

The Role of Actor Engagement in Experience Value Co-creation

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< Abstract >

This research investigates the role played by engagement in the experience value co-creation process. The importance of value co-creation first rose to prominence among researchers and practitioners in 2004, with the publication by Vargo and Lusch of an article entitled “*Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing*”. This article shifted the focus of marketing thinking from goods to service, with this new transcending view being called Service-dominant logic (S-D logic). Despite the wide study of S-D logic over the past 10 years, empirical studies in this field have been neither systematic nor comprehensive.

Regarding the limited empirical research on S-D logic, Vargo and Lusch (2017) noted that this is primarily because researchers in the area have always confused the aggregation and abstraction levels. Thus, in order to move forward, it would be useful for researchers to zoom in and out across levels of abstraction, so that the next frontier of this area becomes the microfoundation of S-D logic, that is the construct engagement.

Therefore, this study has two main research aims: (1) to develop a framework that conceptualizes actor engagement as a microfoundation of experience value co-creation, and (2) to use this framework to identify the actor engagement that takes place in a C2C e-commerce platform.

< Keywords >

Service-dominant logic, Experience value co-creation, Actor engagement, Micro-foundation, Service ecosystem

1. Introduction

1. 1. Background

The behaviors and cognitions of human beings are always guided by a specific institutional logic (Thornton and Ocasio 2008). In the marketing world, this kind of institutional logic is referred to as goods-dominant logic (G-D logic). From the G-D logic perspective, goods are operand resources and end products, manufacturers are responsible for altering their form, place, time and possession, the customer is the recipient of goods, and value is mainly determined by the manufacturers (Vargo and Lusch 2004). This type of logic is also sometimes termed “old enterprise logic” or “manufacturing logic”, or product orientation or marketing myopia (Vargo and Lusch, 2008, p. 25). However, as has often been the case throughout history, although institutional logic can provide us with a guideline, it can also restrict our

understanding and the advancement of scientific knowledge (Vargo and Lusch 2014). G-D logic, as mentioned before, is one such problematic logic that has persisted for 200 years.

Overtaking this situation, Lusch and Vargo (2004) published the groundbreaking article “Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing”. This article shifted the focus of marketing thought from goods to service, with the new transcending view being termed Service-dominant logic (S-D logic), defined as “a lens, a mindset, an act for a unified understanding of the purpose and nature of organizations, markets, and society” (Bolton et al. 2009; Vargo and Lusch 2008).

This paradigm shift came to present a threat to the traditional models of value creation through its extension of increased power to consumers, thus enabling them to take an increasingly active role in the value creation process. In contrast, however, traditional value creation theory treats marketing as a value-adding activity (Porter 1985) and producer; that is, the firm is the true creator of value. However, based on S-D logic, the outcome is not that important; instead, what is important is the value-creating process itself whereby different actors (e.g. suppliers, business partners, allies and customers) work together to co-create value. For example, it is not possible for the value of a car to be created solely by a car manufacturer; indeed, if the consumer does not know how to drive a car and has no car-related knowledge or skill, then a car has no meaning for the consumer aside from being a lump of metal. Hence, based on S-D logic, the value is co-created through the integration of multiple resources provided by both the manufacturer and consumer, with this notion forming the basis of value co-creation. Value co-creation is a joint, concurrent, peer-like process of producing a new value, both materially and symbolically (Galvagno and Dalli 2014). Moreover, in 2016, Vargo and Lusch proposed a new definition of S-D logic, emphasizing that the process is “one of resource-integrating, reciprocal-service providing actors cocreating value through holistic, meaning-laden experiences in nested and overlapping service ecosystems” (Vargo and Lusch 2016, p. 7).

Despite a number of researchers having indirectly included the meaning of “co-creation” in their publications over a long period of time, “cocreation” was initially used as a term only in 2000, when it was introduced by Prahalad and Ramaswamy. They proposed a transformation of the role played by the customer, from being “a passive audience” to “an active player” (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000).

1. 2. Theoretical foundations

With the development of value co-creation study, researchers proposed that the value creation process can be viewed not only as taking place during the manufacturing process but also within the consumption process. Thus, the research on value co-creation can be divided into “co-production and co-creation of value”, which make up the two principal components of value co-creation.

The first type of value co-creation is called *co-production* and is a process where the customer participates in the manufacturing process of the core offering; examples include co-design and shared

inventiveness. The value co-created in this process is mainly *cognitive perceived value*, which typically serves as a benefit to three actors. Firstly, for the manufacturer, this co-created value may take the form of increasing profits (Chan et al. 2010), a strong brand image and word-of-mouth communication (Payne et al. 2008), the quick response of suppliers (Wilhelm and Kohlbacher 2011) and the core competence of the company (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). Next, for the employees of the company, the co-created value can be seen as increased efficiency in the workplace and some degree of economic return (Chan et al. 2010). Finally, for consumers, this value relates mainly to the satisfaction of their needs, which can be regarded as perceived value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004).

