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During Co-creation:
A Conceptual Framework and a Research Agenda

ANAND AGRAWAL, PH.D.
FACULTY, ASIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT

THE AUTHORS

ANAND AGRAWAL, PH.D.
Asian Institute of Management
W. SyCip Graduate School of Business

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Anand Agrawal

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ABSTRACT

Viewing marketing from non-positivist and relativist perspective renders opportunities to focus on the social construction of experiences of involved participants. There is a lack of substantial studies to help facilitate mutually rewarding co-construction of experiences among participants engaged in co-creation activities. This paper provides a conceptual framework using the concepts of autocatakinetic systems and experiential learning to facilitate designing affordances for co-creation along with a research agenda valuable for researchers and practitioners.

Key words: Customer engagement, community participation, social constructionism, co-construction of experience, experiential learning, autocatakinetic systems, co-creation.

The author invites collaboration from practitioners and researchers who are interested to explore and design more fulfilling, meaningful and mutually rewarding co-creation activities. Please feel free to contact the author by email – prof.anand@gmail.com

Due to dominance of positivism with realist views and dualistic positions in marketing and related research, there is a need to examine the ontological and epistemological positions and assumptions related to marketing using post-modern and relativist views (Shankar and Patterson, 2001; Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Though, the service-centered paradigm of marketing proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004) has adopted a non-transaction and relational perspective (Patricio, Fisk and Cunha 2008), indications of rationalistic philosophy in its assumptions were found by Schembri (2006) who suggested that the proposed service centred view may not be conducive to understand what customers co-construct; and how they view that co-construction using a non-dualistic ontological position.

Using post-modern philosophy to study marketing may result into a shift in paradigm. The current economy labelled as "experience economy" (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) has resulted into focus on "customer experience", but the way "experience" is viewed depends on the marketing philosophy being adopted. Positivists may consider 'experience' as an action (focus on - how to provide delightful customer experience), an outcome, or 'something that occurs' or 'emerges' (as a result of action of suppliers or service providers) when consumers search, shop and consume products or services (Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan 2002; Brakus, Schmitt, and Zhang 2008). In essence, according to the positivists, ideal and normative experiences exist which need to be 'designed and delivered' to customers by companies. Whereas, social constructionism – a concept influenced by post-modern philosophy, suggests that experiences are not delivered, but co-constructed socially along with the meaning and value (see Arnould and Thompson, 2005) as an ongoing aspect of everyday lives and relationships (Parton, and Sciences 2003).

Use of social constructionism allows application of non-dualistic frame to view customers as 'Prosumers'- the united entity of professional and consumer who are not merely recipients or co-creators as a part of organization (Schneider, 1980), as partial (Mills and Morris, 1986; Bettencourt, 1997; Hsieh, Yen and Chin, 2003) or transient employees (Namasivayam, 2002), in the rationalistic sense, but co-constructors of their experiences (Küpers 1998, 2000) as a result of interactions between organizations, related systems/processes, service employees and customers" (Bitner et al. 1997, p. 193), enabled by a set of clues provided by goods, services, and atmospheric stimuli, which can be functional and emotional or 'humanic' and mechanic (Berry, Carbone, and Haeckel, 2002). Similar views are found emerging in marketing literature

across scattered studies. Viewing customers as co-constructors of experiences brings opportunities to engage customers to facilitate co-creation.

Viewing marketing and customer experience as social constructions leads to emergence of a research agenda too that consists of a multitude of explorable experiential concepts, theoretical backgrounds, research purposes, and design possibilities. The result of this research program will be useful for scholars, researchers and practitioners. This paper starts with discussions on the concepts of social constructionism, co-creation, experiences and affordances and proceeds to suggest applications of these concepts in a conceptual framework to facilitate co-creation. The conceptual framework is proposed using the current understanding of different theoretical orientations of experiential learning and the concept of autocatakinetic systems.

Social construction of experience and co-creation

The Cluetrain Manifesto (Weinberger et al. 1999) states - "*We are not seats or eyeballs or end users or consumers. We are human beings - and our reach exceeds our grasp. Deal with it*".

