et al.*, 2020). Today"s consumers are increasingly willing to pay for brands that create not only functional value but also provide meaning or symbolic value (Molina, Morán, 2013). Brands are powerful forces shaping the identity politics of our age. Our tastes in brands are regarded as social tools and indicators that work alongside other symbols, objects, and activities as weapons and reflections of our identities and aspirations. In more circumspect accounts, they represent a forest of logos, slogans, and messages, a nebula of information that carpet our everyday lives and landscapes (Power & Hauge, 2008). Symbolic

value also reflects how society perceives the social status of the consumer. A brand"s symbolic reputation is the set of images that consumers perceive to be related to their self-concept (Saputra *et al.*, 2021).

Therefore, capital is divided into economic, cultural, social, and symbolic forms. The redistribution of these forms of capital is essential for maintaining and legitimising the structure of social relations. Within the field of brand management, symbolic capital plays a crucial role in establishing a brand"s distinctive position in the marketplace by endowing it with symbolic attributes that resonate with consumers.

1.3 The Field of Power

Bourdieu defines the field as a space which various agents (institutions, individuals, and groups) occupy and where they compete for certain positions (Bourdieu, 1985). Agents" relationships in the social field depend on their resources, as their general quantity and types matter. Bourdieu calls these resources capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The field has its own norms, rules of entry or values, e.g., aesthetic values are the dominant theme in the field of cultural production, but each field belongs to a wider context of fields, interacting with their environments; the actors in the field simultaneously operate in other fields (Webb *et al.*, 2002). Bourdieu describes the field as „a network or arrangement of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 2003).

The field functions as a kind of „game" with its own rules, which are known to all the actors or „players" in the field; just as the relative value of the cards varies in every game, the hierarchy of the different types of capital differs from one field to another (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 2003). Capital, i.e., a form of power, ensures that the highest amount of capital corresponding to the field guarantees a dominant position. Economic capital is often seen as the most efficient form of capital due to its ease of transformation into other types of capital (Maanen, 2009). The actor who has acquired high symbolic capital enjoys high prestige and status in the field. The status is acquired by one or another type of capital that is dominant in the field and is considered to be the most important; one of these types of capital is transformed into symbolic capital. Thus, the position of each actor in a field depends on the amount of accumulated capital that is significant in that field (Grenfell, Hardy, 2003).

Bourdieu believes that social reality, and therefore the basis of heterogeneity and inequality, consists of relations (Wacquant, 2013). Class, as a modality of social grouping and as a source of consciousness and behaviour, emerges in the endless competition in which participants engage in different spheres of life to acquire, control, and contest different kinds of power or „capital". This competition, anchored in its place in social space, is defined by the three-dimensional coordinates of the volume, composition, and trajectory of capital (Wacquant, 2013). Brands, which have accumulated a lot of capital (economic, social, and symbolic) can influence others and persuade them of the truth of the messages they convey (Kapoor *et al.*, 2022).

Bourdieu"s notion of the field of power describes the space in which individuals, institutions, and groups occupy certain positions and compete. The position of the competitors in the field depends on their power or the possession of a larger amount of capital that is recognised in the field.

1.4 Habitus

Another important concept introduced by Bourdieu is *habitus*. According to the sociologist, social structure, i.e., fields with all their internal complexities, creates *habitus* (Murphy, Costa, 2015). This concept defines a system of tendencies to react to reality derived from the agent"s background, education, and the material conditions of the social class to which the agent belongs. *Habitus* is legitimate in the field,

and it is the natural historical patterns of things (Bourdieu, 2013). Bourdieu"s notion of *habitus* refers to the objective and subjective conditioning of members of certain social groups that supports the reproduction of power relations (Sharlamanov *et al.*, 2024).

An individual"s *habitus* can be expressed in a variety of ways, such as „standing, speaking, walking, feeling and thinking" (Bourdieu, 1990). The concept of *habitus* also occupies an important place in Bourdieu"s broader theory, which explains how an individual"s behaviour can reproduce class structure (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992). People with similar experiences and backgrounds may have similar attitudes and consumption practices; Bourdieu recognises that groups of people, such as social classes, have collective *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1984/2010).

Habitus can contribute to understanding value co-creation by functioning as a prism of consumer value through which market offerings, products, services, and brands are perceived and evaluated. First, consumers perceive and experience the practices of the value co-creation through their *habitus* – their consumer value prism. Second, perception, evaluation, and valuation are based on the consumer"s value prism, as practices are experienced based on the held attitudes, interests, and attitudes that constitute *habitus* (Ellway, Dean, 2020). Bourdieu"s concept of *habitus* describes a set of tastes and inclinations that operate according to class homology, such as the working-class"s preference for utility or the bourgeoisie"s orientation towards luxury. The *habitus* of high cultural capital includes environmental awareness and principles of sustainability, which are referred to as ethical or „conscious consumption". Ethical consumers are mainly consumers of high cultural capital. The repertoire of high cultural capital consumers prefers local, material, and physical things while maintaining a strategy of exclusivity (Carfagna *et al.*, 2014).

Bourdieu"s concept of *habitus* encompasses not only the rational but also the unconscious dimension of behaviour. *Habitus* is acquired through experience and socialisation. It includes perception, thinking, emotions, motives, imagination, and needs. It also depends on social position and environment and is linked to social thinking and power aspirations. In the context of value co-creation, *habitus* can act as a prism of consumer value, allowing us to see the tastes and inclinations of different groups.