The second component is called *co-creation of value* and occurs throughout the entire customer journey; in other words, it is derived through value-in-use or value-in-context (Lusch and Vargo 2006).

Co-creation of value is defined as the collaborative creation of value through the interaction of different actors; fundamentally, customers and the firm (Grönroos 2012; Ramaswamy 2011; Wu and Fang 2010). It reflects the fact that value is derived from personalized experiences instead of being embedded in the offering. It thus differs from the co-production process in that, with this kind of value co-creation, what is co-created is mainly *experience value* (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Schau 2009). Furthermore, Mukherjee and Venkatesh (2008) point out that the core of the experience value is fantasy and fun. To this end, the co-creation of value can also be termed *experience value co-creation*. One classic example that illustrates this theory is the concept underpinning the LEGO group. This is reflected in the content of their website's home page, which states: "Creative and engaging play has been at the heart of the LEGO group since 1932, and our brand values are multiple which are imagination, creativity, fun, learning, caring and quality." Thus, through these words, we can see that LEGO think of themselves not only as a manufacturer of plastic building bricks but also as a company that works to co-create an excellent experience with their consumers.

Moreover, when it comes to the empirical study of these two areas, it is interesting to note that the number of empirical studies on co-production greatly exceeds that for experience value co-creation. The most likely reason for this is the inadequacy of S-D logic. This is because co-production is still prone to follow the meaning of G-D logic, whereas based on S-D logic, value can only be created by the customer through value-in-use, and firms need to find a way of accessing customers in order to obtain that value (Grönroos 2006; Lusch and Vargo 2006; Saarijärvi et al. 2013).

1. 3. Research aims

The aims of this study are as follows: (1) to develop a framework that conceptualizes actor engagement as a microfoundation of experience value co-creation, and (2) to use this framework to identify the actor engagement taking place on a C2C e-commerce platform.

2. Literature review

2. 1. Research gap in value co-creation

While most of the focus of existing literature has been on the interaction between the company, or its employees, with the customer (Tsiros and Parasuraman 2006), marketers and researchers should also be aware that interactions among customers can have profound effects on the customer experience (Baron, Harris, and Davies 1996; Martin 1996; Martin and Pranter 1989). Even though marketers have realized the importance of building strong bonds between customers (e.g., the influence of a purchase pal, Woodside and Sims 1976), researchers and marketers ignored the call for creating relationships between customers and have focused primarily on creating relationships with customers. Customers can affect one another either directly or indirectly (Baker 1987; Bitner 1992). For example, crowding or standing too close to others can create anxiety (Bateson and Hui 1986; Fisher and Byrne 1975; Hall 1966).

On the other hand, customers can also affect other customers directly by the different roles that each customer may assume. For example, some customers are disruptive (e.g., talking loudly during a movie) while some may assist fellow customers by playing the role of an advisor, with the other customers assuming the role of advisers. McGrath and Otnes (1995) developed a typology of roles that strangers can play in a retail environment. They identified specific roles such as the help seeker, helper, competitor, and complainer, among others. The positive and negative effects of customer-to-customer interactions have been empirically documented for the tourism industry (Wu 2007).

Thus, based on the view of Brodie et al. (2011), Storbacka et al. (2016, p3009) extend consumer engagement to actor engagement. They define actor engagement as “both the disposition of actors to engage, and the activity of engaging in an interactive process of resource integration within the institutional context provided by a service ecosystem”.

Therefore, this study will put the focus on actor engagement and examine the role of actor engagement in experience value co-creation.

2. 2. Service ecosystem

A service ecosystem is defined as a ‘relatively self-contained, self-adjusting system of resource-integrating actors connected by shared institutional arrangements and mutual value creation through service exchange’ (Vargo and Lusch 2016, p. 11). According to the service ecosystems perspective, value creation emerges through the act of exchange at three different levels: a micro level where two actors exchange in the context of a dyad; a meso level where three actors, not all connected with each other, exchange in the context of a triad; and a macro level, where numerous actors all exchange directly or indirectly with each other in the context of a complex network (Chandler and Vargo 2011;

Vargo and Akaka 2012). These three levels should not be understood separately, but rather simultaneously through the concept of a “meta layer” that provides insight into how these three levels of interaction relate and evolve (Chandler and Vargo 2011). Alternatively, a service ecosystem perspective conceptualizes what value is and how it is co-created by joint efforts among firms, customers, and other actors (e.g., suppliers, government agencies, nonprofit organizations) (Vargo and Lusch 2008).

Service ecosystem view draws attention to multiple levels of interaction as drivers of value creation (Akaka, Vargo and Lusch 2013). Moreover, a service-ecosystem perspective draws on a dynamic systems approach to study the interaction and exchange of service among various actors. It emphasizes the role of institutions in governing interactions of several actors that participate in value creation (Williamson 2000).

Importantly, S-D logic promotes an extended contextual perspective, which includes social and cultural contexts within which value is created (Akaka, Vargo and Schau 2015). The discussion on service ecosystem mainly focuses on how phenomenological value emerges through interaction and application of resources within systems of service-for-service exchange.