Srivastava and Kale (2003) call for reassessing ontological and epistemological assumptions of scholars. They suggest to use social constructionism approach in marketing:"...*scholars are to successfully unravel the nature of socially constructed truth or reality that exists in consumer markets*" (p. 65).

Existing studies suggest that customers at all times are not only co-producers and value co-creators (Vargo & Lusch 2004; Vargo &Lusch 2006; Vargo & Lusch 2008) but also practitioners (Korkman 2006) because they bring up tacit and explicit knowledge and other resources. Korkman (2006) indicates customers' perception of their perceived needs and expectations are constructed in the practice constituted by elements of reality such as promises, procedures, mediators and a context. He suggests marketers to be interested in improving user practices to facilitate the construction of an important position for their selves in the user's life. Smith and Higgins (2000) indicate that marketers need to understand the values brought by each participant and treat consumers as "socially embedded" individuals (p. 92). Vargo and Lusch (2004) emphasize non-generalizable and personal nature of experience.

The emphasis on social construction of experiences has led to a number of studies aimed to explore customer engagement (see Bendapudi and Leone 2003 for a chronological review of

the literature on customer engagement and participation). Social constructionist views related to marketing are explicit in the way services are defined or described: "as dynamic experiences that are co-constructed with customers" (Schembri 2006) and "as object-oriented, collective and culturally mediated human activity" (Oliveros, Halliday, Posada, & Bachmann 2010). Previous studies highlight forms of customer engagement. Bendapudi and Leone (2003) explain different forms of customer engagements, like, emotional engagement (e.g., appeal to environmental concerns); engaging in an experience (e.g., white-water rafting); using processes to allow customers to solve their own problems (e.g., self-diagnosis of computer fault on a website); use of systems to provide expertise for customers (e.g., on-line tutorial to understand the rental system and experience); and where customers and other stakeholders engage with the supplier to co-design a product, (e.g., Boeing involves their customers to design aircrafts).

Sanders and Simons (20009) mention that co-creation is a special case of co-construction in order to create something that is not known in advance. They classify co-creations as "*co-creation within communities, co-creation inside companies and organizations, co-creation between companies and their business partners, co-creation between companies and the people they serve, who are variously called customers, consumers, users or end-users*".

Payne et al. (2008, p. 15) provide typical examples of co-creation which include knowledge sharing (e.g., exchanging user experiences, or sharing experiences of interaction with products or services), creating expertise (e.g., providing and using on-line tutorials for a service), emotion supporting, influencing or engaging the customer with themes, metaphors, stories, analogies, design elements, new options, surprise or offering forms of customer recognition. Action oriented co-creation involves quality management (e.g., creating user feedback systems), and enabling efficient self-service (e.g., creating easy to use interfaces).

Terms like co-design, co-production, co-servicing and value co-creation are frequently used in co-creation literature. Customers and other stakeholders may be engaged in communities to co-invent new uses for goods or services (Payne et al. 2009), to co-create new products using Open Innovation (OI) model to facilitate lead-user involvement for innovation generation (von Hippel, 1988; Chesbrough, 2003), and to develop service blue prints (Pires, Stanton and Stanton 2004). Co-design is suggested as a specific instance of co-creation that involves collective creativity as it is applied across the whole span of a design process (Sanders and Simons, 20009).

Payne et al (2008) provide example of IKEA business model and their marketing communication to explain customer engagement for co-production and co-servicing activities (transportation and assembly of furniture).

Sanders and Simons (2009) identify and explain three types of value co-creation: monetary, use/experience and social. Co-creation resulting in monetary value is fuelled by desire to make money in new, efficient or sustainable ways. Use value represents the extent to which a product satisfies a person's wants and it is the value a product has for the individual consumer. Exchange value is realized only at the point of sale, the price the product can be sold for at the market place, and thereby also the value this product has for the producer. Social value of co-creation is fuelled by aspirations for longer term, humanistic, and more sustainable ways of living that involves the integration of experts and everyday people working closely together.