1.5 Symbolic Violence

Bourdieu argues that in earlier centuries, people refused to recognise indirect power even where it was staring them in the face, without turning power into „a circle whose center is everywhere and nowhere" (Bourdieu, 1991). In constructing a theory of symbolic power, Bourdieu „attempts to theorize the processes by which, in all societies, order and social harmony are created through indirect, cultural mechanisms rather than through direct, coercive social control" (Jenkins, 1992). Symbolic violence is incomprehensible and invisible to its victims. It does not need to be legitimised or proven, because it only legitimises itself, and with it the practices, situations, or even people that are „permissible", in this order. The strength of culture is that actors do not have to consciously learn to live in it, for they are born in culture and mediated within structures (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 2003).

According to Bourdieu, there are objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of the actors, which can guide and limit their practices or representations (Bourdieu, 1989). It is also through the satisfaction of needs that brands draw consumers into the brand value co-creation. Brand value co-creation fosters a close, productive, and mutually beneficial relationship between the company and consumers. Value co-creation is understood as a discourse that expresses contemporary corporate power,

which is a set of organisational strategies and discursive procedures that aim to transform the social relations of production (Zwick *et al*., 2008).

Symbolic violence is used to promote products and influence consumer behaviour. It involves the strategy of creating emotional tension in consumers through the contradictions of images, stereotypes, or social norms (Erturk, 2024).

Recognition. Symbolic violence, one of the strategies brands use to engage consumers in the brand value co-creation, increases consumers“ belief that the brand listens to, takes an interest in, and acts on their suggestions and opinions. In the simplest terms, this can mean that consumers, believing that their ideas and thoughts will be taken into account and valued, devote their time, effort, and resources to improve, for instance, the Mozilla Firefox web browser or work with the online community to develop brand extensions for Activia yogurt brand (Ind, Iglesias, 2016). Companies that involve consumers in unpaid work for brands try to foster consumers“ emotional attachment to the voluntary programme and to advocate the moral value of the collective task. Companies that want to involve consumers in unpaid brand value co-creation organise volunteer programmes in a way that makes consumers proud to participate and design programmes to provide an opportunity to measure consumers“ individual contributions (Zwick *et al*., 2008). For example, during their free time, on weekends or after working hours, consumers develop ideas for the IKEA brand and improve furniture designs. The brand promises that consumers will gain global fame and recognition by working with a strong brand like IKEA (Livescault, 2024).

Identity. Brands offer consumers the opportunity to reinforce their social identity by consuming specific brand products or by discussing the brand and its products online (McGowan *et al*., 2017). Consumer identification is a relational factor that can help brands improve brand value co-creation practices and compete with competitors (Itani, 2020). Consumers express their identity through their consumption choices, present their lifestyle and tastes, and differentiate themselves from others (Duan, Dholakia, 2017). The association of the brand with the identity of the consumer can be manifested in brand love. For example, some consumers love the MacBook because it represents a certain lifestyle, offering significant advantages in terms of instrumental value (Chen *et al*., 2022). The association between consumer and brand identity can be fostered in communication messages through the use of tools that create a sense of control over the consumer“s identity in relation to a particular product and/or brand (Zhu *et al*., 2024).

Group ties are another crucial precondition for the use of symbolic violence. Identification with a group also creates a desire to be liked and respected within that group. As a result, a person must respect the rules that exist within that group. This is one of the prerequisites for commitment to the values, norms, and beliefs of the group (Kuznecovienė, 2000). Consumers use a product/brand to indicate which social group they belong to, and brands also indicate consumer reputation and status (Chattalas, Shukla, 2015). Brands engage consumers in brand communities by satisfying consumers“ needs for belonging to a larger group of like-mindedness, for fitting in, and for recognition (Seller *et al*., 2018). Consumers perceive social networks as brand value that creates experiential benefits for them (Chen, 2022). For instance, Lady Gaga“s fan community is designed to foster closer ties between her and her fans around the world. The Google Community brings leaders together in „labs“ to innovate and influence Google“s investments and spending. The Harley Davidson brand has brought together its community of fans, connecting those who ride Harley Davidson motorcycles (Arya *et al*., 2019).

Desire to gain recognition and fame, to reinforce social identity, to belong, and to connect are some of the important needs that brands manipulate to draw consumers into brand value co-creation. More powerful

actors in the field, usually brands, set the rules, and consumers must conform to the norms and rules set by brands. In this way, brands use symbolic violence to transform consumers" beliefs and change their actions.

2. Research Methodology

A qualitative research strategy was chosen, which allows the collection of the interpretations of the research participants that may be unique and specific to their individual experiences and contexts. Qualitative research helps researchers to understand the conditions of behaviour from the perspective of subjects. Contextual events, conditions, and their connections are studied and analysed. Qualitative research helps to investigate, understand, and explore the phenomena under study in their context, using a variety of evidence (Naz *et al.*, 2022). The goal of qualitative research is to provide detailed and illustrative information to understand the various aspects of the problem being analysed. Therefore, qualitative research deals with aspects of reality that cannot be quantified, focusing on understanding and explaining the dynamics of social relationships (Queirós *et al.*, 2017).