3. Conceptual framework and hypothesis development

3.1 Conceptual framework

Based on the prior literature, the conceptual framework for the experience and engagement construct is established. The framework specifies the relationships between these two constructs, with the platform also having an impact as an environmental element. The following section justifies the relationships by reference to the literature review.

Experience is important in business practice because to some degree every economic offering is experienced (Van Doorn 2006). Moreover, Desmet and Hekkert (2007) also stated that “all actions and processes that are involved, such as physical actions and perceptual and cognitive processes (e.g. perceiving, exploring, using, remembering, comparing, and understanding), will contribute to the experience”.

Furthermore, engagement is a multidimensional and hierarchical concept, which means “a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experience with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships. It exists as a dynamic, iterative process within service relationships that co-create value. It is a multidimensional concept subject to a context and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral dimensions” (Brodie et al. 2011, p. 260). In this paper, we adopt the view of consumer engagement as a psychological construct and treat it as a cognitive process which has an impact on consumer behavioral outcomes and thus impacts the experience of consumers.

Multiple studies have already proved the existence of a relationship between engagement and

behavioral outcomes (Algesheimer et al. 2005; Cheung et al. 2014; Lehmann et al. 2013). First, in an experiment on retail shopping, Gonclaves (2009) found that increased engagement leads to increased willingness to pay in a shopping situation. In their study of consumer use of Facebook brand pages, De Vries and Carlson (2014) found engagement impacts brand loyalty, that is, the intention to say positive things about the brand.

Moreover, Desmet and Hekkert (2007) confirm that contrary to popular belief, “emotion is the result of a cognitive process, though often automatic and unconscious”. Thus, we propose that the engagement between multiple actors can provide experience value to each actor. In other words, depending on the level of engagement that an actor exhibits, the value that he or she derives from his or her experiences is different. In the conceptual framework, the experience value is hypothesized to result from the engagement that emerges from the interaction between actors.

3. 2. Platform as an environment variable

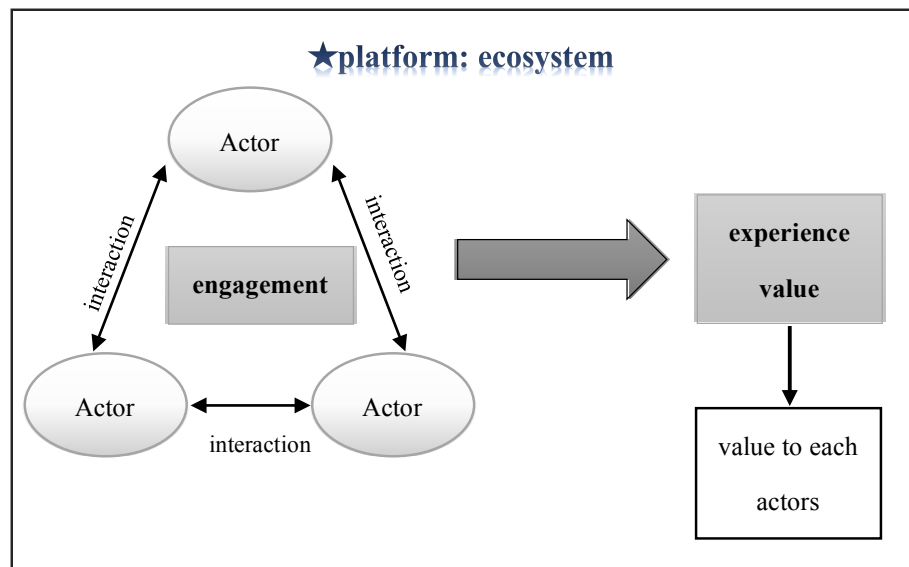
In addition, the experience is always influenced by the context; that is, the environment in which the interaction takes place. Frow et al. (2015) pointed out that effective co-creation is dependent on the existence of a platform on which actors are able to engage. Digital applications, such as websites, mobile applications, and social media, are the preferred engagement platforms. In this study, we treated the C2C e-commerce platform as the engagement platform where the engagement takes place. Wang and Liao (2008) conducted an empirical study by questionnaire with 119 users of G2C (government-to-citizen) eGovernment systems in Taiwan, seeking to measure the success of such systems from the citizen’s perspective. The empirical results show that the digital system plays a significant role as an environment actor. The prior literature also shows that the quality of website design has an indirect influence on behavioral intention through mediating variables such as attitude (Dedeke 2016; Pallud and Straub 2014). Therefore, this study proposes that the quality of engagement platforms may also influence actors’ engagement.