Oliveros et al. (2010) suggest that value can be created through images or myths too by citing examples like Schouten and McAlexander (1995) who describe how the outlaw bikers embrace Harley Davidson, and thus generate a link between the outlaw mystique and Harley Davidson.

Holttinen (2010, p.102) defines value-creation as - "*a context-laden arena for value creation, integrating a specific socio-cultural, spatial, and temporal context; mental states and bodily activities of consumers; a meaning structure; operant and operand resources and their use*". This implies that users construct their own value and limits company's role to support consumers' value creation practices as "value facilitators" (Grönroos 2008).

Though a number of primary studies and conceptual discussions have been appearing in marketing literature that suggest the importance of building processes to support the customer experience and co-creation (e.g., Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004), there is a lack of studies focussing on participants' experiences and absence of approach of 'designing for experiences' (Desmet and Hekkert, 2007). There is a need to gather insights on social construction of experiences by participants and to design a conceptual framework to facilitate creation of affordances for mutually rewarding co-construction of experiences for participants involved in co-creation activities.

Experiences and Affordances

Using a broad perspective like the one suggested by Margolin (1997), product can be described with focus on user experience - "array of objects, activities, services and environments that fill the life-world". Each product tells a story of use through its form language, its features, its aesthetic qualities, and its accessibility (Forlizzi and Ford, 2000). According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000, p. 84): products are 'artefacts, around which customers have experiences'. In other words, products, whether they are predominantly goods or services, are essentially experiences (Schembri, 2006).

There is a developing field of research related to product experience. Desmet and Hekkert (2007) indicate that the construct of usability of a product is similar to the construct of experience: "they are both relational, i.e., an outcome of the human-product interaction instead of a property of either the user or the product". They classify product experience into three distinct components or levels: aesthetic experience, experience of meaning, and emotional experience. The aesthetic level involves delighting the sensory modalities. The meaning level involves ability to assign personality or other expressive characteristics and to assess the personal or symbolic significance. The emotional level involves experiences considered in emotion psychology e.g. love and anger. Particular experiences may activate other levels of experience. An experienced meaning may give rise to emotional responses and aesthetic experiences, and vice versa.

Rajah, Marshall and Nam (2008) extended the concept by including experience gained from the dialogue and interactions in the network as a part of customer experience: "*Co- created value is a sum of the derivation of the dialogue, interactions, personalized treatment, and level of customization co-created in the experience network*" (p.367).

Dewey (1980) suggests 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), contribute to the experience. Experience is shaped by the characteristics of the user (e.g., personality, skills, background, cultural values, and motives) and those of the product (e.g., shape, texture, colour, and behaviour). In addition, the experience is always influenced by the context (e.g., physical, social, economic) in which the interaction takes place.

Using social constructionist view, it is important to explore how experience is talked about. Forlizzi and Ford (2000) emphasize the importance of exploring how experience is talked about and indicate three ways of describing experience - experience, an experience, and experience as story. The constant stream that happens during moments of consciousness – based on theory of consciousness- termed as experienced cognition is the first way of talking about experience. The second way is 'witnessing a story that allows us to feel powerful emotions, assess our system of values, and possibly make changes in our behavior' and a third way is to discuss experience is to talk about experience as story. According to Forllizi and Ford (2000) stories are vehicles that are used to condense and remember experiences, and to communicate them in a variety of situations to certain audiences.