The study was conducted according to the logical sequence. The first stage involved the analysis of the scientific literature to reveal the theoretical aspects of brand value co-creation and Bourdieu"s concepts of capital, field, *habitus*, and symbolic violence. In the second stage, the research methodology was developed, a qualitative research method was chosen, a research instrument was prepared, and a research sample was selected. In the third stage, empirical data were collected, and a preliminary analysis was performed, and categories and subcategories were identified. In the fourth stage, the empirical research data were processed, analysed, and interpreted.

Research data collection method. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect research data to reveal the co-creation of the BMW brand value from the theoretical perspective of Pierre Bourdieu"s approach to the structures of power. The semi-structured interview method aims to reveal the whole of the phenomenon under study in its usual context and allows the researcher to delve into the perspectives of the research participants, collect abundant, detailed, and unique data that captures nuances, thereby enabling them not only to identify the current situation, but also to explain its causes (Gaižauskaitė, Valavičienė, 2016). Semi-structured interviews allow for the preparation of additional questions aimed at exploring information (Rabionet, 2011). During a semi-structured interview, research participants are allowed to freely participate in creating meaning, which allows for a broader context to be assessed during data analysis and for the situation to be interpreted more flexibly.

Research instrument. A semi-structured interview questionnaire was used to collect research data. An interview questionnaire was prepared for the research participants, BMW brand consumers.

Selection of research participants. It is assumed that the validity and relevance of research results are related to the amount of information provided by the selected cases and the analytical skills of the researcher, rather than the sample size (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the most informationally rich cases are selected strategically and purposefully (Patton, 2002). The sample is targeted, and its size is determined using a convenience sampling method, which, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), is used to obtain targeted information and avoid data overload. Data is collected until no new information on the issues of interest is obtained, i.e., theoretical saturation is reached (Norkus, Morkevičius, 2011; Fusch, Ness, 2015).

The study was conducted between July 2025 and May 2026. Members of the BMW community were observed through their Facebook and Instagram profiles, focusing on the content they created and discussed. In total, 359 user-generated social media posts were collected and analysed. Selected

members of the BMW enthusiast community were contacted. Consumers were selected based on the following criteria: (1) a BMW brand consumer for at least 5 years and (2) an active member of the BMW brand community for at least 2 years. 20 informants were invited to participate, 12 of whom took part in the study. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 60 and 80 minutes. A total of 1,006 pages of textual material were analysed. Interviews were conducted remotely via online communication platforms and telephone calls. The majority of informants were male; of the 12 participants, 2 were female, reflecting the male-dominated composition of the BMW brand community. More detailed information about the informants is provided in *Table 1* below.

Table 1. Information about Study Participants and Interviews

Research participant identifier	Age	Age	Education	Occupation
IN1	Male	27	Incomplete Higher Education	Sales Manager
IN2	Female	34	Master“s degree	Marketing Manager
IN3	Male	26	Vocational Education	Registered Builder
IN4	Male	20	Secondary Education	Registered Builder
IN5	Female	31	Bachelor“s degree	Nurse
IN6	Male	33	Bachelor“s degree	Sales Manager
IN7	Male	36	Master“s degree	Head of Kindergarten
IN8	Male	34	Bachelor“s degree	Head of Association
IN9	Male	37	Bachelor“s degree	Senior IT Analyst
IN10	Male	29	Incomplete Higher Education	Sales Specialist
IN11	Male	25	Vocational Education	Photographer
IN12	Male	30	Bachelor“s degree	Creative Specialist

Source: created by the authors, 2026.

Organisation of the study. At a pre-arranged time, the study participants were presented with a semi-structured questionnaire and were asked to provide detailed answers. Interviews with study participants were conducted via social media platforms Instagram and Facebook during phone calls. The interviews were recorded on a voice recorder with the verbal consent of the research participants. According to Aleknevičienė *et al*. (2020), one of the most important components of ensuring research ethics is the voluntary participation of research participants in the research. The purpose of informed consent is to inform research participants or their representatives about their rights and role, the objectives of the research, and the researcher“s expectations.

Research ethics. During the study, the researcher adhered to key ethical principles in social research, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and the protection of participants“ privacy (Babbie, 2007). Interview questions were designed to elicit participants“ own perspectives without influencing or misleading them. Confidentiality was ensured by presenting participant characteristics without attributing individual responses. To respect privacy and maintain objective data analysis, information about third parties provided by participants was neither reported nor analysed. The study complied with all required

ethical standards. Participants“ rights: voluntary participation, anonymity, and assurance of study reliability, were safeguarded (Bitinas *et al.*, 2008; Green, Thorogood, 2006). Consent was obtained after providing information about the study, and anonymity was protected with coded identifiers. The questions were formulated to avoid causing any discomfort or harm.

Method of analysis of research data. The interview data obtained were analysed using the qualitative content analysis method. According to Žukauskienė (2008), the content analysis method is standard and widely used in the social sciences. When analysing the research data, the following steps were followed based on Gaižauskaitė and Valavičienė (2016): (1) the interviews were read several times; (2) relevant parts were marked and coded; (3) codes were grouped and categorised; (4) meaningful elements within categories were divided into subcategories; (5) categories were explained and described; and (6) the results were interpreted.