3. 3 Analysis subject: C2C e-commerce platform

A C2C e-commerce platform is an Internet-based consumer-to-consumer marketplace that allows ordinary consumers to trade new and second-hand goods. As such, a C2C e-commerce platform is akin to other C2C marketplaces such as village markets and garage sales (Belk et al. 1988; Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005; Sherry 1990). Buyers and sellers are typically ordinary consumers, rather than professional sellers running (Tang and Forster 2007). Recently, however, C2C e-commerce platform has also come to accommodate business-to-consumer (B2C) selling alongside C2C selling (Chu 2013). These websites utilize the ubiquity and convenience of the Internet to bring together millions of buyers and

sellers, and millions of goods for sale, in one virtual place (Tang & Forster, 2007). In so doing, they achieve economies of scale and enormous geographical coverage not possible in traditional C2C markets (Chu, 2013). For example, the Mercari covers all of Japan even America.

Figure 3.1 Conceptual model



Sources : Desmet and Hekkert (2007); Brodie et al. (2011)

3. 4. Development of hypothesis

Based on the characteristics of Mercari which has two important actors: buyers and sellers. This study developed two hypothesis models, one is standing on the buyers' side and one is standing on the sellers' side. Moreover, based on the conceptual framework this study proposed before that consumer who is highly engaged with the seller or the platform (C2C e-commerce platform) are likely to interact with them more frequently, thus affect their final experience value. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1a: Actors' engagement affects their experience value.

Figure 3.2 Hypothesis model standing on the buyers' side

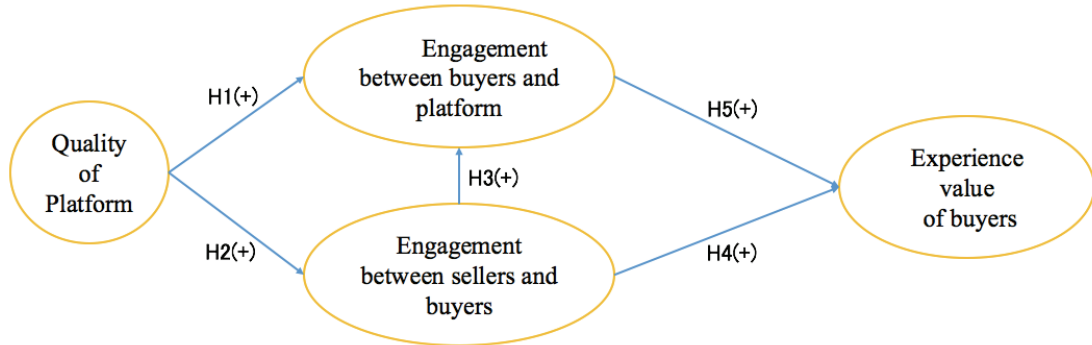


Table 3.1 Hypothesis standing on the buyers' side

H1	Quality of platform has a positive effect on engagement between buyers and platform.
H2	Quality of platform has a positive effect on engagement between sellers and buyers.
H3	Engagement between sellers and buyers has a positive effect on engagement between sellers and platform.
H4	Engagement between sellers and buyers has a positive effect on the experience value of buyers.
H5	Engagement between users and the platform has a positive effect on the experience value of buyers.

Figure 3.3 Hypothesis model standing on the sellers' side

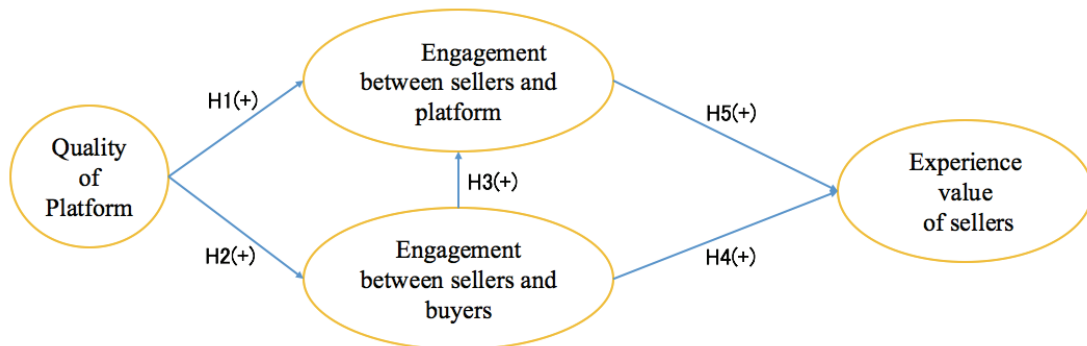


Table 3.2 Hypothesis standing on the sellers' side

H1	Quality of platform has a positive effect on engagement between sellers and platform.
H2	Quality of platform has a positive effect on engagement between sellers and buyers.
H3	Engagement between sellers and buyers has a positive effect on engagement between sellers and platform.
H4	Engagement between sellers and buyers has a positive effect on the experience value of sellers.
H5	Engagement between users and the platform has a positive effect on the experience value of sellers.