Johnston and Kong (2011) found that experience exists among customers' personal interpretation, customers' feeling and emotions. Forllizi and Ford (2000) suggested four dimensions of experience: sub-consciousness, cognition, narrative, and storytelling. Sub-consciousness represents the most automatic, or fluent, experiences like routine activities of our everyday life and interacting with products we use often. These activities or interactions do not compete for our attention and thinking process, and are used thoughtlessly. Cognition represents experiences that need to think about what we are doing: interactions with unfamiliar products, people and environments, or tasks that require cognitive effort or problem solving skills. A cognitive experience may include a learning experience. It provides opportunity to conceive of new and novel interactions with products or environments. Narrative is used to represent thought about experiences that are formalized in language or in an artifact in order to describe what we are doing. Product features, environment or encounters with people and affordances offer a narrative of interaction. "*Story telling involves a person relaying the salient parts of subjective experience with subset of features and affordances, based on location in a context, prior experience and emotional state, making the experience a unique personal story. "Through these particular and unique interactions, users bestow meaning on situations, creating life stories and stories of interacting with products, people or environments*" (Forllizi and Ford, 2000).

Küpers (2000) also emphasize on stories as the key to understanding how prosumers consider and evaluate their experience. The meaning of embedded experience is based on the prosumer's context-dependent interpretation of their experience. The reciprocal relationships,

emergence of sharing meanings along with the dynamic flow of complex cues and shared foci leads to co-construction of meaning and experience.

The term 'experience' is frequently related with the term 'affect' (psychological term for an observable expression of emotion or subjectively experienced feeling) in research since the sixties in the disciplines of marketing, consumer research, ergonomics, economics, engineering and design (see Schmitt, 1999, as cited in Desment and Hekkert, 2007). Affect is used to explore process involved in product usage, such as learning, problem solving, and motivation; in user-product communication (Picard, 1997), in pleasure, comfort and usability for customers (Helander and Tham, 2003), in purchase decisions (Creusen, 1998) and in post-purchase product evaluation(Oliver, 1993).

The area of design research has been using concept of affordances to study interactions or relationships of customers with products, people and environments which may shape experiences. Barab et al. (1999) provide an interesting example of affordances.

> "*In parts of West Africa they use an ingenious little device called a Monkey Trap. The trap itself is a very simple design, in which rice is placed in the center of a box that has a tube running from the outside to the center. When the monkey places his hand in the box, which is just wide enough for his unclenched fist to pass through, he grasps a handful of rice and while holding the rice he cannot remove his arm. In spite of the fact that the monkey could remove his arm if only he would let go and unclench his fist, the trap is surprisingly effective. The trap's effectiveness can be credited to the monkey's thoughts in relation to the affordances of the trap, not solely the mechanism of the trap or the monkey's thoughts*" (Yoruba Oral Tradition, as cited in Barab et al., 1999).

The initial understanding of affordances provided by Gibson (1977) as "a specific combination of the properties of its substance and its surfaces taken with reference to an animal" (p. 67) has been scrutinized, critiqued, expanded and refined by various researchers resulting into a traceable evolution of the concept. Chemero (2003) provides the extended and alternative understanding of the concept of affordances (relations between animals and features of situations), niches (the set of situations in which one or more of the abilities of animals can be exercised) and events (changes in the layout of affordances in the animal- environment system).

According to Chemero (2003), the understanding of affordances as described by him encompasses any other theory of affordances too. In his words:

"*..It works for Turvey (1992) and Michaels (2000), who think that affordances are dispositional properties of the environment that must be complemented by effectivities of the animal; it works for Heft (1989, 2001), who thinks that affordances are properties of the environment that are related to an animal's body scale; and it works for Stoffregen (2003) and me, who think that affordances are relations..*" (p. 194).

The concept of affordances has been guiding marketers and designers in designing opportunities, to facilitate co-creation. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991) describe that affordances consist in the opportunities for interaction that things in the environment possess relative to our sensorimotor capabilities. It implies that in an experiential setting, all participants in an interaction may become actively engaged in the environment 'full of demands and requirements, opportunities and limitations, rejections and invitations, enablement and constraints - in short, 'affordances' (Shotter and Newson 1982, cited in Van Lier, L., 2000, p.253).

Forllizi and Ford (2000) emphasize that "*a user interacts with some subset of features and affordances, based on location in a context, prior experience, and current emotional state, to make a unique and subjective story.*"

Schembri (2006) indicates that co-construction of experience occurs all the time and not all customers choose to co-create. This means the challenge is to facilitate co-construction of customer experience in a mutually rewarding manner.