3. Results

3.1 BMW Brand Value Co-Creation Tools

Following the study, the results obtained by the informants were systematised. The responses and comments from the study informants enabled the authors to identify the tools and instruments of power used within the BMW user community to engage users in the brand value co-creation. Research has shown that the majority of BMW brand community members contribute to the brand value co-creation in various ways, such as by sharing information, participating in community activities, and engaging in creative activities.

Information sharing. The majority of informants report that they **share information** with other members of the BMW community or individuals interested in the BMW brand. Information-sharing activities take place across social media platforms and within closed groups, encompassing both discussions with like-minded individuals and the dissemination of user-generated content. This includes sharing photographs of their vehicles, creating and distributing video content and images, as well as exchanging knowledge on car maintenance and modification. Additionally, participants provide feedback and express critiques regarding BMW car models and repair practices:

„<...> I post photos with my car on social media, short videos showing the car from different angles in beautiful locations <...>„ (IN1).

„<...> I post photos of cars on Instagram and upload stories“ (IN2).

„<...> I share information with others, comment on posts about car parts <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> I express criticism on social networks, discuss models and their changes <...>„ (IN6).

„<...> I share information about car repairs, their parts <...>„ (IN12).

Participation in community activities. Informants indicate that they are actively engaged in activities that unite BMW enthusiasts. This involvement takes place both online, on social media platforms, where they discuss current BMW maintenance and modification issues, and in real life, by participating in events that bring together BMW enthusiasts. In such events, BMW cars and their modifications are presented, and official sports competitions are held:

„<...> I am a member of social media groups where BMW maintenance and repairs are discussed <...>„ (IN1).

„<...> I had the opportunity to participate in drifting events and gatherings of the BMW community of female drivers <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> In groups, we discuss car recommendations, search for parts, the latest trends, configurations, prototypes <...>„ (IN4).

„<...> I am a member of social media communities and look for advice there <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> I participate in communities, look for advice on how to improve the project car, and advise others <...>„ (IN6).

„<...> BMW is not just a car; it"s a lifestyle. I don"t spend a day without the BMW community <...>„ (IN9).

Creative activities. The majority of informants within the BMW enthusiast community report engaging in **creative activities** related to vehicle improvement and personalisation. They perceive BMW modification as a form of self-expression and a lifestyle practice. Informants invest considerable time, effort, and financial resources in improving their vehicles, including adjustments to colour, appearance, sound, and technical performance. Vehicle modification thus emerges as a defining characteristic of BMW enthusiasts:

„<...> you buy a car, treat it like a project, keep improving it, try to make it look aggressive <...> and suddenly the car turns into something WOW <...>„ (IN1).

„<...> I am improving the car so that it makes a loud noise and has bright colours <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> I will restore the old car, tune it up a little, increase its power a little <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> We tune it up, spruce it up, fix it up so that it looks nice, cool, and tough <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> I am constantly looking for car parts and planning how to improve my BMW project car <...>„ (IN7).

„<...> I am preparing my BMW fighter, constantly investing in it <...>„ (IN11).

BMW brand users contribute to brand value co-creation by sharing information, participating in community activities, and engaging in creative activities, dedicating their time, knowledge, and skills. Brand value co-creation takes place by sharing information with other brand users, giving advice, commenting, sharing experiences, photos, videos, participating in community gatherings both on social networks and in person with other BMW drivers.

3.2 BMW Consumer Capital

BMW brand enthusiasts accumulate capital in various forms by using BMW cars. Owning and using BMW cars allows them to demonstrate their financial capabilities (monetary capital, property), acquire cultural (education, knowledge), social (language, behavioural habits), and symbolic (sociocultural prestige, reputation) capital within the group or community that also uses BMW cars, as well as outside of it, in society at large.

Financial capital within the BMW enthusiast community manifests through unequal opportunities to acquire desired vehicle models and to modify them in distinctive ways. Informants note that individuals with greater financial resources, time, and capacity for investment tend to own more expensive models and allocate substantially more resources to vehicle enhancement. In contrast, those with more limited means often strive to keep pace with others and express admiration for individuals who possess more valuable, prestigious, and highly regarded vehicles. The financial dimension of capital, as described by informants, is primarily reflected in the ability to allocate significant financial resources to the maintenance, modification, and display of BMW vehicles. This is commonly perceived as an achievement, an investment, and a means of sustaining or enhancing one"s social status:

„<...> The car is expensive, the equipment is expensive, tuning the car is expensive <...>„ (IN1).

„<...> I invest a lot in the car itself and its maintenance. BMW shows its monetary value <...>„ (IN2).

„<...>BMWs are for those who can afford them <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> BMW is not a cheap car to maintain; chassis parts are not cheap <...>„ (IN4).

„<...> if you drive a BMW, you are financially wealthier, better, more stable <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> BMW parts make for expensive ownership <...>„ (IN6).

„<...> Even a simple BMW repair can require a significant investment <...>„ (IN8).

„<...> BMW maintenance is expensive <...>„ (IN10).

Cultural capital within the BMW enthusiast community, as identified by the majority of informants, encompasses knowledge of BMW models, an understanding of the brand"s achievements, and awareness of the characteristics of BMW vehicles. It also includes familiarity with their operational capabilities and with events in which vehicles of this marque participate:

„<...> BMW always remains in the top 3 or at least the top 10 in competitions. I appreciate that. It shows the power of the BMW brand, its desire to improve and perform. BMW is definitely visible, whether it"s a drift competition or just a car gathering <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> Race victories, which models have won, are important. This is proof that engineers are able to get something out of that model <...>„ (IN4).