4. Empirical research on C2C e-commerce platform

4. 1. Online data collection

In order to test our hypotheses, an online survey was designed and the participants were asked to fill out the survey based on their own usage experience of the C2C e-commerce platform. The survey was posted from July 1 to July 5, 2018. After one week of the survey period, a total of 400 respondents filled out the survey. Of these 400 respondents, 200 are the sellers and another 200 are buyers. Moreover, a profile of this sample is as follows. Table 5.1 indicates that the sample represents both genders, a wide variety of ages, ethnicities, regions of Japan, household incomes and years of experience using C2C e-commerce platforms.

Figure 4.1 Gender of sample

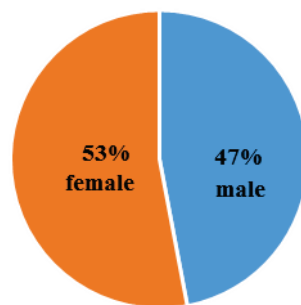


Figure 4.2 Age of sample

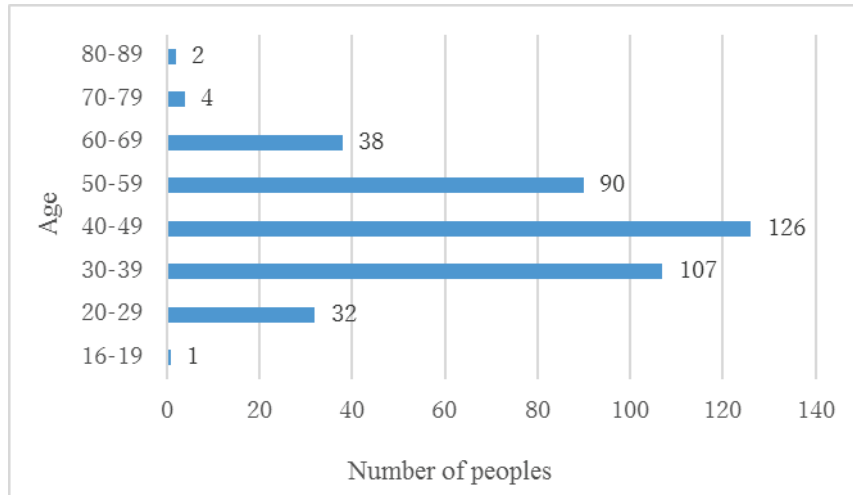


Table 4.1 Region of sample

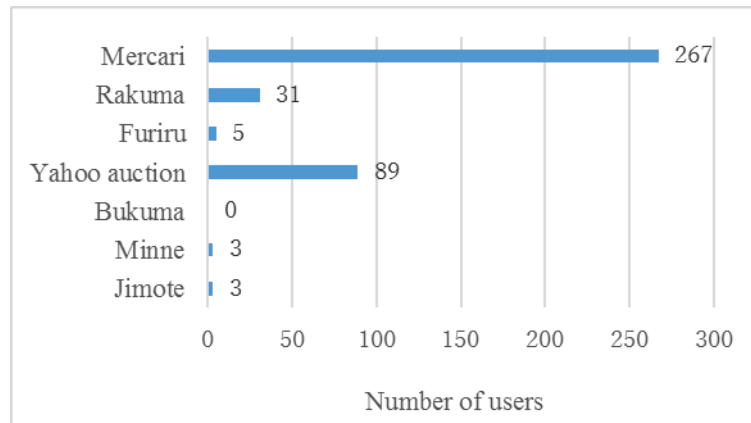
		Percentage	Number
Region of Japan	Tokyo	24.5%	98
	Kanagawa	7.8%	31
	Osaka	7.5%	30
	Chiba	5.8%	23
	Aichi	5.8%	23
	Saitama	5.3%	21
	Hokkaido	5%	20
	Hyogo	4.8%	19
	Fukuoka	4%	16
	Kyoto	3.3%	13
	Nara	1.8%	7

The participants first answered questions related to their experience of the previous usage on C2C e-commerce platform and frequency of buying and selling. And we divided the participants into “buyers” and “sellers” through their answers. For buyers, they were asked to evaluate the quality of C2C e-commerce platform which they used most first, then the engagement between them and the sellers and the engagement between them and the C2C e-commerce platform. Finally, the buyers were asked to evaluate their experience regarding the C2C interactions. For sellers, they were also asked to evaluate the

quality of C2C e-commerce platform which they used most first, then the engagement between them and their customers and the engagement between them and the C2C e-commerce platform. Finally, the sellers were asked to evaluate their experience regarding the C2C interactions as well.

All the variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, the lowest perception being scored with 1, and the items included in the survey were adapted from prior research.

Figure 4.3 Usage of platform



4. 2. Hypothesis model standing on the buyers' side

We tested the structural relationships existing between the concepts using SEM. First, in order to guarantee measurement reliability and validity, the covariance and correlation of all the multi-item constructs in our framework were provided (see Table 5. 2 and 5. 3). The results indicate that the data fit our conceptual model acceptably: $\chi^2 = 46.19$; $\chi^2/df = 0.94$; GFI=0.94; AGFI=0.89; RMR=0.05; RMSEA=0.05; CFI=0.86; AIC=133.46.

