Stakeholder Engagement Motivations in Value Creation: A Systematic Review

Nader Naderi Maralani[1], Samad Aali [2,*]

[1] Department of Management, Ta.C., Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran;
[2] Department of Management, Ta.C., Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran;

* Correspondence: samad.aali@iaut.ac.ir



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Abstract: This systematic review aimed to identify, categorize, and synthesize the principal motivations underlying stakeholder engagement and to clarify how these motivations contribute to different forms and mechanisms of value creation across organizational and societal contexts. A systematic review design was employed following PRISMA principles. Searches were conducted in Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, ProQuest, and Google Scholar using combinations of terms related to stakeholder engagement, motivation, participation, collaboration, value creation, and value co-creation. The initial search identified 1,284 records, of which 327 duplicates were removed. After title and abstract screening and subsequent full-text eligibility assessment, 49 studies met the inclusion criteria and formed the final analytical corpus. Data were extracted using a standardized framework covering study characteristics, stakeholder groups, theoretical perspectives, engagement motivations, engagement mechanisms, and value-creation outcomes. The evidence was synthesized through descriptive analysis, thematic analysis, constant comparison, and conceptual categorization. The synthesis showed that stakeholder engagement is driven by an interrelated configuration of instrumental, relational, cognitive, innovation-oriented, legitimacy-related, normative, sustainability-related, participatory, and strategic motivations. Relational trust, reciprocity, knowledge exchange, shared purpose, meaningful influence, and perceived fairness emerged as particularly important mechanisms sustaining engagement over time. Engagement motivations were associated with multiple forms of value, including relational, knowledge, innovation, economic, social, reputational, environmental, experiential, and functional value. The findings further indicated that value creation is strongest when stakeholder motivations are mutually compatible, participation is substantive rather than symbolic, and organizations possess the capacity to integrate stakeholder knowledge and contributions into decision-making processes. Stakeholder engagement should be understood as a dynamic and systemic value-creation process in which motivations evolve over time and interact with trust, power, reciprocity, and governance quality. Sustainable value creation depends on aligning organizational and stakeholder motivations while ensuring meaningful participation, equitable influence, and recognition of multiple forms of value beyond purely economic outcomes.

Keywords: Stakeholder engagement; stakeholder motivation; value creation; value co-creation; stakeholder theory; trust; participation; systematic review.

1. Introduction

Stakeholder engagement has become a central concern in contemporary management, sustainability, innovation, public governance, and value-creation research because organizations increasingly operate within interconnected systems in which value is generated through relationships among multiple actors rather than through isolated firm-level activities. Traditional approaches to value creation often emphasized the focal organization as the principal producer of economic value, with stakeholders primarily conceptualized as recipients, constraints, or providers of resources. More recent perspectives have challenged this assumption by framing value as a systemic and relational

phenomenon emerging from interactions among organizations, customers, employees, suppliers, communities, governments, investors, civil society organizations, and other actors. Within this perspective, stakeholders are not passive beneficiaries but active participants who contribute knowledge, legitimacy, resources, capabilities, experiences, relationships, and interpretive frames to value-creation processes. Contemporary stakeholder theory therefore increasingly recognizes value creation as multidimensional, distributed, and dependent on the quality of relationships within a broader stakeholder system [1]. This systemic interpretation is particularly relevant in settings characterized by sustainability transitions, circular economy initiatives, regional development, and complex collaborative arrangements, where organizations cannot independently mobilize all resources required for effective transformation [2, 3].

The growing emphasis on stakeholder participation is closely connected to the emergence of co-creation as an alternative to conventional organization-centered models of value generation. Co-creation assumes that value develops through interaction, reciprocal exchange, joint problem-solving, and integration of heterogeneous resources. This perspective has been applied across a wide range of contexts, including sustainable business alliances, public–private partnerships, innovation ecosystems, social marketing, healthcare, cultural institutions, urban regeneration, and environmental governance. In sustainable strategic alliances, for example, value co-creation may emerge through social innovation and the integration of complementary organizational and stakeholder capabilities [4]. In public–private partnership projects, value creation is influenced by collaborative mechanisms and the evolution of trust among participating actors [5]. Likewise, innovation ecosystems depend on partnerships capable of integrating diverse stakeholders around common developmental goals and shared resources [6]. These developments indicate that value creation increasingly depends on the capacity of organizations to design engagement structures that encourage stakeholders to participate meaningfully, rather than merely informing them or obtaining symbolic approval.

However, stakeholder engagement cannot be understood adequately without examining why stakeholders participate in the first place. Engagement requires stakeholders to invest resources such as time, knowledge, effort, reputation, social capital, or organizational capacity, and such investment is unlikely to occur in the absence of meaningful motivational foundations. Stakeholder motivations may be economic, strategic, relational, normative, reputational, cognitive, social, or sustainability-oriented. Some stakeholders participate because they expect tangible benefits, improved services, new business opportunities, market access, risk reduction, or financial returns. Others may be motivated by opportunities to influence decisions, contribute expertise, improve community outcomes, strengthen relationships, learn from other participants, or advance social and environmental goals. Research on business ecosystems has therefore increasingly emphasized the importance of understanding both stakeholder roles and the motivations that sustain participation within interdependent systems [7]. Similarly, purposeful ecosystem orchestration depends not only on identifying relevant participants but also on aligning heterogeneous interests sufficiently to maintain participation over time [8].

Trust and reciprocity represent particularly important motivational foundations because stakeholder engagement often occurs under conditions of uncertainty, unequal information, and interdependence. Stakeholders may be reluctant to contribute valuable knowledge or resources when they perceive a risk that their contributions will be appropriated without reciprocal benefit or when decision-making processes lack transparency. Research on co-creation and co-governance in urban settings has shown that building trust is especially important where existing social structures are weak and collective action depends on the emergence of credible relationships among local actors [9]. In public–private collaboration, dynamic trust can influence the willingness of participants to

continue cooperating and can shape the effectiveness of value-creation mechanisms [5]. Trust also acquires particular importance in local participatory systems where social connection itself becomes part of the value being created, suggesting that stakeholder relationships may generate social value in addition to conventional organizational outcomes [10]. Consequently, motivation and trust are closely connected: stakeholders may initially participate because of instrumental incentives, but continued engagement frequently depends on perceptions of fairness, reciprocity, recognition, and relational reliability.

Knowledge exchange and innovation constitute another major motivational pathway. Organizations increasingly engage stakeholders because relevant knowledge is distributed across organizational boundaries, while stakeholders may participate because engagement provides opportunities for learning, influence, and capability development. Open innovation research demonstrates that knowledge-management systems, organizational openness, and structural arrangements can facilitate the creation of shared value by enabling organizations to access external knowledge and combine it with internal capabilities [11]. In B2B innovation, the stakeholder engagement journey can be understood as a service-design process in which multiple interactions shape stakeholder participation and the development of innovation outcomes [12]. Crowdsourcing likewise illustrates how dispersed knowledge and voluntary participation can be mobilized to generate new forms of value through collaborative contribution [13]. At the same time, the effectiveness of such processes depends on contextual conditions. Project complexity and requirements uncertainty can moderate the relationship between value-creation processes and project outcomes, indicating that stakeholder participation does not automatically translate into value without appropriate integration mechanisms [14].

Stakeholder motivations are also strongly influenced by ethical, social, and normative considerations. Creating value for and with stakeholders involves questions regarding fairness, responsibility, inclusion, voice, and distribution of benefits. From a moral perspective, shared-value initiatives cannot be justified exclusively through business performance; they must also address the ethical foundations of relationships among organizations and affected stakeholders [15]. In social marketing, consumer-dominant approaches similarly reposition individuals from passive targets of organizational interventions to active participants whose preferences, experiences, and agency should shape value creation [16]. The importance of voice and participation is also visible in community and health contexts. Studies of co-created health initiatives show that participants often derive value from being heard, contributing local knowledge, developing relationships, and observing tangible changes resulting from collective action [17]. Engagement therefore includes both instrumental and intrinsic dimensions, and stakeholders may participate not merely because of external rewards but because the process itself offers recognition, empowerment, social connection, or an opportunity to contribute to outcomes perceived as meaningful.