„<...> Certificates are very important, a big plus <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> BMW engines are among the most awarded, I appreciate that <...>„ (IN9).

Social capital within the BMW enthusiast community is reflected in a shared vocabulary, distinctive communication style, and recurring behavioural practices. It is also manifested in the desire of members to demonstrate superiority or uniqueness over others. Informants indicate that characteristic rituals and behavioural practices include vehicle modification, as well as activities, such as wheel spinning, drifting, and racing one another:

„<...> comes up to you in a more powerful BMW and says that your car is weak, challenges you to a race. <...> when you build a custom car, you can show it off to your friends, what you"ve got in your garage, sometimes take it for a spin <...>„ (IN1).

„<...> Some of the main habits include wheel spinning, drifting, or racing each other from a standing start <...> BMW fans strongly understand the value of BMW, sometimes overestimating it and underestimating others, to the point of disliking other cars. As they say, Audi and BMW are like two guests who won"t sit at the same table <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> BMW fans love speed and racing to show who is better, louder, more superior <...>„ (IN12).

Symbolic capital (sociocultural prestige and reputation) is expressed through BMW enthusiasts" associations with the brand, which they link to interpersonal attributes such as greater power, distinctiveness, uniqueness, higher status, and a better quality of life. By aligning their identity with the BMW brand and its associated meanings, members of the BMW community come to identify themselves with these attributes. Through such associations, brand identity becomes intertwined with consumer identity:

„<...> With my BMW, I stand out, as my car is powerful, it looks different, I"m attractive <...>„ (IN1).

„<...> so that others would enjoy looking at the BMW, those around me, so that they would pay attention. Building a custom car and having a unique model is my lifelong dream <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> BMW is one of the leading brands for others. BMW means higher status, reliability, a better image <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> BMW allows me to show off my high standard of living <...>„ (IN7).

„<...> The way I build my project car allows me to show off my creative modification options, both the technical capabilities of the car and its speed and power <...>„ (IN9).

„<...> The rarer the BMW model you have, the more exclusive you are <...>„ (IN11).

BMW brand consumers view the BMW brand as an expression of financial capital, which also manifests itself in other forms, such as cultural capital, which allows them to expand their knowledge of this brand, its improvement and repair possibilities, and as a brand that has won many awards and certificates, has achieved a lot in the field of racing, and is reliable and high-quality. BMW users attribute the desire of BMW users to show their superiority and higher status, which they seek to achieve by participating in car races, drift competitions, and car tuning, while belittling drivers of other car models and breaking traffic rules, to BMW"s social capital. The symbolic consumer capital of the BMW brand is manifested in the symbolic perception of the BMW brand. Consumers attribute the characteristics of exclusivity, power, strength, and higher status to the BMW brand.

3.3 BMW Users" Field of Power

BMW users demonstrate their power among their peers, the BMW user community, and seek higher status by purchasing more expensive cars, newer models or by searching for rare car models and restoring them. They devote substantial financial and time resources to car restoration. BMW drivers demonstrate their power and superiority over other BMW drivers by seeking more powerful cars, exclusive tuning, and the rarest and most luxurious details.

Owning a more expensive BMW model. A substantial proportion of informants indicate that owning a more expensive BMW model enables them to demonstrate their capabilities, attain higher status, and gain greater recognition within the community:

„<...> a lot depends on what brand of BMW you drive, whether it"s the worst or the best <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> you pick up a new BMW from the dealership, put on personalised license plates, and you have status <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> If you can afford an expensive model, you are also showing your capabilities <...>„ (IN7).

A more powerful BMW model is likewise identified by community members as a means of demonstrating superiority. Informants note that technical enhancements to engine performance enable the achievement of greater vehicle power, which is valued and recognised by other members of the community:

„<...> BMWs are fast <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> It"s important to increase the power of the car <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> I stand out with my BMW because it"s well equipped and not weak <...>„ (IN4).

„<...> The more powerful the engine of your BMW, the better <...>„ (IN6).

„<...> BMW is the fastest and most attractive <...>„ (IN8).

Owning a rare BMW model. The majority of informants indicate that owning a rare BMW model also serves as a means of attaining higher status and recognition within the community. In particular, the ability to independently create and modify vehicles, as well as to restore older or vintage models and bring them back to life, is highly valued:

„<...> Antiques get more attention than the latest models <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> I bought a rare model in Lithuania because there are so few of them <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> Rarer models get more attention than more expensive ones <...>„ (IN4).

„<...> people are crazy about those few BMW models, paying thousands of euros for an old car <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> Older models are valuable because they are difficult to obtain. Which means that few people have one <...>„ (IN12).

Car tuning activities. The manifestation of power is expressed through vehicle tuning activities. Community members must invest considerable financial resources, time, and effort, as well as accumulate knowledge, in order to modify their vehicles in ways that make them distinctive and recognised within the community:

„<...> Tuning allows you to show the uniqueness of the car, making it look more beautiful than others <...>„ (IN1).

„<...> A car can make sounds, be brightly coloured, be tuned, redesigned, and look completely different <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> I am restoring an old school model so that it will be beautiful for others to look at <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> it is important to constantly modify the car so that it is unique <...>„ (IN4).

