

Special Session 8.5 Research and Methodological challenges in Research on Collaboration and Co-Creation of Value

Session Chairs:

Robert F. Lusch, University of Arizona

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Panelists:

Richard Bagozzi, University of Michigan

John Deighton, Harvard Business School

Neeli Bendapudi, Ohio State University

Christian Gronroos, Hanken Swedish School of Economics, Finland

Linda Price, University of Arizona

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Session Summary Writer:

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Eminent panelists dissect the emerging theoretical re-crystallization of economic activity, as a co-creation and consumption of value between participants, classically identified as producers and consumers. Value is emergent at the confluence of its producer and consumer and therefore the idea, that producer is the value creator and consumer is the value ‘destroyer,’ needs revision.

What challenges does this emergent abstraction of co-creation of value pose to the research community? Research has traditionally seen its role in answering questions on how best a producer may seek and serve consumer attention profitably. Thus, research has taken a production vantage point. However, if consumers co-create value then groups of producers are not competing for distal consumers. They *are* the consumers that co-produce too, thus necessitating a change in vantage point. If so, what are the germane research questions?

Price argues that there is a need to know about every aspect of collaboration and therefore every approach – for example, experiments, ethnography, or modeling—has a germane role in this enquiry. She highlights three different metaphors for framing research on collaboration and co creation. Considering co-authorship as a metaphor, she explores the questions of firm ownership and loyalty. Taking the producer-consumer metaphor, she highlights the fact that knowledge workers are both producers and consumers. Finally, she takes the ecosystem metaphor to suggest that, co-creations lead to filling the space in between participants embedded and interacting in an economic ecosystem.

Lusch makes the distinction between value in exchange and value in use. He argues that, while value in exchange might be created in a factory, the consumer is also a co-creator

of value in the use of the offering. Thus, it would be germane to focus on value in use rather than value in exchange

Methodologically, if value does not exist apart from the co-producing consumer, the unit of analysis is no longer market share or profitability but, time and place of the value creation and consumption. Thus, directionally this implies that research should take a phenomenological approach where the researcher immerses herself in the value creation process, to experience the value as a co-creator. A fallout challenge then, is objectivity in research.

The panelists posit in conclusion that the 'co-creation of value' notion raises the intriguing possibility of a discontinuity in the marketing research field, in terms of the research questions that need to be addressed and the methodologies that need to be adopted, in order to be viable and relevant as a profession.