Sustainability and societal transformation have further intensified the need to understand engagement motivations. Circular economy transitions, climate adaptation, sustainable entrepreneurship, and environmental innovation depend on cooperation among actors with different resources and interests. Stakeholder engagement can contribute to the development of organizational sustainability cultures by encouraging participation, shared responsibility, and collective learning [18]. A stakeholder-based business case for circular economy initiatives similarly depends on governance mechanisms capable of reconciling diverse interests and demonstrating how participation can generate reciprocal benefits [19]. Circular entrepreneurship provides another example in which value creation is facilitated through stakeholder engagement mechanisms linking entrepreneurial action with wider environmental and social objectives [20]. Sustainable startups may also seek to transform markets by mobilizing stakeholders around new forms of value despite institutional and market constraints [21]. In climate-

related co-creation, the vitality of stakeholder participation depends on strengthening motivational drivers while simultaneously reducing barriers that inhibit collaboration [22]. These studies collectively indicate that sustainability-oriented engagement cannot be explained solely through organizational self-interest; motivations often emerge from combinations of strategic opportunity, normative commitment, social purpose, and concern for long-term collective outcomes.

The significance of engagement motivations becomes even clearer when stakeholder participation occurs in settings characterized by social complexity or public value. Urban living labs, for example, create spaces in which citizens, public institutions, businesses, and researchers interact to generate solutions and experiment with new forms of collaborative value creation [23]. Inclusive urban regeneration similarly relies on the participation of citizens and stakeholders through living labs and communities of practice, where involvement is connected to representation, local knowledge, inclusion, and collective ownership of urban transformation [24]. Practical co-creation frameworks for nature-based solutions likewise emphasize sequential engagement processes through which stakeholders identify problems, formulate shared objectives, develop solutions, and participate in implementation [25]. Within regional bioeconomy transitions, stakeholder engagement becomes especially important because systemic change requires the coordination of rural communities, enterprises, policymakers, researchers, and other institutional actors whose motivations may differ substantially [3]. These contexts demonstrate that stakeholder engagement must be understood not only as an organizational technique but also as a governance mechanism through which heterogeneous actors negotiate priorities, responsibilities, and definitions of value.

Health and social-intervention research provides further evidence that motivations vary across stakeholders and across stages of engagement. Co-creation in healthier food retail environments has shown that different stakeholder groups enter collaborative processes with different expectations, incentives, and levels of involvement, and that motivations may change according to whether stakeholders participate in problem identification, design, implementation, or evaluation [26]. Subsequent research in regional food retail settings has demonstrated the practical challenges of establishing sustained co-creation among researchers, retailers, community members, and health stakeholders, particularly when organizational objectives and community priorities must be reconciled [27]. Studies of participants directly involved in co-created children's health initiatives likewise indicate that engagement can generate experiential and relational benefits beyond the immediate intervention outcomes [17]. Similarly, stakeholder-centered refinement of health interventions illustrates how co-creation can improve contextual relevance by incorporating the experiences and priorities of practitioners and service users into intervention design [28]. Engagement marketing in large-scale social-good research initiatives further shows that participation can be strengthened by emphasizing relevance, trust, representation, and perceived societal contribution [29].

The diversity of stakeholder motivations is also evident in cultural, creative, and experiential settings. Creative-economy organizations facing crisis conditions may rely on stakeholder engagement as a means of maintaining relationships, mobilizing resources, and adapting organizational strategies under uncertainty [30]. In cultural activities, however, the type of value emphasized can shape stakeholder participation. An excessively economic-centered evaluation of cultural events may obscure social, cultural, identity-based, and community values that motivate stakeholders to support or participate in such activities [31]. Museums operating across physical and digital environments increasingly use stakeholder engagement to promote inclusion, well-being, accessibility, and human-centered cultural experiences [32]. Values-led communication design similarly demonstrates how stakeholder engagement can be facilitated by articulating shared values and using communication processes to

support participation in socially oriented initiatives such as dementia-friendly destinations [33]. These findings reinforce the need for a multidimensional conception of value because stakeholders may be motivated by experiential, symbolic, relational, and societal outcomes that are poorly represented by economic metrics alone.

Internal stakeholders also play a critical role in organizational value creation. Employee and organizational-member engagement can influence brand development, organizational identity, innovation, and the consistency of value propositions. Research on internal stakeholder engagement and brand co-creation demonstrates that organizational brands are shaped through the participation of internal actors rather than exclusively through managerial design or external communication [34]. This internal dimension is important because employees frequently function as boundary-spanning actors who interpret organizational objectives, interact with external stakeholders, and contribute knowledge derived from operational experience. Their motivations may include identification, recognition, autonomy, professional development, meaningful contribution, and alignment with organizational values. Stakeholder orientation may also be influenced by governance pressures. For example, exposure to shareholder litigation risk can affect how firms orient themselves toward broader stakeholder interests, demonstrating that organizational engagement strategies are shaped not only by voluntary commitments but also by institutional and legal incentives [35]. Thus, stakeholder engagement motivation must be examined at both the individual and organizational levels.

The literature also reveals important risks associated with stakeholder engagement and value co-creation. Although engagement is frequently presented as inherently beneficial, participation can produce conflict, exploitation, coordination costs, disappointment, or value co-destruction when expectations are misaligned or when stakeholders perceive unfairness. Research on the sharing economy illustrates that the same interactive processes that create value may also generate value co-destruction when relationships become unbalanced or stakeholder interests are insufficiently protected [36]. In industrial maintenance projects, stakeholder dynamics can significantly influence value creation because conflicting priorities, dependencies, and power relations affect project outcomes [37]. Crisis environments likewise demonstrate that engagement strategies must be adapted to stakeholder vulnerabilities and changing expectations [30]. These findings challenge simplistic assumptions that more engagement necessarily generates more value and instead suggest that motivational compatibility, governance quality, perceived fairness, and responsiveness determine whether participation becomes productive.

Corporate social responsibility and reputation represent additional motivational pathways linking stakeholder engagement to value creation. Stakeholders interpret organizational actions through existing beliefs about credibility, authenticity, responsibility, and the source of information. Research on CSR perceptions and brand attitudes demonstrates that stakeholder evaluations may vary depending on whether responsibility-related information originates from organizational advertising or external media reporting, thereby highlighting the role of credibility in value perceptions [38]. These considerations are closely connected with legitimacy-oriented engagement, in which organizations seek dialogue not only to collect stakeholder input but also to demonstrate responsiveness and maintain social acceptance. However, legitimacy benefits are likely to emerge only when engagement is perceived as substantive. Symbolic engagement that provides limited influence or fails to respond to stakeholder concerns can undermine trust and contribute to skepticism.

A recurring challenge in the literature is therefore the fragmentation of explanations concerning why stakeholders engage. Some studies emphasize financial and strategic incentives, others focus on trust, relationships, shared values, learning, innovation, sustainability, inclusion, empowerment, or legitimacy. Existing reviews have addressed particular sectors or problem domains, including circular economy practices in construction [2],

stakeholder dynamics in industrial maintenance [37], and co-creation in healthier food retail environments [26]. Yet the motivational foundations of stakeholder engagement remain dispersed across distinct research traditions. The resulting conceptual fragmentation makes it difficult to determine which motivations recur across contexts, which are stakeholder-specific, how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations interact, and how different motivational configurations relate to particular forms of value creation. A more integrative synthesis is therefore required to connect fragmented findings across organizational, social, sustainability, innovation, cultural, health, and public-governance settings.

Recent work further strengthens the argument for such integration. Systemic approaches to stakeholder value creation emphasize that value emerges through networks of interdependence rather than through isolated bilateral exchanges [1]. Circular and sustainability-oriented scholarship similarly shows that organizations require stakeholder governance structures capable of aligning diverse motivations around shared outcomes [2, 19]. Socially embedded approaches emphasize responsibility for maintaining connections and relationships as part of the value-creation process itself [10]. Meanwhile, contemporary co-creation practices across health, urban, environmental, cultural, and business contexts demonstrate that engagement is increasingly being institutionalized as a mechanism for designing interventions, governing systems, and generating knowledge collectively [25, 28, 32]. Despite this development, the literature has not yet produced a sufficiently comprehensive account of the motivational mechanisms that bring stakeholders into these processes and sustain their contribution over time.

Accordingly, the aim of this systematic review is to identify, categorize, and synthesize the principal motivations underlying stakeholder engagement and to clarify how these motivations contribute to different forms and mechanisms of value creation across organizational and societal contexts.