„<...> it is important to tune, beautify, and tidy up the car so that it looks beautiful, cool, and tough <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> I spend time restoring my BMW car, and it makes it more exclusive and expensive <...>„ (IN11).

In the BMW community, power is manifested and sought through constant competition over whose car is more expensive, rarer, more exclusive, and more powerful. The community, which identifies with the BMW brand and its associated attributes, grants recognition to members only when they conform to certain characteristics and standards. At the same time, regardless of their social and economic position, members are subjected to pressure to meet and enact these expectations.

3.4 BMW Consumer Habitus

BMW consumer *habitus* consists of consumers“ habits, understanding, thinking, needs, dreams, tastes, and language. The majority of informants identify the following *habitus*: racing and drifting, tuning cars, creating project cars, striving to stand out, being superior in various ways, and giving nicknames to car models.

Racing/drifting. One of the most commonly mentioned *habitus* is racing and drifting. Informants distinguish that an integral part of being in the BMW community is competition and the desire to be better and more recognised in society. The desire for a higher status occurs among community members who are closely connected through the hobby that unites them, but at the same time, there is an even greater pressure to fit into the group. Competition occurs in the area of understanding driving skills and technical knowledge:

„<...> BMW drivers like to race <...>„ (IN1).

„<...> of course it“s fun, you step on the gas, drive, slide sideways <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> In my free time, I participate in side-skid competitions, I do it for the adrenaline <...>„ (IN6).

„<...> I used to like to destroy BMW tires at the test track <...>„ (IN7).

„<...> I concentrate on one of the branches of motorsports: drift <...>„ (IN8).

„<...> I like to drift, but there are not many legal places where you can let off steam with your car, practice <...>„ (IN10).

Project cars/tuning. Informants indicate that community members frequently engage in vehicle tuning and the development of project cars. A proportion of BMW enthusiasts own multiple vehicles, using one for everyday transportation while dedicating another to modification and the expansion of its technical capabilities. Project cars are often operated only during the summer season and are primarily used for photoshoots, exhibitions, and special occasions. In some cases, due to extensive technical modifications, these vehicles are no longer legally permitted on public roads and therefore remain in the garages of their builders, where they are visited by like-minded peers who recognise and evaluate the modifications made.

Substantial investments of time, financial resources, effort, and energy are directed toward vehicles that are not primarily used for their functional purpose of transportation from one location to another. Instead, this practice is understood as a form of creative expression and a lifestyle orientation. In this way, members of the BMW enthusiast community articulate their interest through the practice of building and developing project cars:

„<...> Wow, this project is a brutally powerful machine, you can"t drive it every day. You can show it to your friends in the garage, show what you"re doing on social media <...>„ (IN1).

„<...> popcorn in the car"s muffler to make the sound loud, the car has to be brightly coloured, and creating a project car allows you to turn the car into something unique that no one else has <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> I"m doing a project; it"s my lifelong dream <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> I have a project car, and I"m constantly modifying it <...>„ (IN4).

„<...> We"ve tuned it up a bit, put a spoiler on it <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> When I create a project car, I try to make ends meet <...>„ (IN6).

„<...> I create my own project car, so I film, take photos, and upload content to social networks <...>„ (IN7).

„<...> Creating projects is interesting, I release retro bombs on the streets <...>„ (IN9).

Desire to stand out. The majority of informants, when discussing their participation in the community, state that owning a BMW vehicle enables them to stand out in their surroundings and to perceive themselves as distinct and superior to others. They express a desire to be regarded as more advanced, unique, and socially recognised. This pursuit of recognition and attention is directed not only outwardly but also within the BMW enthusiast community itself:

„<...> My neighbours think I"m a hooligan, that I don"t follow the rules, because I drive a BMW <...> with a BMW, I stand out from the crowd <...>„ (IN1).

„<...> if you drive a BMW, you are a daredevil who breaks the rules <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> I have a BMW model that few people have. It allows me to stand out <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> Rarer models attract more attention than more expensive ones <...>„ (IN4).

„<...> A BMW car gives you higher status, recognition <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> I race in official races, and if I win, it gives me recognition <...>„ (IN7).

„<...> People on the road look at my car favourably: I get a lot of positive reactions, thumbs up <...>„ (IN12).

Specific language. BMW enthusiasts use specific language and expressions that are understood only by members of the community. They often call specific BMW models by various nicknames:

„<...> BMW 540i is colloquially known as the Plum (fifth series BMW model manufactured until 2003). The E46 model is called E fourtyscrap or a Better made Volkswagen; E30 is an exceptional BMW model, called a Hooligan <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> I used to have a Plum, the E39 model. Now I have a Swallow, the E36 model <...> BMW models have different names in colloquial speech: Swallow (E36), Plum (E39), Batman (E60), Shark (E28), Hooligan (E30), The f series (F10) <...>„ (IN4).

„<...> The Swallow started to show some whims and went out <...>„ (IN6).

„<...> I like the Swallow because it flies low <...>„ (IN7).

„<...> My first car was a third-class BMW, popularly called a Hooligan <...>„ (IN9).

BMW users pay close attention to car maintenance and improvement, discuss options with like-minded people, and plan how to improve and redesign their cars. BMW cars become part of their lifestyle, daily habits, and personality.