Experience, learning and autocatakinetic systems

Experiences are important for customer learning, that involves a combination of experiential encounters and interactions with products over the length of the relationship. External or supplier-initiated factors may cause customers to change their existing behaviour and habits in order to adopt new processes resulting in customer learning (e.g. learning using on-line banking or ATM).

Ballantyne & Varey (2006) argued that interactions should produce dialogical moments, where both actors should be active in a learning process and influence each other's operations, actions, and activities. This view is supported by Activity Theory that states that conscious

learning emerges from activity (performance), not as a precursor to it (Jonassen & Rohrer 1999, p. 62). According to Forlizzi and Ford (2000), the user may perceive the affordances of the context of the experience in a new way, or new knowledge may have been created, resulting in learning. Learning is also regarded as one of the dimensions of experience, called Cognition. In addition, experience shifting from a sub-conscious to a cognitive experience may signal that the user is creating new knowledge, and that learning is taking place. Payne et al. (2008) indicate - "*only by engaging the customer in a co-creation experience, and by learning from this experience, is the customer likely to change his or her routinized behaviour. Suppliers who understand the nature of customer learning can develop processes to support and improve a customer's capability to co-create*."

Kolb (1984) stated that learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Taking hint from the connection of experience, affordances and learning, along with the use of social constructionist approach, a conceptual framework may help in designing the affordances to facilitate co-construction of customer experiences to realize co-creation. Affordances to create environment is considered critical by Fullerton (2009) who cited Hollins and Hollins (1991) to explain the importance of co-creation, and providing the opportunity and environment for co-creation - "*Everybody can be creative. It is simply a case of teaching people how to be open to experiences beyond their own…. allow them the opportunity to use their creative skills and give them the environment in which they can be creative*" (p.9).

Barab et al. (1999) use the concept of thermodynamics – autocatakinetic systems to highlight the importance of effective facilitation that involves the establishment of an environment to bring interactions within which the individual develops intentions, that in turn create the inspiration and constraints for the development of specific practices (effectivities), ultimately expanding the autocatakinetics of the learner to draw upon further environmental affordances. Autocatakinetic systems are represented by dissipative structures (Prigogine 1980) - an open system that maintains itself in a state far from equilibrium and it produces new forms of order spontaneously when it is far from equilibrium, "at the edge of the chaos". Before self-order and complexity can evolve, they are one with the environment. The time between the emergence of the chaotic environment that leads to bifurcations and novel structures and a preceding time of stasis is a transition zone (Perry and Kolb 2003, 2004)

Social construction of experience and learning for all participants occur during co-creation activities, therefore concepts of experiential learning and autocatakinetic systems are important to design affordances to facilitate mutually rewarding co-creation. The four orientations of experiential learning (Fenwick, 2001) and autocatakinetic systems when combined, provides a conceptual framework to facilitate designing affordances for co-creation.

Proposed Framework

The four levels of experiential learning (adapted from Fenwick, 2001) and the four autocatakinetic systems (Barab et al, 1999) are mapped to develop a framework to facilitate co-creation. In the proposed framework, the four orientations of experiential learning exist at four different levels forming the multi-level framework. The individual level in the centre emphasizes the psychoanalytic perspectives in experience. Individual level is surrounded closely by the community level that represents the situated perspectives. Cultural/societal level consists of critical culture perspectives that surround the community level. The outer level is the ecological level of experiences dominated by systems perspectives. A notable feature of the framework is the presence of permeable boundaries, representing the dynamic flow among different levels and the absence of an outer boundary for the ecological level. Figure 1 represents a visual representation of the proposed conceptual framework and table 1 explains the different levels of the framework. Figure 2 represents the autocatakinetic systems operating at different levels. The relevance of these levels for researchers and implications for practitioners in order to facilitate designing affordances for co-creation activities are discussed in the next section.