First, we find that the quality of platform has a positive effect on engagement between buyers and platform (H1; $\beta_1=.38$; $p<0.01$) and engagement between sellers and buyers (H2; $\beta_2=.51$; $p<0.01$), so H1 and H2 are verified. Regarding the engagement factor, results demonstrate that engagement between sellers and buyers directly influence the engagement between buyers and platform (H3; $\beta_3=.39$; $p<0.01$). H3 is verified. About the relationship between engagement factor and experience factor, which is decided by the types of engagement. Respectively, the engagement between sellers and buyers has a positive effect on the experience value of the buyers (H5; $\beta_5=.27$; $p<0.01$), the engagement between buyers and platform has no effect on the experience value of buyers (H4; $\beta_4=.077$; $p>0.1$).

In sum, the results obtained demonstrate that the actor engagement styles play a significant role in engagement platforms.

Table 4. 2 Correlation of buyers' model

	EV3	EV2	EV1	CE11	CE12	CE13	CE21	CE22	CE23	P1	P2	P3
EV3	1.000											
EV2	.728	1.000										
EV1	.496	.539	1.000									
CE11	.403	.471	.255	1.000								
CE12	.446	.411	.278	.578	1.000							
CE12	.472	.421	.222	.556	.671	1.000						
CE21	.620	.630	.512	.367	.329	.357	1.000					
CE22	.448	.536	.525	.312	.298	.217	.562	1.000				
CE23	.576	.608	.605	.497	.411	.456	.639	.579	1.000			
P1	.352	.267	.424	.253	.272	.203	.349	.183	.430	1.000		
P2	.352	.271	.335	.200	.231	.220	.254	.184	.358	.618	1.000	
PE	.298	.226	.256	.218	.242	.177	.246	.087	.318	.388	.633	1.000

Figure 4.4 Structural model of buyers

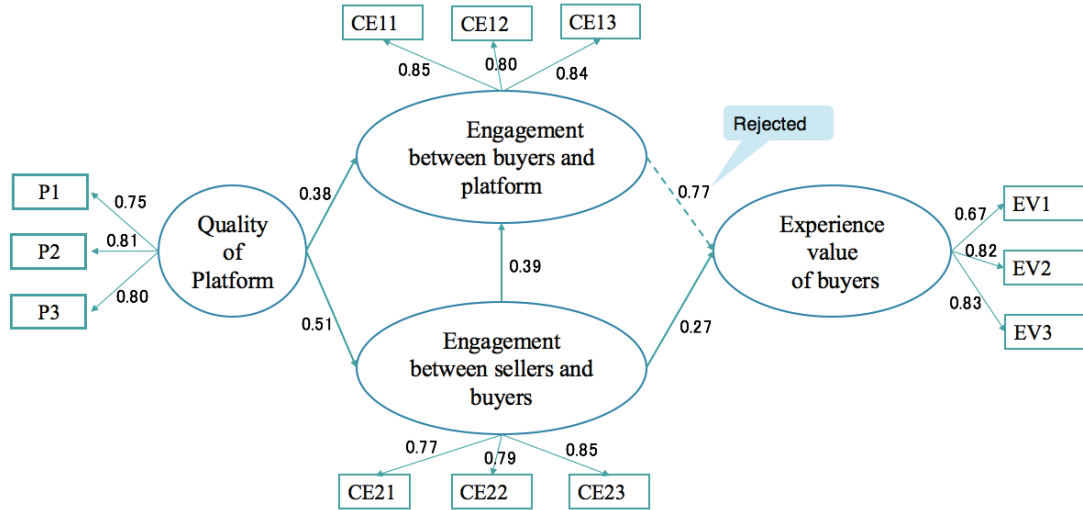


Table 4.3 Structural model of buyers

No.	Hypothesis	Estimate
H1	Quality of platform has a positive effect on engagement between buyers and platform.	0.38*** supported
H2	Quality of platform has a positive effect on engagement between sellers and buyers.	0.51*** supported
H3	Engagement between sellers and buyers has a positive effect on engagement between buyers and platform.	0.39*** supported
H4	Engagement between sellers and buyers has a positive effect on the experience value of buyers.	0.27*** supported
H5	Engagement between buyers and platform has a positive effect on the experience value of sellers.	0.77 Rejected

Significance level $\alpha < 0.01$ ***; $\alpha < 0.05$ **

4. 3. Hypothesis model standing on sellers' side

We tested the structural relationships existing between the concepts using SEM. The results indicate that the data fit our conceptual model acceptably: $\chi^2= 97.939$; $\chi^2/df= 1.99$; GFI=0.920; AGFI=0.87; RMR=0.07; RMSEA=0.07; CFI=0.92; AIC=155.94.