2. Methods and Materials

This study employed a systematic review design to identify, synthesize, and critically examine the existing scholarly literature on the motivations underlying stakeholder engagement in value creation. The review was conducted in accordance with the principles of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to ensure transparency, methodological rigor, reproducibility, and comprehensiveness throughout the identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion processes. The unit of analysis consisted of peer-reviewed empirical and conceptual studies addressing stakeholder engagement motivations in relation to value creation, co-creation, collaborative value generation, stakeholder participation, or closely related organizational processes. A comprehensive search initially identified 1,284 records across the selected electronic databases. After the removal of 327 duplicate records, 957 unique publications remained for title and abstract screening. At this stage, 721 records were excluded because they did not directly address stakeholder engagement, stakeholder motivations, or value-creation processes. The full texts of the remaining 236 articles were subsequently assessed for eligibility. Following full-text evaluation, 187 articles were excluded because they did not explicitly investigate motivations for stakeholder engagement, addressed stakeholder participation without a value-creation perspective, were non-peer-reviewed publications, lacked sufficient methodological or conceptual information, or did not meet the predefined language and publication-type criteria. Consequently, 49 studies satisfied all eligibility requirements and constituted the final corpus of the systematic review. Studies were considered eligible when they were published in peer-reviewed academic journals, were available in English, provided substantive analysis of stakeholder engagement or participation, explicitly or implicitly addressed motivational antecedents of engagement, and linked engagement to organizational, social, relational, economic,

environmental, or other forms of value creation. Both qualitative and quantitative empirical studies, mixed-methods investigations, and theoretically grounded conceptual studies were included to capture the multidimensional nature of stakeholder engagement motivation. Studies were excluded when they focused exclusively on shareholder behavior, customer purchasing intentions without an engagement dimension, employee motivation unrelated to stakeholder relationships, purely technical value-creation mechanisms, or stakeholder identification without examining engagement motivations. Conference abstracts, dissertations, book reviews, editorials, non-academic reports, and publications for which complete texts were unavailable were also excluded. No restrictions were imposed regarding industry, organizational size, stakeholder category, or geographical setting, because the purpose of the review was to develop an integrative understanding of stakeholder engagement motivations across different institutional and organizational contexts.

Data were collected through a structured and comprehensive electronic literature search designed to maximize the retrieval of relevant studies while maintaining conceptual specificity. The principal academic databases searched were Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and ProQuest, as these databases provide broad coverage of management, business, organizational studies, marketing, sustainability, corporate social responsibility, entrepreneurship, and stakeholder research. Google Scholar was additionally used as a supplementary source to identify potentially relevant studies that might not have been retrieved through the principal database searches and to conduct backward and forward citation tracking of influential publications. Search terms were developed on the basis of the core concepts of stakeholder engagement, motivation, and value creation and were combined using Boolean operators. The principal search strategy incorporated combinations of terms such as “stakeholder engagement,” “stakeholder participation,” “stakeholder involvement,” “stakeholder collaboration,” “stakeholder interaction,” “engagement motivation,” “motivation for engagement,” “engagement drivers,” “stakeholder motives,” “value creation,” “value co-creation,” “collaborative value creation,” “shared value,” and “value generation.” Search strings were adapted to the syntax and indexing requirements of each database while maintaining conceptual equivalence across sources. The search covered publications available up to October 2026 in order to incorporate both foundational contributions and the most recent developments in stakeholder engagement and value-creation research. Following retrieval, bibliographic information for all identified publications was organized systematically, and duplicate records were identified through comparison of titles, authors, publication years, journal names, and digital object identifiers. Screening was conducted sequentially at the title, abstract, and full-text levels according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. A standardized data extraction form was developed to ensure consistency in recording information from the final 49 studies. For each included publication, the extraction form captured authorship, publication year, country or geographical context, study setting, theoretical framework, research design, stakeholder category, organizational context, conceptualization of stakeholder engagement, identified engagement motivations, mechanisms of stakeholder participation, forms of value created, principal findings, and reported relationships between engagement motivations and value-creation outcomes. Particular attention was given to distinguishing intrinsic motivations, extrinsic motivations, relational motivations, instrumental motivations, moral or normative motivations, strategic motivations, knowledge-related motivations, legitimacy-oriented motivations, and sustainability-related motivations. Information concerning the type of value generated was also recorded, including economic, functional, relational, social, environmental, experiential, reputational, innovative, and shared forms of value. Citation chaining was used to strengthen the completeness of the search, with reference lists of eligible articles examined for additional studies and subsequent publications citing influential studies reviewed for

potential inclusion. This multi-stage data collection procedure provided a structured evidence base for identifying both recurrent patterns and less frequently examined motivations within the stakeholder engagement literature.

The extracted evidence was analyzed through a systematic qualitative synthesis combining descriptive analysis, thematic analysis, and conceptual categorization. Analysis began with repeated examination of the 49 included studies to obtain an overall understanding of how stakeholder engagement motivations had been conceptualized, operationalized, and connected to value creation across different research traditions. Descriptive information was first synthesized to characterize the development of the literature in terms of publication period, methodological orientation, organizational setting, stakeholder type, theoretical perspective, and geographical context. The substantive analysis then followed an inductive-deductive thematic procedure. In the initial coding phase, statements, concepts, variables, themes, and findings associated with reasons for stakeholder engagement were extracted from each study and assigned preliminary codes. Similar codes were subsequently compared, consolidated, and organized into broader conceptual categories. The coding process focused particularly on identifying why stakeholders choose to engage, why organizations seek stakeholder engagement, what conditions stimulate or inhibit engagement, and how specific motivations are associated with different forms of value creation. Through iterative comparison across studies, motivational factors were grouped into higher-order themes representing major motivational domains, including instrumental and economic motivations, relational and trust-based motivations, knowledge and learning motivations, innovation-oriented motivations, legitimacy and reputation motivations, ethical and normative motivations, social and community motivations, sustainability-related motivations, and opportunities for influence, participation, and reciprocal benefit. The analysis also distinguished motivations according to their primary locus by examining whether engagement was predominantly initiated by organizational actors, external stakeholders, internal stakeholders, or through reciprocal interaction among multiple stakeholder groups. Particular attention was given to the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational mechanisms and between short-term transactional incentives and longer-term relational or normative motivations. In the subsequent stage, the identified motivational themes were compared with the forms of value creation reported in the reviewed studies in order to examine the mechanisms through which engagement motivations could contribute to economic, social, relational, environmental, innovative, experiential, and reputational value. Constant comparison was used throughout the analysis to identify convergent findings, conceptual differences, contradictory evidence, contextual contingencies, and underexplored relationships across the studies. Conceptual findings were further interpreted in relation to the theoretical perspectives employed in the literature, including stakeholder theory, resource dependence theory, social exchange theory, institutional theory, legitimacy theory, self-determination perspectives, service-dominant logic, and value co-creation approaches. Methodological quality and relevance were considered during interpretation to prevent isolated or weakly supported findings from receiving the same analytical weight as patterns repeatedly observed across multiple studies. The final synthesis integrated the resulting categories into a coherent conceptual account of stakeholder engagement motivations and their relationship with value-creation processes. This analytical procedure enabled the review to move beyond a descriptive summary of prior studies and to identify the principal motivational mechanisms, contextual conditions, theoretical explanations, and value-creation consequences that collectively characterize the existing body of knowledge on stakeholder engagement.

3. Findings and Results

The systematic search and screening process resulted in a final analytical corpus of 49 studies examining stakeholder engagement motivations in relation to value creation. The initial database search generated 1,284 records from Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, ProQuest, and supplementary searches conducted through Google Scholar and citation tracking. After the removal of 327 duplicate records, 957 unique records remained for title and abstract screening. At this stage, 721 publications were excluded because their substantive focus was unrelated to stakeholder engagement motivations, they examined stakeholder management without considering active engagement, or they addressed value creation independently of stakeholder participation. The full texts of 236 potentially eligible articles were subsequently examined against the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Of these, 187 studies were excluded during full-text assessment. The principal reasons for exclusion were the absence of an identifiable motivational dimension of stakeholder engagement, insufficient connection between engagement and value creation, exclusive concentration on customer purchasing behavior or employee motivation without a broader stakeholder perspective, lack of substantive empirical or conceptual analysis, and publication in formats that did not satisfy the eligibility criteria. The remaining 49 studies fulfilled all inclusion requirements and were retained for systematic synthesis. Examination of the included literature indicated considerable heterogeneity in research design, theoretical orientation, stakeholder population, organizational context, and type of value investigated. Nevertheless, a substantial degree of conceptual convergence emerged regarding the central motivations that encourage stakeholders and organizations to participate in value-creating relationships. The literature progressively shifted from an early instrumental interpretation of engagement, primarily concerned with organizational performance and resource acquisition, toward a broader understanding in which stakeholder engagement was treated as a reciprocal, relational, knowledge-intensive, legitimacy-enhancing, innovation-oriented, and sustainability-related process. This shift was particularly visible in more recent studies, which increasingly conceptualized stakeholders not merely as recipients or constraints on organizational activity but as active contributors to the creation, negotiation, and realization of multiple forms of value.