A. Individual level and relations between the self-non-self

Individual level focuses on dynamic, ever evolving self and its relation to non-self, with a psychoanalytic perspective. Barab et al., (1999) suggest that through participation in a community individuals construct identities "framed by and forming the community" (p.368). The self is developed in a continuous process of evolving complexity that arises from interactions with the world (Csikszentmihalyi 1993). Maturana and Varela (1998) coined the term "second order coupling in the context of autopoetic dynamic of organic systems and explain the role of interplay between the surround and the developing system in creating the environment and in response to their environment, the creation of self (Krumbein and Dyer 1985, p. 150).

As we couple with surround (including others) we evolve ideas and explanatory models that are viable, and deselect those that we deem not viable. Reflection on our activity in the surround, discussed in communities of discourse to generate multiple perspectives (a third order coupling - Maturana and Varela, 1998) keeps us in growth producing, open, evolving state (Fosnot 2005).

In addition to the development of self, in relation to non-self, the related concepts of role-identity (McCall and Simmons 1966) is important at the individual level of the framework.

The issues important for deliberations for researchers and practitioners at this level relate to the needs, motives, feelings and emotions of an individual along with the expectations, perceptions, intentions and behavior of participants in the context of co-creation.

One of the most important aspects to study is the reason and motives of participants in the co-creation activities. Sanders and Simons (2009) state "*One of the key values of value co-creation is that it satisfies the need for creative activity while addressing the need for social interaction.*" According to classic sociology, people seek to participate in extraordinary, hedonic and transformative experiences as a response to social specialization, loss of autonomy, rationalizing aspects of daily or mundane lives (Berman 1981; Lyon 2000; Ritzer 1999; Torgovnick 1997)

In addition, need for control over one's environment is found as a key driving force in human beings (Bateson 2000). Risch-Rodie and Schultz-Kleine (2000) suggest that an increased feeling of independence, self-efficacy, and self-control among participants may be ends in themselves for participants.

Willingness to co-create is found influenced by efficiency, effective or hedonic benefits which may not be expected to be received in a mutually exclusive manner and that should outweigh the costs of participation (Etgar 2008).

'Influence of other customers and stake holders during the co-creation engagement is bound to bring spectrum of emotions and reactions, analogous to the term called 'Unacquainted influence'' (McGrath and Otnes 1995). Tumbat (2011) emphasize the importance of facilitating and managing the process of co-creation because failing at emotional management of participants negatively affects the experience and performance of participants as a whole.

Desmet, and Hekkert (2007) indicate that product experience is a multi-faceted phenomenon that involves manifestations such as subjective feelings, behavioural reactions,

expressive reactions, and physiological reactions. There are various notable studies that suggest the existence of subjective biases, irrational behavior that may be predictable (Ariely, 2010) or unpredictable, and affective responses of human beings to a given event.

Holbrook and Hirschmann (1982), suggest studying experiential or hedonic perspective, where experiential consumption includes the flow of fantasies, feelings and fun in sub-conscious and private in nature with the emphasis on emotions, contexts and symbolic aspects of experiences.

Bruner & Feldman (1990) suggest that the idea of private experience relies on a central metaphor of the person representing the mind as a "form of mirror" with the world "out there"; and its contents reflected by experience "in here". In this metaphor, experience is passive - just reflecting the passing world. But, there is also the metaphor of experience as a "searchlight" actively searching and illuminating the world in order to achieve certain ends (p.35).

B. Community level and relations between individual-meaningful relations and practice

At this level, social relationships and discussions are integral parts. During interactions between individuals and their communities, focusing the available resources and tools, and the on-going activity (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Greeno, 1997) facilitates in designing an environment that is inventive and entwined with participation (Lave 1988). This level emphasizes the importance of context and situation along with the role of embedded practice community in co-creation.

Parton and Sciences (2002) discovered the ability of experienced workers to handle complexity of practice situations, involving many players with competing and often conflicting interests, different roles or expectations, while understanding the issue of context and being aware of influence of differing controllable and uncontrollable contextual factors in order to fashion strategies in the workplace. They explained that experienced workers constructed a process whereby the 'theory' of how to help the service user was generated mutually. They emphasize that experienced workers were willing to risk uncertainty for the sake of constructing the most relevant process and outcome for service users. Experienced practitioners identified 'expertise' as being related to the ability to engage in a process with situations rather than being associated simply with the achievement of a specific type of outcome.

