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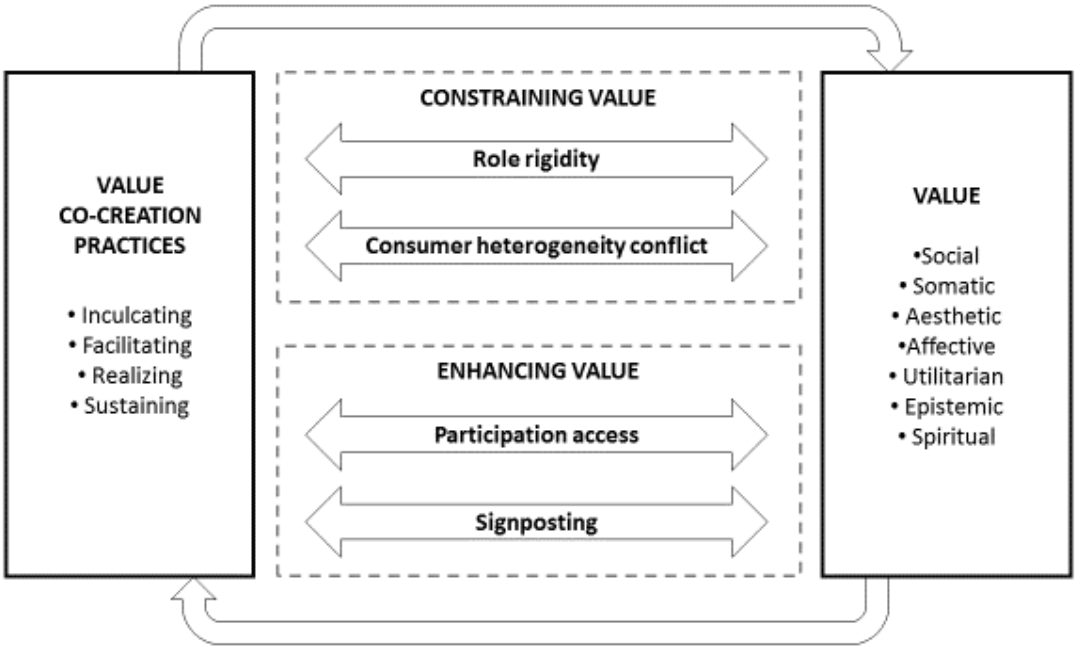
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Music is Not the Score: Integrating Experience and Practice Perspectives on Value Co-Creation in Collective Consumption Contexts

In many service settings, such as when attending a live orchestral music performance, the value that a customer derives from the experience depends on their interactions not just with service employees (such as when buying tickets, being ushered to a seat, or when hearing the music played by the musicians) but also from interactions with other customers in the service environment (such as others in the audience who sit together - in silence or not - to enjoy the musicians' playing). We label these *collective consumption contexts*. Other examples, which have their own 'rules of behavior', include spectator sports, choral singing, slimming clubs and orienteering, and examples in the online world include multi-player gaming and peer-to-peer IT support.

Consumers derive multiple dimensions of value from collective consumption contexts (see Figure 1). The impact of collective consumption on value represents a challenge because unlike employee-driven touchpoints, peer-to-peer touchpoints are not directly controlled by the firm.

Figure 1: Constraining and enhancing value in collective consumption contexts



A key challenge for service managers in these contexts is to understand how consumers coordinate with each other, particularly when there is variation in customers' skill levels. Despite the difficulty, it is ultimately the service provider's responsibility to ensure that the

service experience is optimised for all customers despite individual variation, lest it detract from the value that consumers perceive.

To address this challenging managerial issue, we conducted a six-month study with a world leading orchestra. Orchestral music provides a rich collective consumption context. Multiple employees as well as consumers are frequently co-present, and event forms range from traditional events that are heavily provider-led to more participatory formats that are strongly consumer-led. Our method included participant observation and multiple interviews with audience members, players, music educators, and service personnel in administrative and professional roles.

We identified four variables that influence the relationship between co-creation practices - defined after Barnes (2001, p 19) as "socially recognized, coordinated forms of activity, done or performed on the basis of what members learn from each other, and capable of being done well or badly, correctly or incorrectly" or more colloquially, as the 'way things are done around here' - and perceptions of value.

- *Role rigidity* occurs where a high level of skill is required to fully participate, such as listening to orchestral music, singing in a choir, or riding bicycles without brakes in a velodrome. Service providers need to identify ways to reduce role rigidity for novices, for instance by offering them special events where they can learn the acceptable ways of behaving. Alternatively, if rigid roles are unavoidable, attention should be given to how these roles might be coached.
- *Consumer heterogeneity conflict* can occur in contexts where consumers with very different levels of skill participate in the same service experience. To accommodate these differences, managers need to think through how they manage these different consumers. Sometimes, the best solution to consumer heterogeneity conflict is simply physical (or virtual) separation.
- Focusing on *participation access* provides one solution to the challenge of consumer heterogeneity. Learning may be achieved by empowering expert consumers to support newcomers along their learning journeys.
- Clear *signposting* can also help to indicate which activities will be appropriate for novice or expert consumers.

An overarching implication for service managers is that they need to anticipate potential barriers to value co-creation that can arise from differences in consumers' prior learning. Immersive customer insight is needed to identify whether individual consumers are able to learn the accepted ways of behaving, what barriers exist to this social learning, and where more expert customers will be only too happy to help less experienced peers. Service organizations can then design ways to facilitate social learning between novices and experts so as to optimize value for all.