Value Co-Creation Process: Reconciling S-D Logic of Marketing and Consumer Culture Theory within the Co-Consuming Group

Submitted by Siwarit Pongsakornrungrungsilp to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management Studies In May 2010

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate how individual consumers negotiate in the collective community in order to co-create value. By making use of the concepts of ‘resources’ from the Service Dominant Logic of Marketing and ‘cultural lens’ from Consumer Culture Theory, this dissertation considers both individual and collective interaction in order to demonstrate the roles of individual consumers in the value creation process and how the value creation process works. A comprehensive and up to date review of literature provides a guide to the theory and a path for research. This dissertation employed netnography to understand social and cultural aspects of consumption from an online football fan community. The data collection also included participant and non-participant observations, and local fans interviewings. Hermeneutical framework of interpretation was used to analyse data.

The findings show that consumers can co-create value among themselves through the roles of ‘provider’ and ‘beneficiary’. It shows the dynamic movement of individual consumers within the continuous learning process of value creation. This dissertation demonstrates that brand community plays a role as a platform of value creation. Consumers can co-create value among themselves through the process of engaging, educating and enriching. The finding demonstrates active roles of consumers in value creation process. This dissertation also discusses how inequalities between resources of consumers in brand community can cause conflicts among them and how these conflicts stimulate consumers to co-create the collective resources. Within this process, consumers have collectively balanced the power through the social interaction in order to eliminate the domination and conflicts. This dissertation extends the previous researches in value creation within brand community by demonstrating how individual consumers engage and negotiated in value creation process. It contributes to respond working consumers and double exploitation through ‘sacrifice’.
“This dissertation is dedicated to my Grandad and Grandmum, and also
Assistant Professor Pattama Sidthichai, PhD and
Assistant Professor Pongthep Fookul, PhD.”
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Prologue

I remember that I was confused and frustrated about my PhD destination in my first year. I kept asking myself and also other PhD students about my PhD destination. Unfortunately, there was no other full-time PhD students in Marketing during that time, thus, I did only discuss with my roommate who studied Finance. I knew that I was panic. Those students in my office were in the final year and they saw a light at the end of the cave. They told me that don’t worry – You’ll know when you are there.

Supervisor teams, Professor Jonathan Schroeder and Dr Alan Bradshaw who has left Exeter in 2008, were my torch. They had gradually supervised and trained me to ready for tackling with PhD dissertation. I started my PhD journey with my research proposal – Branding football club. I remember being told at the time that PhD route was not a straight line, but instead, it might be a circle, non-linear, or complex process depending on how quick I could engage it. I began to read articles related to branding and corporate branding. It led me to consider other concepts such as consumption experience and brand community. Meanwhile, Jonathan’s a reading module was very useful and he introduced ‘S-D logic’ to me in the first time. Who know that my long journey and adventure had began from that time.

Although I had considered many theories during my training process in the first year, I still focused on football. To develop my dissertation, Alan suggested me to start writing the conceptual paper about consumption experience and football industry. This paper was benefit to my dissertation in the final year. However, in my first year, I still confused and looked for my destination until I attended the Consumer Culture Theory seminar at Bilkent University, Turkey recommended by my supervisors. This seminar was my turning point and lightened me to see my PhD route. I had opportunities to meet top professors and other PhD colleagues in Consumer Culture Theory. I remember that I did not well in discussion during the seminar, but I learnt a lot from this seminar and was more confident to pursue the doctoral study since there. At the end of the first year, I learnt that I needed to think separately between concept and context of study. This means to consider how concept(s) is suit for understanding context and how context is suit for driving the concept. Therefore, I had to begin thinking of how I could study value creation from the context of football fandom.

However, even I was confident about my route and concept of study – value creation within co-consuming group-, I was asked by many colleagues how football fandom was suitable to understand value creation. I had to clarify them that I was not studying about football governance or research in football, but I was studying about value creation within brand community. Football fandom was only a context of study. In the other words, football fandom played a role as a consumption object which consumers (football fans) consume, and consumption experience can be used to explain their consumption. Moreover, as a Liverpool FC fan, I chose Liverpool FC fan community as a place of study. In this context, Liverpool FC plays a role as a brand which links all Liverpool FC fans to socialise. With the strong tradition of Liverpool FC fans, it provided an opportunity for me to understand how consumers (football fans) co-create value for themselves. Moreover, with the strong culture and long tradition of Liverpool FC, it provides an opportunity to understand consumer culture within a co-consuming brand community. In the same year, my conceptual paper about value creation in brand community was accepted to present in CRAW2008 at the University of Manchester. It provided me a good experience as my first international conference.

To prove the feasibility, Jonathan and Alan had supported me to conduct the pilot study. This would benefit to understand context of the study and the way for collecting the data. I travelled to collect the data at the city of Liverpool. I was lucky to know a Thai lady, P’June who provided hospitality to me during my data collection at Liverpool, even we had never
met before. I conducted interviews with 6 local Liverpool FC fans. I also conducted participant and non-participant observations at the Pub near Anfield, Liverpool FC homeground, and within Anfield stadium both before and after the game. What I had learnt from this pilot study was that it was very difficult to access the local Liverpool FC fans due to their strong local identity of Liverpool. I felt and perceived the tension of the local and global among the local fans from this pilot study. As a Liverpool FC fan for 25 years, I have never thought that I am not a true fan. I have supported Liverpool FC in the same way with local fans do, but just a chance to attend game at Anfield. However, after I embedded with the Liverpool City, I found that the history and culture of Liverpool city play an important role to bond local Liverpool FC fans with the club and create the strong local identity. I also understood the feeling of ‘Left Behind’ that their local identity was consumed by outsiders. They felt that they were losing their power and importance toward the brand. At the end of this trip, I found myself bonding with Liverpool as I was in my home town, even I wasn’t born here.