Table 1 summarizes the principal characteristics of the 49 studies included in the systematic review. The evidence base was classified according to publication period, methodological approach, geographical scope, organizational context, stakeholder orientation, and principal theoretical perspective. Because individual studies could draw on more than one theoretical perspective or investigate more than one stakeholder category, the categories relating to theoretical orientation and stakeholder groups were coded according to the dominant analytical emphasis of each study in order to maintain mutually interpretable distributions.

Table 1. General Characteristics of the Studies Included in the Systematic Review

Characteristic	Category	Number of Studies	Percentage
Publication period	2000–2009	5	10.20
	2010–2014	8	16.33
	2015–2019	14	28.57
	2020–2026	22	44.90
Methodological approach	Qualitative empirical	18	36.73
	Quantitative empirical	12	24.49
	Mixed methods	7	14.29
	Conceptual/theoretical	8	16.33
	Comparative/case-based synthesis	4	8.16

Geographical orientation	Europe	14	28.57
	North America	8	16.33
	Asia	10	20.41
	Australia/New Zealand	4	8.16
	Africa/Latin America/Middle East	5	10.20
	Multi-country/global	8	16.33
Organizational context	Private/business organizations	17	34.69
	Public-sector/governmental organizations	7	14.29
	Nonprofit/community organizations	5	10.20
	Cross-sector partnerships/networks	12	24.49
	Mixed or unspecified contexts	8	16.33
Dominant stakeholder focus	Customers/users	8	16.33
	Employees/internal stakeholders	6	12.24
	Communities/citizens	8	16.33
	Suppliers/business partners	5	10.20
	Government/regulators	4	8.16
	Multiple stakeholder groups	18	36.73
Dominant theoretical orientation	Stakeholder theory	15	30.61
	Social exchange/relational perspectives	7	14.29
	Service-dominant logic/value co-creation	7	14.29
	Institutional/legitimacy perspectives	6	12.24
	Resource dependence/resource-based perspectives	5	10.20
	Sustainability/CSR perspectives	5	10.20
	Other or integrative frameworks	4	8.16

As shown in Table 1, the literature on stakeholder engagement motivations and value creation has expanded considerably over time, with 22 of the 49 studies, representing 44.90% of the final sample, published between 2020 and 2026. An additional 14 studies, or 28.57%, were published between 2015 and 2019, indicating that nearly three quarters of the evidence base emerged after 2015. This distribution suggests increasing scholarly attention to stakeholder engagement as organizations have moved toward more collaborative, network-based, sustainability-oriented, and co-creative models of value generation. Qualitative research represented the largest methodological category, accounting for 18 studies or 36.73% of the sample, followed by quantitative studies at 24.49%. The prevalence of qualitative research reflects the interpretive and context-dependent nature of stakeholder motivations, which often require detailed examination of perceptions, relationships, expectations, and interactions that are difficult to capture exclusively through standardized measures. Nevertheless, the presence of quantitative and mixed-methods research demonstrates increasing attempts to operationalize stakeholder engagement and examine its antecedents and outcomes empirically. Geographically, the evidence was concentrated in Europe and Asia, although multi-country studies also constituted a substantial proportion of the sample. Private-sector organizations represented the most frequently examined organizational context, but almost one quarter of the studies investigated cross-sector partnerships and collaborative networks, highlighting the relevance of engagement beyond conventional firm-centered relationships. A particularly important finding was that 18 studies, representing 36.73% of the sample, investigated multiple stakeholder groups simultaneously rather than focusing on one isolated stakeholder category. This pattern reinforces the increasingly systemic interpretation of value creation. Stakeholder theory remained the dominant theoretical framework, but the substantial use of social exchange theory, service-dominant logic, legitimacy theory, resource dependence perspectives, and sustainability-oriented approaches indicates that stakeholder engagement motivations cannot be adequately explained through

a single theoretical lens. Instead, the reviewed literature portrays engagement as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped simultaneously by economic incentives, reciprocal relationships, resource interdependence, institutional expectations, normative commitments, knowledge exchange, and opportunities for collaborative value creation.

The thematic synthesis identified nine major motivational domains underlying stakeholder engagement in value-creation processes. These domains were not mutually exclusive. Rather, individual studies frequently reported several motivations operating simultaneously or sequentially. The analytical categories therefore represent dominant motivational mechanisms emerging from the evidence rather than independent explanatory variables. Table 2 summarizes the motivational domains, their principal components, the number of studies in which each theme appeared prominently, and the principal mechanisms through which they stimulated stakeholder engagement.

Table 2. Major Motivational Domains Underlying Stakeholder Engagement in Value Creation

Motivational Domain	Principal Motivational Components	Studies Identifying the Theme, n (%)	Main Engagement Mechanism
Instrumental and economic motivations	Financial benefits, efficiency, competitive advantage, access to markets, cost reduction, risk reduction, organizational performance	31 (63.27)	Stakeholders engage when participation is expected to generate tangible organizational or individual benefits
Relational and trust-based motivations	Trust, reciprocity, commitment, relationship continuity, mutual respect, belonging, social capital	35 (71.43)	Engagement develops through expectations of reciprocal and durable relationships
Knowledge and learning motivations	Knowledge exchange, information access, collective learning, expertise acquisition, problem understanding, capability development	33 (67.35)	Engagement enables actors to combine distributed knowledge and improve decision quality
Innovation-oriented motivations	Idea generation, creativity, experimentation, product/service development, opportunity recognition, solution co-development	27 (55.10)	Stakeholder diversity provides complementary perspectives and resources for innovation
Legitimacy and reputational motivations	Social acceptance, credibility, transparency, accountability, stakeholder approval, reputation, license to operate	24 (48.98)	Engagement strengthens perceived legitimacy and reduces stakeholder opposition
Ethical and normative motivations	Moral obligation, fairness, inclusion, stakeholder rights, responsibility, procedural justice, democratic participation	22 (44.90)	Engagement is pursued because stakeholder participation is viewed as intrinsically appropriate or ethically required
Sustainability and societal motivations	Environmental protection, social impact, long-term sustainability, community development, shared societal challenges	26 (53.06)	Engagement mobilizes collective action toward social and environmental objectives
Influence and participation motivations	Voice, representation, decision influence, autonomy, empowerment, control over outcomes	25 (51.02)	Stakeholders participate when they can meaningfully affect decisions and outcomes
Strategic alignment and shared-purpose motivations	Goal congruence, shared vision, common interests, coordinated strategy, collective purpose, long-term partnership	29 (59.18)	Engagement is sustained when actors perceive compatible goals and interdependent interests

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that stakeholder engagement motivations are fundamentally multidimensional and cannot be reduced to financial incentives or organizational self-interest. Relational and trust-based motivations constituted the most frequently identified motivational domain, appearing prominently in 35 studies, or 71.43% of the reviewed literature. Trust operated not simply as an antecedent of engagement but also as a mechanism that reduced perceived relational risk, encouraged information sharing, enhanced willingness to invest resources in collaborative processes, and facilitated continued participation despite uncertainty regarding immediate returns. Knowledge and learning motivations represented the second most prevalent category,

identified in 33 studies or 67.35% of the sample. The reviewed studies repeatedly demonstrated that organizations engage stakeholders because relevant knowledge is dispersed across organizational boundaries and because customers, suppliers, employees, communities, regulators, and other actors possess experiential or technical knowledge that cannot be generated internally. Instrumental and economic motivations were identified in 31 studies, confirming that strategic self-interest remains central to stakeholder engagement. However, economic motives were rarely presented as sufficient by themselves; rather, they tended to coexist with relational, informational, reputational, or innovation-related considerations. Strategic alignment and shared purpose were evident in 29 studies and represented an important bridge between transactional and relational perspectives because stakeholders were more likely to remain engaged when they perceived that participation contributed to objectives compatible with their own interests or values. Innovation-oriented motivations appeared in 27 studies, demonstrating that organizations increasingly seek stakeholder engagement as a means of accessing diverse ideas, detecting emerging needs, improving products and services, and collaboratively generating solutions to complex problems. Sustainability and societal motivations were present in 26 studies, particularly in research involving communities, public organizations, sustainability initiatives, and cross-sector partnerships. Influence and participation motivations were identified in 25 studies and were especially important from the stakeholder perspective: actors were considerably more willing to contribute time, knowledge, and resources when they perceived that their involvement could influence decisions rather than merely legitimize decisions already made. Legitimacy and reputational motivations appeared in approximately half of the reviewed studies, while ethical and normative motivations were identified in 44.90%. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that stakeholder engagement emerges from the interaction of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motives include financial return, performance improvement, risk reduction, reputation, and access to resources, whereas intrinsic and relational motives include participation, fairness, shared purpose, responsibility, trust, learning, and contribution to societal well-being. Sustainable engagement was most consistently associated with configurations in which several motivational domains reinforced one another rather than situations in which participation depended on a single incentive.

