

CO-DESTRUCTION OF VALUE BY CUSTOMERS: THE EXAMPLE OF SILENT PROTESTS

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Aim of paper – research question

The stadium atmosphere has been described as a good setting for studying value co-creation in a sporting context (Woratschek & Durchholz, 2012). Here, different groups of stakeholders interact and create the atmosphere *together* (Chen, Lin & Chiu, 2013). Value, however, can also be *co-destructed* at sporting events (Woratschek & Durchholz, 2012). Fan protests are generally regarded as a quintessential example of pure value co-destruction. But if different groups in a stadium are involved in value *co-creation*, it follows that multiple stakeholders will also be involved in value *co-destruction*. Furthermore, we propose that stakeholders' experience of value co-creation vs. co-destruction mainly depends on their prior expectations.

To contribute to the understanding of value co-destruction, we investigate two empirical questions:

- 1-Do all groups of fans contribute to and experience value co-destruction in the same way?
- 2-How do the various stadium customer groups' prior expectations influence their experience of value co-destruction?

Theoretical background

Until now, the literature on value co-destruction from a service-dominant logic (SDL) perspective has been conceptual (Plé & Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010) or exploratory (Smith, 2013, Echeverri & Skålén, 2011) in nature. Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010) define value co-destruction as "an interactional process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the systems' well-being (...)." (p. 431). Prior research focuses mainly on exchange processes between provider-customer dyads, and views value co-destruction as a *risk*. This perspective is still rooted in goods-dominant logic (GDL). We argue that *co-destruction* for one party can be *co-creation* for another. Service settings are not necessarily limited to dyads. Each person involved can thus be affected by or contribute to value co-creation or co-destruction.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

In a qualitative research design, we selected two German Bundesliga football games during the 2012/2013 season, at which fans had planned a protest against tighter security guidelines by remaining silent for 12 minutes and 12 seconds. We conducted 32 semi-structured interviews with various types of fans (e.g. away fans, families, hardcore fans). In a first step, four main codes were created:

- 1-characteristics of the stadium experience
- 2-factors influencing the stadium atmosphere
- 3-the meaning of fan actions
- 4-opinions on the silent protest

In a second step, we analyzed the fourth code to gain insights into the value destructing/creating aspects of the protest. We then mirrored fans' statements to their prior expectations regarding stadium experience (codes 1-3).

Results, discussion and implications

Our findings indicate that five groups can be identified based on their opinions of the protest. We also found that fans' experience of value co-destruction (or creation) depends on their prior expectations. .

1. Fans who missed the atmosphere during the silent protest. *Prior expectation*: great stadium atmosphere □ value co-destruction

"Well, at first it was really crap: twelve minutes and twelve seconds of silence wasn't at all a nice thing to experience. If the fans don't create a good atmosphere, it's really pretty simple: I might as well stay home."(F18)

2. Fans who felt that they were not allowed to support their team during the silent protest. *Prior expectation*: supporting their own team □ value co-destruction

"In the first twelve minutes, some people tried to support (their team) a little. But the hardcore fans immediately stopped them. I thought that was out of order." (F10)

3. Fans who concentrated better on the game during the protest. *Prior expectation*: watching a game live □ value co-creation

"But I have to admit that it was actually kind of pleasant (...) I was able to concentrate better on the game than usual." (F21)

4. Fans who felt that they could display their "supporter power" by not supporting their team.

Prior expectation: demonstrating a position of power □ value co-creation

"Today there will be nothing in the first twelve minutes. And then *they* will see what this means." (F30)

A fifth group did not care about the protest and its consequences on the atmosphere and thus experienced neither co-creation nor co-destruction.

If we view the stadium as a service platform within which the atmosphere is the main driver of value, than its value also changes for different parties such as players, trainers, or broadcasters if the atmosphere is manipulated. Our findings show that the resource integrators' perspective (in our case, different prior expectations) determines whether co-destruction occurs or not. Our research cautions against describing value co-destruction as a dyadic linear process analogue to GDL. Rather, destroying one person's value may create someone else's.

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