3.5 BMW Consumers and Symbolic Violence

The symbolic violence of the BMW brand experienced by BMW consumers is unconscious, unrecognised, and unacknowledged. It manifests through the satisfaction and manipulation of human needs, statements and ideas, language and the meanings attributed to it, images, social norms, and stereotypes. The majority of informants indicate that recognition, identity, and group affiliation are of central importance to them. Symbolic violence is expressed through these areas.

Recognition. Consumers associate the BMW brand with the aspiration to be better, stronger, and superior in a broader sense, encompassing both financial capacity and overall human value. In this context, a BMW car becomes a means to satisfy the need for social recognition:

„<...> With a BMW, you can stand out, show your worth <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> With a BMW, you can be stronger than other drivers <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> if you drive a BMW, you are financially wealthier, better <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> When I drive into the city in a sports car, I drive more safely. I watch as passersby follow the car with their eyes <...>„ (IN12).

Identity. A substantial proportion of informants identified associations and attributes represented by BMW vehicles, which they also linked to their own identity. These include distinctiveness, boldness, a willingness to challenge norms, and a higher social status:

„<...> With a BMW, I stand out <...>„ (IN1).

„<...> With BMW, you are considered a rebel who breaks the rules <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> You can go wild, break the rules, and be free with BMW <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> BMW means higher status, reliability <...>„ (IN5).

„<...> I love the process of building and restoring BMWs, bringing old BMWs to new life. A car like that stands out on the street <...>„ (IN9).

Group ties, membership, and the pursuit of recognition within the group are also important to most informants. To be acknowledged as part of the community, members are expected to adhere to certain behavioural norms, own a vehicle, continuously modify and improve it, and be familiar with the community“s discourse as well as its specific terminology:

„<...> Only those who own a BMW car are accepted into the community <...>„ (IN2).

„<...> I don“t think it would be possible to join the community without a BMW <...>„ (IN3).

„<...> BMW allows you to belong to the group <...>„ (IN4).

„Guys are reluctant to accept girls into the community because they stereotypically think that girls don“t know anything, even though they really know a lot about cars <...>„ (IN5)

„<...> it gives you a sense of community; there are definitely a lot of people who drive this brand of car <...>„ (IN9).

Consumers associate the BMW brand with the idea that social recognition can be achieved through owning a BMW car. In this context, ownership is positioned as a means of indicating higher economic status, personal success, and exclusivity. The integration of personal identity into the BMW brand further implies that individuals who drive BMW cars are perceived as embodying brand-related qualities such as reliability, high social status, courage, and creative self-expression, especially through customisation and modification of the car. Furthermore, the need for social affiliation is constructed as dependent on BMW ownership, as inclusion in the BMW community is often perceived as dependent on owning a BMW car. This dynamic represents a form of symbolic violence, where individuals make sense of the belief that recognition, identity formation, and group membership are achieved primarily, if not exclusively, through

the acquisition, use, and improvement of a BMW car, rather than through alternative, intangible forms of social participation.

4. Discussion

This study offers a comprehensive examination of brand value co-creation as a structure of power. Focusing on the BMW brand community, it analyses consumer behaviour and provides insights into the ways in which power structures are manifested within co-creation processes. The findings suggest that these largely invisible and implicit power structures are reproduced through consumers“ engagement in brand community activities and their identification with the brand. In particular, consumers tend to align themselves with brand-associated attributes, such as high status, exclusivity, norm transgression, and membership in a privileged community, thereby conforming to the worldview constructed by the brand. These findings contribute to and extend prior research on brand value co-creation by offering a more critical perspective on how consumers perceive and enact power within such processes (Madsen, O“Mullan, 2018; Lee, Kim, 2019; Mingone *et al*., 2020).

The present article advances the existing body of knowledge on brand value co-creation by conceptualising it as a structure of power. Drawing on a critical theoretical perspective, it demonstrates how such power structures are manifested within brand communities through the distribution of capital, the formation of *habitus*, and the operation of symbolic violence, while also elucidating consumers“ perceptions of these dynamics. In doing so, the study introduces a novel analytical approach that addresses a notable gap in the literature. Previous research has predominantly framed brand value co-creation as a positive and collaborative process between consumers and brands (Merz *et al*., 2009; Vargo, Lusch, 2016), with a strong emphasis on measuring consumer engagement (Harmeling *et al*., 2017) and examining the motivations underlying participation (Cheung *et al*., 2020; Chen *et al*., 2021; Hsieh, Chang, 2016). The present study complements and extends this line of inquiry by analysing brand value co-creation as a power process that may also produce adverse outcomes and does not necessarily lead to an equitable satisfaction of the interests of all stakeholders.

The brand value co-creation in the context of critical theory, viewed from the perspective of capital power, reveals inequality. It shows that brands are higher in the hierarchy than consumers, because brands have greater capital power; the values they promote and the offers they offer put pressure on consumers to associate themselves and their lives, to identify them with the choices offered by brands, trying to fulfil the values of status or success through the consumption of brand products. Bourdieu (1998) suggests that those who are dominated unconsciously collude with their domination through misrecognition of the processes of domination. According to Bourdieu (1998), consumers experience pressure to achieve a desired identity, which may not actually correspond to their socio-economic position. Our study, analysing the BMW case, agrees with previous studies, confirming that any unequal distribution of capital leads to social inequality (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2013; Bapuji *et al*., 2018; Lashitew *et al*., 2024). The brand value co-creation can turn not into a collaborative process, but into a mechanism of symbolic violence, operating without consumers precisely sensing the line where one turns into the other.