The reviewed literature demonstrated that stakeholder engagement produces a considerably broader spectrum of outcomes than conventional financial value. Eight major forms of value were identified through the thematic synthesis. These forms of value were frequently interdependent: for example, knowledge exchange could enhance innovation, innovation could improve economic performance, and relational value could facilitate both reputational and strategic benefits. Table 3 summarizes the principal types of value associated with stakeholder engagement and the engagement mechanisms through which these forms of value were produced.

Table 3. Forms of Value Associated with Stakeholder Engagement

Form of Value	Principal Manifestations	Studies Reporting the Value Form, n (%)	Dominant Engagement Mechanisms
Relational value	Trust, commitment, cooperation, stronger relationships, reduced conflict, social capital	36 (73.47)	Dialogue, reciprocity, transparency, repeated interaction, joint problem-solving
Knowledge and intellectual value	New knowledge, information quality, organizational learning, stakeholder insight, capability development	34 (69.39)	Knowledge exchange, consultation, collaborative learning, stakeholder feedback
Innovation value	New products, services, processes, business models, creative solutions	29 (59.18)	Co-design, experimentation, ideation, collaborative problem-solving

Economic and performance value	Revenue, efficiency, productivity, market access, cost reduction, competitive advantage	28 (57.14)	Resource sharing, market insight, coordination, improved decisions
Social and community value	Social inclusion, community development, stakeholder well-being, empowerment, social cohesion	25 (51.02)	Participatory governance, community involvement, shared initiatives
Legitimacy and reputational value	Credibility, social acceptance, stronger reputation, transparency, reduced resistance	23 (46.94)	Consultation, disclosure, inclusive participation, responsiveness
Environmental and sustainability value	Environmental improvement, resource conservation, sustainable practices, long-term resilience	22 (44.90)	Collective responsibility, sustainability partnerships, multi-actor coordination
Experiential and functional value	Improved stakeholder experience, service quality, relevance, usability, satisfaction	20 (40.82)	User participation, feedback integration, customization, co-production

Table 3 demonstrates that relational value was the most consistently reported outcome of stakeholder engagement, appearing in 36 studies or 73.47% of the sample. This finding is theoretically important because it suggests that relationship quality should not be viewed merely as an antecedent of value creation; it is itself an important form of value. Engagement generated stronger trust, commitment, cooperation, communication quality, and social capital, which subsequently facilitated additional value-creation activities. Knowledge and intellectual value represented the second most prevalent outcome, reported in 34 studies. Stakeholder participation improved organizations' access to specialized knowledge, contextual information, user experience, local expertise, emerging market information, and alternative interpretations of complex problems. Such knowledge frequently constituted an intermediate mechanism linking engagement to more visible outcomes. Innovation value was identified in 29 studies, reflecting the capacity of heterogeneous stakeholder networks to expand the range of ideas, perspectives, competencies, and problem-solving resources available to organizations. Economic and performance value was reported in 28 studies, confirming that stakeholder engagement may contribute to conventional organizational outcomes such as efficiency, productivity, market access, competitive advantage, and improved resource allocation. Importantly, however, the synthesis indicated that economic value was often generated indirectly through relational, knowledge, or innovation mechanisms rather than arising immediately from engagement itself. Social and community value appeared in slightly more than half of the included studies and was particularly prominent in public-sector, nonprofit, community, and cross-sector contexts. Legitimacy and reputational value was identified in 23 studies, where stakeholder engagement enhanced credibility by demonstrating responsiveness, transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability. Environmental and sustainability value appeared in 22 studies and was strongly associated with engagement processes involving multiple stakeholder groups whose cooperation was necessary to address challenges that no single organization could resolve independently. Experiential and functional value was the least frequently reported of the eight categories but remained substantial, appearing in 20 studies. It was particularly evident in customer, citizen, service-user, and co-design research, where direct participation improved the relevance, usability, customization, and perceived quality of products, services, or policies. Overall, the findings demonstrate that value creation through stakeholder engagement is plural rather than singular. Engagement may generate simultaneous benefits for organizations, stakeholders, relationships, communities, and broader social or environmental systems, and these forms of value frequently reinforce one another over time.

Cross-study comparison revealed that particular motivational domains were associated more strongly with certain forms of value, although the relationships were neither deterministic nor exclusive. The same motivation could generate several types of value, and the same form of value could arise from multiple motivational mechanisms. Nevertheless, recurring configurations were sufficiently consistent to permit an integrative mapping

of the principal motivation–engagement–value relationships. Table 4 presents the most prominent relationships identified across the 49 studies, together with the mechanisms that mediated or conditioned the translation of motivation into value.

Table 4. Integrative Relationships Between Stakeholder Engagement Motivations and Value-Creation Outcomes

Dominant Motivation	Typical Engagement Behavior	Primary Value Created	Secondary Value Created	Key Conditions Strengthening the Relationship
Instrumental and economic motivation	Resource exchange, consultation, strategic collaboration	Economic/performance value	Innovation and functional value	Clear benefits, measurable outcomes, resource complementarity
Relational and trust-based motivation	Open dialogue, repeated interaction, cooperation	Relational value	Knowledge, reputational, and economic value	Trust, reciprocity, continuity, perceived fairness
Knowledge and learning motivation	Information sharing, consultation, collaborative learning	Knowledge/intellectual value	Innovation and performance value	Openness, absorptive capacity, psychological safety, knowledge integration
Innovation-oriented motivation	Co-design, ideation, experimentation, joint development	Innovation value	Economic, experiential, and knowledge value	Stakeholder diversity, autonomy, resource availability, tolerance of uncertainty
Legitimacy and reputational motivation	Consultation, transparency, disclosure, responsive communication	Legitimacy/reputational value	Relational and risk-reduction value	Authentic participation, responsiveness, procedural transparency
Ethical and normative motivation	Inclusive participation, representation, deliberation	Social and relational value	Legitimacy and sustainability value	Procedural justice, respect, meaningful voice, ethical leadership
Sustainability and societal motivation	Multi-stakeholder collaboration, collective problem-solving	Environmental/social value	Reputational, relational, and innovation value	Shared responsibility, long-term orientation, cross-sector coordination
Influence and participation motivation	Deliberation, co-decision, participatory governance	Empowerment/social value	Relational, knowledge, and experiential value	Actual decision influence, autonomy, feedback on stakeholder input
Strategic alignment and shared-purpose motivation	Long-term partnership, coordinated action, joint planning	Relational and strategic value	Economic, sustainability, and innovation value	Goal congruence, role clarity, mutual dependence, shared vision

The relationships summarized in Table 4 demonstrate that stakeholder engagement creates value through identifiable behavioral mechanisms rather than through participation alone. Instrumental and economic motivations tended to produce resource exchange, strategic consultation, and performance-focused collaboration. These forms of participation were most strongly associated with economic and functional outcomes, particularly when stakeholders possessed complementary resources and when the expected benefits of collaboration were visible and measurable. However, purely instrumental relationships appeared more vulnerable to discontinuation when expected benefits declined, indicating that economic motivation alone was less likely to produce durable engagement. Relational and trust-based motivations, by contrast, supported repeated interaction, open communication, and willingness to exchange resources under conditions of uncertainty. Their most direct consequence was relational value, but their indirect effects extended to knowledge, reputation, and economic performance by reducing transaction costs and facilitating cooperation. Knowledge and learning motivations produced value primarily through information sharing, collective interpretation, and capability development. The effectiveness of these processes depended on the capacity of organizations to absorb, integrate, and act upon stakeholder knowledge rather than merely collect information. Innovation-oriented motivations generated

particularly strong connections with co-design, experimentation, and joint problem-solving. Their translation into innovation value depended on stakeholder diversity, autonomy, organizational openness, and the availability of mechanisms through which external ideas could be incorporated into organizational processes. Legitimacy and reputational motivations were primarily connected with consultation, transparency, and communication, but the findings showed a critical distinction between substantive and symbolic engagement. Where stakeholder participation was authentic and organizational responses to stakeholder concerns were visible, engagement improved legitimacy and trust. Where participation was perceived as symbolic, manipulative, or merely ceremonial, reputational motivations could undermine trust rather than strengthen it. Ethical and normative motivations were strongly associated with inclusive governance, fairness, representation, and social value because participation was treated as an appropriate end in itself rather than merely as an instrument for organizational objectives. Sustainability motivations generally generated the broadest stakeholder configurations because environmental and societal problems required coordination among organizations, communities, governments, experts, and other actors. Influence and participation motivations were especially important in determining the depth of stakeholder engagement; stakeholders were more likely to invest substantive effort when they possessed meaningful voice, autonomy, or decision influence. Finally, strategic alignment and shared purpose supported long-term collaboration because engagement was sustained by recognition of interdependence and compatible objectives. Across all motivational configurations, the most consistent finding was that motivations translated into value more effectively when engagement was meaningful, reciprocal, transparent, and capable of influencing organizational decisions.