After I came back from Liverpool trip, Alan and I had discussed how I could access the Liverpool FC fandom. He asked me to read Rob Kozinets’s Netnography. When I had read those papers, I realised that netnography was suitable for me to access the realm of Liverpool FC fans. During this time, I had joined a project with Jason Healy, another PhD student from Dublin City University, Ireland, who was pursuing PhD in Marketing and the context of Liverpool FC by the cooperation between our supervisors. This study is the cooperation between the Marketing Group, the University of Exeter, and the Center of Consumption Studies (CCS), DCU Business School, Dublin City University, Ireland. This was one of the supervision processes which Jonathan employed to train me. I travelled to Liverpool again to collect additional data. We had set the goal for presenting paper at the Macromarketing conference at Clemson University, South Carolina, USA, and our paper got acceptance. To present paper in this conference, there was no question related to the context of study, football fandom. It implied that conducting research on football fandom was not a problem or limitation of the study, but I needed to consider the related issues such as the history and tradition of Liverpool FC, accessing to the Liverpool FC fans, etc.

Phew! I felt more comfortable in my PhD destination after I had presented the paper: ‘Left Behind, Local Fans of Global Brand’. By employing the lens of global fan, it helped me understand the tension of local and global fans. Moreover, as a researcher, I employed myself as data collection instrument during my observation about Liverpool FC context. I would call it an avanture because during one of my visitings at European game at Anfield, I had been abused by a local Liverpool FC fan who didn’t want to see outsiders, especially an international fan like me, in their realm. However, not all Liverpool FC fans closed the door to outsiders, because there was a mature fan who came to calm the situation. This also included one after the 206th derby match when I went back to the Pub, namely the Sandon. Once I stepped into the bar for ordering a pint of beer, there was a guy who looked like a guard of their group (wearing black jacket and jeans with the skinhead hairstyle) walked to me and asked me out. He had tried to search my stuffs but I denied and walked away from there. It was a place where Simon, my Liverpool FC mate, told me that it was one of the most friendly pubs for us. I told this story to the TIA forum, and all my fellow members agreed that it should not happen with the Liverpool FC fan. It’s shame!

But the process of training did not finish, Jonathan supported me to submit my research proposal to ‘Doctoral Dissertation Proposal in Marketing Contest’, held by Marketing Science Institute (MSI). The result was not the prize but it was the comments related to the feasibility of my conceptual, context of the study, research questions and also the methodology. The feedback was very useful to my dissertation and made me ready to start my real journey.
Since I had walked through different training processes, it was the right time for me to walk into real pitch. I had reconsidered my conceptual part, context of study, research questions and also methodology. I spent most of my time within ThisIsAnfield.com by permission of the moderator and other members to collect and observe data. I walked into the midway of my doctoral journey and another half was presented in the Chapter One to Chapter Nine of this dissertation.

When I had started my second half, I was panic again because whenever I looked at the new issue articles, there were interesting and important papers related to my dissertation. Therefore, I had to control myself to concentrate with my research questions and data. I remember being told by Jonathan that I should think ‘enough’ and concentrate with my study.

What’s New? This is a common question I have been asked since the beginning of my second half of journey, writing the dissertation. Has someone never done before? Does it employ new concept to understand the phenomenon? Is it a new context to understand this issue? How does it extend our understanding the concept? These questions were raised during my attending QDA workshop and the CCT IV conference at the University of Michigan. One of this workshop aims was to drive me and other young scholars to challenge the theory. Another issue I learnt from this workshop was ‘let data talk’, and I agreed with them because as a young researcher, it’s quite often that I was over reflective and did not provide related data. Until now, I realise that attending conferences both presenting and listening is the good opportunity to learn and accumulate knowledge and experience from the research community.

When I was nearly my destination, I realised that I did not only receive a degree, but also my wisdom and experience in the international academic society. One thing I learnt from studying PhD at the University of Exeter was that PhD was value creation through a continuous learning process between supervisor and student. This process required interaction, shares, dialog, cooperation and discussion. This process can be employed to understand with other phenomena such as relationship within family, or workplace. This process likes a football required 11 players to support each other.

At the end of my prologue, I ask myself: Do I believe in fate? Yes, I do. This is one of reasons why I am here in Exeter as one of Jonathan’s students. It seemed like I was walking into the Great Hall at Hogwarts in J.K.Rowling’s Harry Porter on my first day as one of the Marketing Group at the ‘real’ Great Hall, the University of Exeter. It was not sorting hat, but a register officer to point me to the Streatham Court where my office and long journey were. Like Dumbledore, Jonathan always provided me good weapons at the right time. Those weapons did benefit me to achieve my PhD destination. Therefore, I would say that I have not walked through the PhD journey alone, but with my supervisor, Marketing Faculty, other PhD colleagues, and my family. I have a feeling in the same way with all Liverpool FC fans toward our tradition:

“YOU’LL NEVER WALK ALONE”
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