First, we find that the quality of platform has a positive effect on engagement between sellers and platform (H1; $\beta_1=.493$; $p<0.01$) and engagement between sellers and buyers (H2; $\beta_2=.770$; $p<0.01$), so H1 and H2 are verified. Regarding the engagement factor, results demonstrate that engagement between sellers and buyers directly influence the engagement between sellers and platform (H3; $\beta_3=.331$; $p<0.01$). H3 is verified. About the relationship between engagement factor and experience factor, we can find that, in sellers' model, no matter what actor engagement style, the engagement factor has a significant positive effect on the experience factor. Respectively, the engagement between sellers and buyers has a positive effect on the experience value of the sellers (H5; $\beta_5=.424$; $p<0.01$), the engagement between sellers and platform has no effect on the experience value of the sellers (H4; $\beta_4=.126$; $p<0.01$).

Table 4.4 Correlation of sellers' model

	EV3	EV2	EV1	CE11	CE12	CE13	CE21	CE22	CE23	P1	P2	P3
EV3	1.000											
EV2	.702	1.000										
EV1	.423	.426	1.000									
CE11	.427	.427	.403	1.000								
CE12	.379	.448	.340	.601	1.000							
CE12	.477	.525	.359	.615	.674	1.000						
CE21	.632	.585	.548	.342	.316	.412	1.000					
CE22	.541	.471	.522	.315	.239	.395	.682	1.000				

CE23	.568	.565	.558	.373	.364	.430	.690	.685	1.000			
P1	.385	.288	.408	.311	.221	.272	.381	.334	.447	1.000		
P2	.367	.285	.352	.332	.198	.211	.332	.312	.361	.625	1.000	
P3	.416	.341	.362	.400	.248	.325	.348	.329	.334	.569	.664	1.000

Figure 4.5 Structural model of sellers

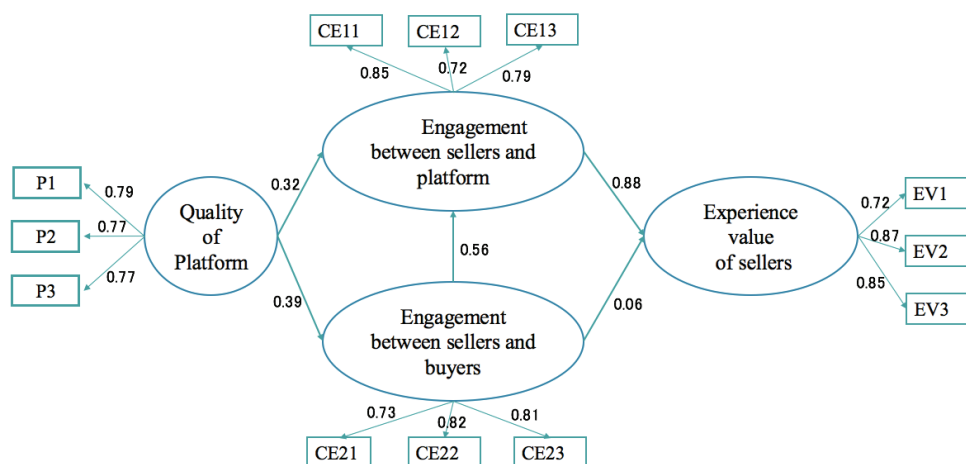


Table 4.5 Structural model of sellers

No.	Hypothesis	Estimate
H1	Quality of platform has a positive effect on engagement between sellers and platform.	0.32*** supported
H2	Quality of platform has a positive effect on engagement between sellers and buyers.	0.39*** supported
H3	Engagement between sellers and buyers has a positive effect on engagement between sellers and platform.	0.56***

		supported
H4	Engagement between sellers and buyers has a positive effect on the experience value of sellers.	0.88*** supported
H5	Engagement between buyers and platform has a positive effect on the experience value of sellers.	0.06*** supported

Significance level $\alpha < 0.01$ ***; $\alpha < 0.05$ **

4. 4. Conclusions

The present research studies the relationship between engagement and experience in engagement platforms as an important stage in the co-creation of value process. Our results have shown that the quality of the engagement platform has a positive effect on actor engagement. Then we can find that active engagement with part of the actors can increase the experience value. However, engagement with some specific actors may not has influence at all.

Firstly, it has been demonstrated that improving the engagement platforms which as an important environment actor, is an important way of promoting engagement between actors. About the quality of the platform, there are mainly three dimensions, respectively information quality, system quality and service quality of platforms (Wang and Liao 2008). If the firm can ensure these qualities, such as when the customer has a problem, the platform shows a sincere interest in solving it (i. e. service quality) or the platform provides the precise information that customer need (i. e. information quality), then customers will see themselves as important actors in their relationship with the firm and develops meaningful experiences.

Secondly, our study shows the importance of the engagement in actor co-creation processes and verified the importance of actor engagement which is mainly the interactions between actors in fostering co-creation experiences, not only as a means of obtaining intangible resources but also can enhance customer cooperation. Exchanging ideas, communications, getting support from other customers can create a fabulous experience for each actor. Consequently, engagement and experience becomes an essential context for involving customers in co-creation processes, and this involvement will positively influence future customer behavior.