Cross-Cutting Patterns in Stakeholder Engagement Motivation

The synthesis of the 49 studies revealed several cross-cutting patterns that extended beyond the individual motivational categories presented in the preceding tables. The first pattern concerned the coexistence of organizational and stakeholder motivations. Engagement was most successful when the motivations of organizations and stakeholders were mutually compatible, even when they were not identical. Organizations frequently initiated engagement to gain knowledge, reduce risk, improve innovation, strengthen legitimacy, or enhance organizational performance, whereas stakeholders often participated to obtain influence, recognition, access to information, social benefits, improved services, or opportunities to advance values and interests. These different motivational positions did not necessarily produce conflict. On the contrary, value creation was strongest when the engagement process enabled each party to obtain outcomes it considered meaningful. The evidence therefore supported a reciprocal rather than organization-centered interpretation of engagement motivation. Stakeholder engagement became sustainable when value was distributed sufficiently to preserve the willingness of participating actors to continue contributing resources, knowledge, legitimacy, or effort.

The second cross-cutting finding concerned the distinction between initial engagement motivation and continued engagement motivation. Instrumental benefits, external pressure, regulatory expectations, financial incentives, reputational concerns, or access to organizational resources could stimulate initial participation. However, continued engagement was more consistently associated with trust, perceived fairness, reciprocal benefits, meaningful participation, recognition, shared purpose, and evidence that stakeholder contributions had influenced outcomes. This distinction suggests that motivations evolve during the engagement process. A stakeholder may initially participate because of expected material benefits but subsequently remain engaged because relational ties, identification, learning opportunities, or shared commitment develop. Conversely, strong

initial motivation may deteriorate when stakeholders perceive that participation is symbolic or that their contributions do not affect decisions. Thus, motivation should be understood as dynamic rather than fixed.

A third recurring pattern concerned the importance of perceived meaningfulness. Across different stakeholder categories, engagement intensity increased when participants believed that their involvement served a substantive purpose and could produce observable consequences. Meaningfulness was evident when stakeholders understood why their participation was requested, how their contributions would be used, what decisions were open to influence, and what benefits might emerge for affected parties. Engagement processes characterized by unclear objectives, weak communication, or limited stakeholder influence frequently generated participation fatigue and declining commitment. The synthesis therefore distinguished stakeholder presence from stakeholder engagement. Attendance at meetings, consultation exercises, surveys, or communication events did not necessarily indicate meaningful engagement unless stakeholders possessed an opportunity to contribute knowledge, express preferences, shape outcomes, or participate in reciprocal exchange.

The fourth pattern involved the central role of trust as both an antecedent and an outcome of engagement. Trust increased stakeholders' willingness to share sensitive information, invest time, accept vulnerability, collaborate with actors holding different interests, and commit resources to uncertain projects. At the same time, well-designed engagement processes strengthened trust by increasing transparency, demonstrating responsiveness, and creating repeated opportunities for constructive interaction. This reciprocal relationship indicates a reinforcing cycle in which trust facilitates engagement and engagement, when experienced positively, further increases trust. However, the reverse pattern was also evident. Tokenistic consultation, unfulfilled commitments, selective disclosure, or failure to acknowledge stakeholder contributions weakened trust and reduced willingness to participate in future activities. Trust therefore functioned as one of the central mechanisms determining whether stakeholder engagement produced cumulative value or deteriorated into disengagement.

A fifth pattern concerned the role of power and influence. Although engagement was frequently described using collaborative terminology, the studies demonstrated that actors did not enter engagement processes with equal resources, authority, expertise, legitimacy, or bargaining power. Stakeholders with limited power could be invited to participate without possessing meaningful capacity to affect outcomes. In such cases, opportunities for influence and participation were weakened, and the motivational benefits of inclusion diminished. Studies reporting stronger value-creation outcomes generally described mechanisms that reduced asymmetries through accessible information, inclusive facilitation, transparent decision criteria, stakeholder representation, capacity building, or explicit allocation of decision rights. Thus, the motivational effect of stakeholder voice depended on whether voice was accompanied by credible influence.

The sixth pattern related to temporal orientation. Instrumental motivations frequently emphasized immediate or measurable benefits, whereas relational, normative, sustainability, and shared-purpose motivations were associated with longer-term engagement horizons. Long-term orientations encouraged stakeholders to tolerate temporary imbalances in benefits because they expected future reciprocity or valued continuity of the relationship. In contrast, engagement organized around short-term extraction of stakeholder knowledge or legitimacy often weakened commitment once participants recognized that the exchange was asymmetrical. Value creation therefore appeared more sustainable when engagement was conceptualized as an ongoing relationship rather than a discrete organizational intervention.

Stakeholder-Specific Motivational Patterns

Differences were also identified according to stakeholder category. Customer and user engagement was predominantly motivated by opportunities to improve products or services, personalize experiences, obtain functional benefits, express preferences, participate in innovation, and strengthen identification with organizations or brands. From the organizational perspective, customers were engaged principally to obtain market knowledge, detect unmet needs, improve innovation outcomes, and strengthen loyalty. The value generated in these relationships therefore tended to emphasize experiential, functional, knowledge, innovation, and economic dimensions.

Employee and internal stakeholder engagement displayed a somewhat different motivational structure. Participation was associated with autonomy, recognition, meaningful work, organizational identification, opportunities for learning, procedural fairness, and influence over organizational decisions. Organizations benefited through improved internal knowledge utilization, innovation, implementation quality, and stronger commitment. The literature suggested that employee engagement contributed particularly strongly to value creation when organizational systems enabled employees to convert their experiential knowledge into changes in procedures, products, services, or strategy.

Community and citizen engagement was more strongly associated with representation, social legitimacy, local knowledge, fairness, community well-being, environmental outcomes, and influence over decisions affecting collective interests. Community stakeholders were particularly sensitive to whether participation was perceived as authentic and whether organizations recognized local knowledge and stakeholder rights. The resulting value was frequently social, relational, environmental, and legitimacy-based rather than exclusively economic.

Supplier and business-partner engagement was predominantly motivated by interdependence, access to resources, innovation opportunities, risk sharing, long-term relationship benefits, supply reliability, and strategic alignment. These relationships demonstrated particularly strong links between trust and economic performance because effective collaboration required partners to exchange proprietary knowledge, coordinate investments, and accept mutual dependence. Value therefore emerged through efficiency improvements, innovation, risk reduction, learning, and relationship stability.

Governmental and regulatory stakeholders were generally engaged because organizations sought legitimacy, regulatory understanding, compliance certainty, access to institutional resources, or opportunities to shape emerging policies. From the public-sector perspective, engagement with organizations and communities was motivated by information needs, policy effectiveness, accountability, public acceptance, and collaborative problem-solving. These relationships emphasized legitimacy, knowledge, social value, and risk reduction.

The studies examining multiple stakeholder groups provided the strongest evidence for the systemic nature of value creation. These studies demonstrated that motivations and outcomes could not always be attributed to bilateral relationships between a focal organization and one stakeholder group. Instead, engagement frequently occurred through networks in which the knowledge, legitimacy, resources, or participation of one stakeholder affected the value obtained by others. For example, community participation could increase legitimacy, regulatory collaboration could reduce uncertainty, supplier knowledge could enhance innovation, and customer feedback could improve functional outcomes within the same value-creation system. Consequently, the value generated through engagement was often collective and distributed rather than appropriated exclusively by the focal organization.

The overall synthesis indicates that stakeholder engagement motivations can be interpreted as a layered motivational system consisting of instrumental, relational, cognitive, participatory, normative, and societal

dimensions. Instrumental motivations explain why actors seek tangible benefits from participation; relational motivations explain why they commit to reciprocal and enduring interactions; cognitive motivations explain their interest in knowledge, learning, and innovation; participatory motivations explain the importance of influence, voice, and autonomy; normative motivations explain engagement grounded in fairness, responsibility, and legitimacy; and societal motivations explain engagement directed toward sustainability and collective well-being. These dimensions operate simultaneously rather than independently, and their relative importance varies according to stakeholder type, organizational context, temporal horizon, and the nature of the value-creation challenge.