From an ethical perspective, these dynamics raise important questions regarding the extent to which brands shape consumer self-perception and decision-making processes. The construction and promotion of idealised lifestyles may contribute to patterns of overconsumption and the formation of unrealistic expectations. Accordingly, while brand communities can foster a sense of belonging and identity, they may simultaneously reproduce exclusionary norms and reinforce inequalities.

Additionally, this study offers practical implications for brand management. It provides insights that may support the ethical governance of brands and the development of consumer engagement strategies grounded in a more reflexive and socially responsible approach to brand management. However, this research is based on a single case study of the BMW brand, which limits the statistical generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, the results may be analytically transferable to other brands characterised by similar identity constructions and active brand communities. Future research could extend this line of inquiry by examining these dynamics across different industries, such as technology or fashion, or through comparative case studies conducted in diverse cultural contexts.

Conclusions

Brand value co-creation can be regarded as a manifestation of different kinds of capital: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. The more diverse forms of capital a brand has accumulated, the greater its power. Brands use brand value co-creation to shape consumer perceptions and opinions, impose their worldview, and rules that consumers should follow and adhere to. Brands set the rules to which consumers must conform. In this way, brands use symbolic violence to transform consumers“ beliefs and change their actions. Brands“ symbolic violence manifests through the manipulation of consumers“ desire to gain recognition and fame, to reinforce social identity, to belong, and to connect.

In the case of the BMW brand, the brand value co-creation functions as a tool of power. Power is exercised by satisfying consumer desires and needs. The BMW brand strives to provide consumers with opportunities to express and create their identity, improve their image by associating it with the products, belong to a community, and feel part of it. This brand creates an attractive image that influences consumers“ thinking and behaviour in the direction desired by the brand. Consumers do not feel the power of the brand; it is intangible, unnamed, and unrecognised by consumers.

Brand value co-creation can be conceptualised as a power structure that may generate adverse outcomes and does not necessarily ensure equitable satisfaction of stakeholder interests. From a critical theory perspective, it reveals inequalities, as brands occupy a dominant position in the field of power due to their greater capital. This enables them to promote values and habits that pressure consumers to align their identities with brand-defined notions of status and success. As a result, consumers may strive to achieve aspirational identities that do not reflect their actual socio-economic conditions. Furthermore, the promotion of idealised lifestyles can encourage overconsumption and foster unrealistic expectations. Thus, while brand communities may provide a sense of belonging, they can also reproduce forms of symbolic violence.

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Author contributions: **Tadas Limba:** conceptualization, methodology, writing - review & editing. **Giedrius Romeika:** conceptualization, methodology, writing - review & editing. **Aurimas Šidlauskas:** methodology, formal analysis, writing - review & editing. **Eglė Juozėnaitė:** conceptualization, methodology, investigation, formal analysis, writing - original draft.

PREKIŲ ŽENKLO VERTĖS BENDRAKŪRA KAIP GALIOS STRUKTŪRA

Tadas Limba, Giedrius Romeika, Aurimas Šidlauskas, Eglė Juozėnaitė

Santrauka. Prekių ženklo vertės bendrakūra yra viena įtakingiausių šiuolaikinės rinkodaros koncepcijų. Vartotojų įtraukimas į įvairią aktyvią veiklą, įskaitant plėtrą, grįžtamąjį ryšį, rėmimą ir paramą, gali padėti bendrai kurti prekių ženklo vertę. Prekių ženklai įtraukia vartotojus į prekių ženklo vertės bendrakūrą tenkindami jų poreikius ir norus. Organizacijoms prekių ženklo vertės bendrakūra taip pat teikia naudą: leidžia padidinti pardavimus, užimti geresnę padėtį rinkoje, didinti prekių ženklo žinomumą, išlaikyti vartotojų lojalumą. Straipsnyje prekių ženklo vertės bendrakūra analizuojama per Pierre Bourdieu požiūrį į galios struktūras. Tyrimo problema keliama klausiant, kokias galios struktūras prekių ženklai naudoja pasitelkdami prekių ženklo vertės bendrakūrą. Tyrime pasitelkta mokslinės literatūros apžvalga, sisteminė, lyginamoji analizė, pusiau struktūruoti interviu ir apibendrinimas. Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad prekių ženklo vertės bendrakūra funkcionuoja kaip galios struktūra. 12 pusiau struktūruotų interviu su BMW prekių ženklo bendruomenės nariais rezultatai rodo, kad dauguma informantų prekių ženklą sieja su išskirtinumu, galia ir aukštu statusu. Internalizuodami prekių ženklo vertybes ir prisitaikydami prie bendruomenės normų, vartotojai gali nesąmoningai atkurti ir sustiprinti prekių ženklo galios struktūrą. Tai gali apimti simbolinį smurtą, nes spaudimas atitikti su prekių ženklu susijusius standartus gali sustiprinti socialinę nelygybę. Taigi, prekių ženklo vertės bendrakūra gali funkcionuoti ne tik kaip bendradarbiavimo procesas, bet ir kaip mechanizmas, atkuriantis galios struktūras.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: prekių ženklo vertė; bendrakūra; galios struktūra.