5. Implications and limitations

5. 1. Discussions: The influence of engagement styles

The study finds the engagement style of an actor to be an important factor that will influence how actors perceive the experience value outcomes. Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016) conducted a case study in the aerospace industry, proposing nine possible styles of actor engagement that influence the actor's experience. For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected two of those nine styles, namely the actor who has an explicit goal and active behavior, and the actor who has an explicit goal and passive behavior.

Table 5.1 Actor engagement styles

	Implicit goals	Explicit goal
Active behavior	Actor does not reveal purchase goals, assumes some responsibility for fulfilment; requires minimal support	Actor assumes primary responsibility for fulfilment; requires minimal support
Passive behavior	Actor does not reveal purchase goals; expects supplier to “deliver”	Actor declares their purchase goal; expects supplier to “deliver”

Source: Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016)

In this study, compared to the actor platform (C2C e-commerce applications), the sellers have relatively active behaviors, while the buyers, as actors, also display active behaviors. For example, the buyers and sellers often engage in lengthy conversations as part of their negotiations over the price and details of the items. However, the two parties differ in terms of their respective goals. While sellers have the more explicit goal of selling their items, the majority of buyers freely scan the home page and should their negotiation with the seller fail, they then have the option to end the transaction. Therefore, in this research, we treat the sellers as the actors with explicit goals and active behaviors, the buyers are the actors with implicit goals and active behaviors.

This helps to explain the outcome of the study in that, for the buyers' model, the engagement between the buyers and the platform does not affect their experience, but from the sellers' point of view, their engagement with the platform does affect their experience because they have explicit goals.

5. 2. Implications for research and managerial practice

This research has aimed to develop a more manageable framework for understanding experience value co-creation within service ecosystems and has verified the importance of construct engagement in the

marketing field. In addition to the identified research issues, the paper makes four specific contributions to S-D logic and especially to the literature on engagement.

Firstly, Chapter 2 identified several gaps in the literature on S-D logic; thus, for experience value co-creation and engagement, value co-creation is abstract and difficult to observe empirically. Hence, by introducing the construct engagement, this research facilitates the microfoundation movement in the study of S-D logic. Secondly, most existing studies on engagement have tended to focus on the engagement between the firm and customers while ignoring the engagement between multiple actors. Therefore, this research uses the construct actor engagement and expands the conceptual research on customer engagement to create a more comprehensive understanding of the interaction between multiple actors in a service ecosystem. Next, by reviewing the empirical studies conducted in the engagement field, we find there to have been sufficient research investigating only antecedents or consequences, while only limited research has sought to consider engagement as both an antecedent variable and consequence variable simultaneously. This study investigated engagement in the role of both antecedent variable and consequence variable, thereby enriching the study of engagement.

Finally, this research verified that the actor engagement styles, which are resource integration patterns, can influence the relationship between actor engagement and the final experience value of these customers. This, therefore, provides a fundamental structure for a focal firm wanting to better understand and manage effective value co-creation. The effectiveness of engagement styles is likely to vary between the different actors' own behaviors, thus indicating the need for a deeper understanding of each actor and their characteristics.

5. 3. Limitations

Firstly, although the experience variable has many independent dimensions (cognitive, emotional...), this study considered and measured it as a complete concept and thus ignored the differences between the separate dimensions. A further limitation of the study was the order of the construct experience and engagement. Prior literature about engagement has pointed out that it is actually a cyclical process wherein, if engagement levels rise, the consumer will seek further experiences through the on-going use of the market offering, and this on-going use will continually influence the engagement. Finally, this study has only analyzed the engagement between three specific actors of the flea market app (i.e. seller, buyer, and platform). However, this leaves many other actors that are still to be further explored.

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Appendix: Measurement scales

Variables	Items	
<i>Quality of platform</i> Wang and Liao (2008)	Information quality (A)	A1: The platform provides the precise information you need.
		A2: The platform provides sufficient information.
		A3: The platform provides up-to-date information.
	System quality (B)	B1: The platform is user-friendly.
		B2: The platform is easy to use.
		B3: The platform has an excellent function.
	Service quality (C)	C1: Platform shows a sincere interest in solving your problems
		C2: You feel safe in your transactions with the platform.
		C3: The platform gives you individual attention.
<i>Engagement between sellers and buyers</i> Vivek et al (2014)	CE21: I pay a lot of attention to anything about specific buyers/sellers.	
	CE22: I spend a lot of my discretionary time to communicate with specific buyers/sellers.	
	CE23: My days would not be the same without these specific buyers/sellers	
<i>Engagement between users and platform</i>	CE11: I am proud of using this flea market app.	
	CE12: Time flies when I am using this flea market app.	

Cheung et al (2011)	CE13: I try my hardest to perform well on this flea market app.
<i>Experience value</i>	EV1: It was a nice experience.
Verleye K. (2015)	EV2: I am able to connect with other people.
	EV3: I got a compensation according to the effort I made.