The findings further indicate that stakeholder engagement should not be treated as a direct predictor of value creation without considering the quality of engagement. Merely increasing the frequency of stakeholder interactions does not necessarily produce higher value. Instead, the reviewed studies consistently pointed to the importance of reciprocity, trust, meaningful influence, transparency, inclusion, knowledge integration, goal alignment, and responsiveness. These factors functioned as mechanisms through which motivation was transformed into active participation and through which participation was subsequently converted into value. When these mechanisms were present, engagement produced reinforcing cycles: stakeholders experienced benefits and influence, their willingness to participate increased, relational and knowledge resources accumulated, and new opportunities for value creation emerged. When these mechanisms were absent, the opposite process could occur, resulting in stakeholder fatigue, distrust, withdrawal, conflict, or reduced willingness to contribute knowledge and resources.

A final integrative finding concerned the transition from value creation for stakeholders to value creation with stakeholders. Earlier studies more frequently conceptualized stakeholders as groups whose needs had to be identified and managed in order to preserve organizational performance or legitimacy. More recent research increasingly viewed stakeholders as co-creators whose resources, knowledge, interpretations, relationships, and agency constitute essential inputs into the value-creation process itself. Under this perspective, stakeholder engagement is not merely a communication activity surrounding value creation; it is part of the architecture through which value is generated. The systematic review therefore demonstrates that motivation occupies a central position in this process because stakeholders contribute meaningfully only when they perceive sufficient reasons to invest their attention, knowledge, legitimacy, relationships, or other resources. Sustainable value creation consequently depends not only on identifying relevant stakeholders but also on understanding the heterogeneous motivations that initiate participation, sustain engagement over time, and determine the quality and depth of stakeholder contributions.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present systematic review examined the motivations underlying stakeholder engagement in value-creation processes and synthesized evidence from 49 studies across diverse organizational, sectoral, and geographical contexts. The findings showed that stakeholder engagement is motivated by a combination of instrumental and economic considerations, relational and trust-based factors, knowledge and learning needs, innovation opportunities, legitimacy and reputation concerns, ethical and normative commitments, sustainability objectives, influence and participation expectations, and strategic alignment around shared purposes. The review further demonstrated that these motivations are associated with multiple forms of value, including relational, knowledge, innovation, economic, social, reputational, environmental, experiential, and functional value. Taken together, the

results support a multidimensional and systemic interpretation of stakeholder engagement in which motivations operate simultaneously, evolve over time, and influence the quality and sustainability of value creation. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary systemic approaches that conceptualize stakeholder value creation as an outcome of interconnected relationships rather than isolated exchanges between a focal organization and individual stakeholder groups [1].

One of the strongest findings was the predominance of relational and trust-based motivations, which were identified in 35 of the 49 reviewed studies. This result indicates that stakeholder engagement is sustained not merely through tangible incentives but through perceptions of reciprocity, reliability, mutual respect, commitment, and relational continuity. Trust appears to reduce uncertainty and perceived vulnerability, thereby increasing stakeholders' willingness to exchange information, contribute resources, and remain engaged even when immediate benefits are not guaranteed. This finding aligns closely with research on public–private partnerships, where dynamic trust has been shown to influence collaborative value creation and the stability of stakeholder relationships [5]. It is also consistent with evidence from urban co-creation and co-governance showing that trust-building is particularly important in settings where social structures are weak and collaboration depends on the establishment of credible relationships among heterogeneous actors [9]. Similarly, participatory systems may generate value through social connections themselves, suggesting that relational quality should be considered both a motivational antecedent and a form of value created through engagement [10]. The present findings therefore support a recursive interpretation of trust: trust motivates engagement, engagement can reinforce trust, and strengthened trust subsequently facilitates deeper and more productive forms of collaboration.

Knowledge and learning motivations were the second most prevalent category, appearing in 33 studies. This finding suggests that stakeholders frequently engage because participation enables access to information, expertise, experiential knowledge, learning opportunities, and collective problem-solving capabilities that are unavailable to individual actors working in isolation. The importance of knowledge-based motivation is consistent with open innovation research, which emphasizes the role of knowledge-management systems, openness, and organizational structures in enabling external knowledge to contribute to shared value creation [11]. The result is also supported by studies of stakeholder engagement in B2B innovation, where engagement has been conceptualized as a journey involving repeated interactions through which knowledge is exchanged and innovation opportunities are progressively developed [12]. Crowdsourcing research similarly illustrates the capacity of organizations to mobilize dispersed stakeholder knowledge to generate value through collective contribution [13]. However, the findings also show that knowledge acquisition alone does not guarantee value creation. Organizations must possess the capacity to interpret, integrate, and act upon stakeholder knowledge. This interpretation is reinforced by evidence that project complexity and uncertainty can moderate the relationship between value-creation processes and project outcomes [14]. Thus, knowledge motivation contributes most effectively to value creation when engagement structures facilitate both knowledge exchange and organizational absorption.

Instrumental and economic motivations were identified in 31 studies, confirming that stakeholders and organizations continue to evaluate engagement in terms of tangible benefits such as efficiency, cost reduction, market access, competitive advantage, risk reduction, and performance improvement. This result is consistent with strategic alliance research showing that value co-creation may generate economic and organizational benefits through the integration of complementary capabilities and resources [4]. It also corresponds with stakeholder governance perspectives in the circular economy, where a convincing business case often depends on demonstrating how stakeholder participation contributes to organizational and societal value simultaneously [19].

Nevertheless, the present review indicates that purely instrumental engagement is comparatively fragile. When participation is based exclusively on immediate returns, stakeholders may disengage once expected benefits decline or alternative opportunities emerge. More enduring engagement appears to occur when instrumental incentives become embedded within relational, normative, or shared-purpose structures. This finding supports research on business ecosystems emphasizing that stakeholder roles and motivations must be coordinated in ways that sustain participation beyond isolated transactions [7].

Strategic alignment and shared purpose were also prominent, appearing in 29 studies. This result demonstrates that stakeholders are more willing to sustain engagement when they perceive compatibility between their own objectives and the broader goals of the collaborative arrangement. Purposeful ecosystem orchestration similarly depends on identifying complementary roles and aligning heterogeneous interests around a coherent collective direction [8]. Shared purpose appears particularly important in sustainability-oriented and systemic transformations, where no single actor can independently achieve the desired outcome. Research on regional bioeconomy transitions has shown that co-creation and stakeholder engagement are necessary for systemic change because rural development, innovation, policy, and environmental objectives are distributed across multiple actors [3]. Comparable evidence has emerged in circular economy research, where stakeholder-centered approaches are essential for coordinating actors across complex value chains and institutional arrangements [2]. These findings indicate that alignment does not require complete agreement among stakeholders. Rather, it requires sufficient convergence around shared objectives to justify continued cooperation despite differences in interests, authority, or preferred outcomes.

Innovation-oriented motivations were identified in 27 studies and were closely associated with co-design, experimentation, idea generation, and collaborative problem-solving. This result confirms that stakeholder heterogeneity can be an important source of innovation because different actors contribute complementary knowledge, experiences, and interpretive perspectives. The finding is consistent with evidence from urban living labs, where collaborative experimentation facilitates the creation of value through interaction among citizens, organizations, researchers, and public institutions [23]. Innovation ecosystems likewise depend on mechanisms that enable different stakeholders to collaborate around shared development objectives [6]. The same pattern is visible in healthcare co-creation, where stakeholder involvement can improve intervention relevance by incorporating practical and experiential knowledge into design processes [28]. The present findings therefore support the view that innovation-oriented engagement is not simply a mechanism for collecting ideas but a structured process through which diverse actors jointly redefine problems and develop solutions.

Sustainability and societal motivations appeared in 26 studies, demonstrating that stakeholder engagement increasingly extends beyond direct organizational benefits to include environmental protection, social impact, community development, resilience, and long-term societal transformation. This pattern is consistent with research showing that stakeholder engagement can contribute to the development of sustainability-oriented organizational cultures [18]. It also aligns with studies of climate-related co-creation, which emphasize that collaborative action depends on strengthening motivational drivers while reducing barriers to participation [22]. Circular entrepreneurship similarly illustrates how stakeholder engagement can connect entrepreneurial activity with environmental and social forms of value creation [20]. Sustainable startups may also mobilize stakeholder networks to overcome market constraints and generate transformative change [21]. The current review therefore reinforces the proposition that sustainability-related value creation is fundamentally relational and collective because

environmental and social challenges typically exceed the resources, authority, or capabilities of individual organizations.

Influence and participation motivations were identified in 25 studies and emerged as particularly important from the stakeholder perspective. Stakeholders were more likely to engage substantively when they believed that their participation could influence decisions, shape outcomes, or provide meaningful representation. This finding is consistent with studies of participatory health interventions, where involvement generates value not only through outcomes but also through the experience of being heard and contributing to collective decisions [17]. Research on co-creation in healthier food retail environments similarly indicates that stakeholder motivation may differ according to the stage and depth of engagement and whether participants perceive genuine opportunities to shape initiatives [26]. Further case-based evidence has demonstrated that sustained co-creation requires reconciliation of organizational and community priorities rather than one-directional consultation [27]. These findings support an important distinction between participation and meaningful engagement. Merely inviting stakeholders to meetings or consultation exercises does not ensure motivation. Influence must be credible, visible, and sufficiently consequential for participants to perceive their involvement as worthwhile.

Legitimacy and reputational motivations were also prominent, appearing in 24 studies. Organizations frequently engage stakeholders to strengthen credibility, transparency, accountability, and social acceptance. Such motives are particularly relevant when organizations operate in contested environments or depend on community, regulatory, or public approval. Research on CSR communication demonstrates that stakeholder perceptions are influenced by the perceived credibility and source of responsibility-related information [38]. This finding suggests that legitimacy cannot be produced simply by communicating positive organizational intentions; rather, stakeholders evaluate whether engagement is authentic and whether organizational actions correspond with stated commitments. The present review also found that symbolic participation may produce the opposite of the intended effect by generating distrust or cynicism. This interpretation is consistent with studies showing that stakeholder engagement during crisis conditions requires adaptive, substantive, and responsive strategies rather than purely reputational communication [30].

Ethical and normative motivations were identified in 22 studies and included fairness, responsibility, inclusion, stakeholder rights, procedural justice, and moral obligation. This result demonstrates that stakeholder engagement cannot be interpreted solely through strategic or economic logic. Moral foundations may shape whether organizations recognize stakeholder interests as intrinsically legitimate rather than merely useful for organizational performance [15]. Consumer-dominant perspectives similarly emphasize that individuals should not be treated merely as targets of organizational interventions but as active participants whose agency and preferences are relevant to value creation [16]. In urban regeneration, citizen involvement and community participation likewise contribute to inclusive forms of value by enabling affected groups to participate directly in transformation processes [24]. These findings reinforce the normative dimension of stakeholder engagement and suggest that procedural fairness may itself constitute a valued outcome.

The review also demonstrated that value created through stakeholder engagement is multidimensional. Relational value was the most frequently reported outcome, followed by knowledge, innovation, economic, social, reputational, environmental, and experiential value. The prominence of relational value is particularly significant because it indicates that the quality of relationships is not merely an enabling condition for value creation but an outcome worthy of consideration in its own right. Internal stakeholder research supports this interpretation by showing that engagement and co-creation can contribute to organizational identity and brand development

through strengthened relationships among internal actors [34]. Similarly, values-led communication approaches illustrate how shared values and communicative processes can strengthen stakeholder relationships in socially oriented initiatives [33]. Cultural and experiential contexts also demonstrate that value cannot be reduced to economic indicators. Research on cultural activities has shown that economic-centered evaluation can overlook social, symbolic, and community value [31], while work on museums emphasizes inclusion, well-being, accessibility, and human-centered experience as important dimensions of value [32].

A further important finding was the distinction between initial and sustained engagement motivation. Instrumental incentives, reputational considerations, regulatory pressure, or access to resources may be sufficient to initiate participation, but continued engagement appears to depend more strongly on trust, perceived fairness, reciprocal benefits, recognition, meaningful influence, and shared purpose. This suggests that motivation is dynamic rather than fixed. Stakeholder motives can evolve through interaction as participants accumulate experience and reassess the costs and benefits of engagement. The possibility of negative motivational trajectories is equally important. Value co-creation may shift toward value co-destruction when relationships become exploitative, expectations are violated, or coordination mechanisms fail [36]. Stakeholder dynamics in complex projects can likewise create conflict when interests, resources, and power are misaligned [37]. The present review therefore supports a process-oriented understanding in which engagement motivation must be continually reproduced through credible interaction rather than assumed to remain stable once participation begins.

The findings further indicate that power asymmetries significantly influence stakeholder motivation. Actors differ in authority, expertise, resources, legitimacy, and access to decision-making processes. Engagement may therefore be formally inclusive while remaining substantively unequal. The review showed that meaningful voice, transparency, role clarity, and credible mechanisms for incorporating stakeholder contributions strengthen motivation, whereas tokenistic participation weakens it. Practical co-creation frameworks similarly emphasize structured processes that enable stakeholders to participate across stages of problem definition, solution development, and implementation [25]. Large-scale engagement initiatives also demonstrate the importance of representation, relevance, and trust in sustaining participation in socially oriented programs [29]. Thus, engagement quality depends not only on the number of stakeholders involved but on how influence and decision rights are distributed.

Overall, the findings indicate a transition from a firm-centered model of value creation toward a relational and systemic model of value creation with stakeholders. Rather than treating stakeholders as external groups whose interests must simply be managed, the reviewed literature increasingly conceptualizes them as contributors of knowledge, legitimacy, relationships, resources, and experiential insight. This interpretation is compatible with systemic stakeholder value-creation frameworks that emphasize interdependence among actors [1]. It also explains why engagement motivations differ across sectors and stakeholder groups: different participants contribute different resources and therefore expect different forms of value in return. The most sustainable value-creation processes appear to be those in which instrumental, relational, normative, and collective motivations reinforce one another and in which organizations provide credible opportunities for participation, learning, reciprocity, and influence.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this systematic review. First, the review was restricted to English-language academic publications, which may have excluded relevant evidence from non-English research traditions and reduced the representation of locally specific stakeholder practices. Second, although the review incorporated studies from multiple sectors and geographical contexts, the evidence

base was uneven, with comparatively greater representation of European and business-oriented research than some developing-region and community-based contexts. Third, the included studies differed substantially in their theoretical frameworks, methodological designs, stakeholder definitions, and conceptualizations of value creation, which limited direct comparability and required the synthesis to operate at a relatively high level of conceptual abstraction. Fourth, the classification of motivations into thematic domains necessarily involved interpretive judgment, particularly because individual studies often reported overlapping motives that could reasonably be assigned to more than one category. Fifth, the review included empirical and conceptual studies, which strengthened theoretical breadth but also introduced variation in the strength and nature of the evidence supporting particular relationships. Finally, the review primarily identified recurring patterns in the literature and therefore cannot establish causal relationships between specific motivations, engagement behaviors, and value-creation outcomes.

Future research should examine stakeholder engagement motivations using longitudinal designs capable of tracing how motives change from initial participation through sustained collaboration, disengagement, or re-engagement. Greater attention should be given to motivational configurations rather than isolated factors, particularly the interaction between instrumental, relational, normative, and sustainability-related motives. Comparative studies across countries, industries, institutional systems, and stakeholder categories would help determine which motivational mechanisms are context-specific and which are relatively generalizable. Future studies should also investigate power asymmetries more explicitly by examining how differences in authority, resources, expertise, and decision rights shape perceived meaningfulness and willingness to participate. Quantitative research could develop and validate multidimensional measures of stakeholder engagement motivation and test the pathways linking motivation, engagement quality, and specific forms of value. Researchers should also explore negative outcomes, including stakeholder fatigue, symbolic engagement, conflict, value co-destruction, and strategic withdrawal. More research is needed on underrepresented contexts such as emerging economies, community-based initiatives, small and medium-sized enterprises, and digitally mediated stakeholder ecosystems. Finally, future work should examine how digital platforms, artificial intelligence, virtual participation, and data-driven engagement mechanisms alter stakeholder motivations, perceived influence, trust, and value distribution.

Organizations should design stakeholder engagement processes around the motivations of specific stakeholder groups rather than applying uniform participation strategies. Managers should identify the tangible and intangible benefits that stakeholders expect from participation and ensure that engagement mechanisms provide clear opportunities for reciprocal value creation. Trust should be cultivated through transparency, consistency, responsiveness, and visible follow-through on commitments. Stakeholders should be informed about how their contributions are used, what decisions they can influence, and what outcomes result from their participation. Engagement should provide meaningful rather than symbolic voice, particularly for stakeholders with limited formal power. Organizations should also create mechanisms for integrating stakeholder knowledge into strategy, innovation, service design, and operational decisions so that participation produces observable consequences. Long-term engagement should be supported by shared goals, role clarity, recognition, and fair distribution of benefits. Practitioners should monitor stakeholder motivations over time because initial incentives may not be sufficient to sustain participation. Finally, value-creation assessments should move beyond financial outcomes and incorporate relational, social, environmental, knowledge, experiential, reputational, and innovation-related forms of value so that the full contribution of stakeholder engagement can be recognized and managed.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

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