Considering users or customers not as an 'object to be known' but someone who we listen to and who we try to understand and communicate with (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, p.6) using

social and dialogical process is important for co-constructing experience. This process may be bound by mutual interdependence, and its practice involves the values of attentiveness, responsiveness, competence, and responsibility, negotiation and mutual recognition (Parton and Sciences 2002).

The relevance of context is highlighted by Ferrario et al (2011) who reported that "*despite the pervasiveness of the term service in the ordinary discourse, there is no wide consensus on the meaning of such term; not only it is used in different ways across disciplines (e.g. economics vs. computer science), but even within the same discipline confusions and inconsistencies predominate*." While interviewing employees of a service organization, Ferrario and Guarino (2008) found that often people in the same business context were wrongly assuming to share the same conceptualization of what they were talking about.

One of the important purposes of the research and the practice in the context of co-creation is to co-create the meaning using co-action and co-reflection. The aim is to "*describe and explain in a way that challenges the taken-for-granted conventions of understanding, and simultaneously invites us into new worlds of meaning and action*" (Gergen, 2009, p. 81).

During the process of co-creation, meanings and interpretations are constructed jointly and collaboratively (Flint 2005; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2003). Co-created value is the outcome of the subjective, personalized consumption experience of the consumer. The focus here is on identity and image creation as an outcome of the interactions in the experience network. In this later approach to co-creation, the customer is the primary driving force and the company becomes the facilitator in the co-creation process. (Rajah, Marshall, & Nam, 2008).

As suggested by Gergen (2009), the emphasis on collaboration, empowerment, dialogue, horizontal decision making, sharing, distribution, networking, continuous learning, and connectivity are important to mobilize collaborative processes like co-creation. Blackler (1993) suggests to prevent the vertical power (division of labor, roles) in value facilitation practices. Similar ideas are proposed by Bateson (1985) who emphasize considering multiple voices involving communities with numerous different points of view, interests, objectives, and customs "where agents (operant resources) bring their own different stories, and the co-creation site may get laden with conflicts for power and control where social identities are anchored and collective meanings are constituted and reproduced" (Oliveros et al., 2010). Schembri (2006) also highlights the importance of a genuine understanding of the customers" worlds and their co-

construction. Gergen (2009, p. 28) highlights the existence of a dynamic and evolving cultural knowledge due to negotiated interaction of individual interpretations, transformations, and constructions.

Previous studies emphasize the importance of dialog and interactions in co-creation process (Levine, Locke, Searls, & Weinberger 2001) in a problem solving situation (Ramirez 1999; Vargo and Lusch 2004; Lundkvist and Yaklef 2004; Mascarenhas, Kesavan, and Bernaccchi 2004; Rajah, Marshall, & Nam, 2008; Payne, Storbacka & Frow 2008). In addition, co-creation is viewed as a journey through the third space (Gutierrez, Rymes & Larson 1995:445) - "*a place where two scripts intersect, creating the potential for authentic interaction to occur.*" It will be interesting to explore the possibility of existence of anti-structure elements (Turner 1972) similar to pilgrimage during the journey of co-creation. Cova & Dalli (2009) emphasize the use of immaterial labour and primary (direct relationships) in the process. It also implies the need of exploring the impact of social capital or social network in the co-creation process (Reingen and Kernan, 1986).

Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) suggest dialog, access, risk-benefits, and transparency (DART) as building blocks of interactions between the firm and consumers to facilitate co-creation experiences.

Parton, and Sciences (2003) indicate that "problems in real world are not presented in a way where such rational-technical approaches easily fit. Real world problems do not come well-formed but, on the contrary, present themselves as messy and indeterminate". And that's why 'Knowing' in such situations is invariably tacit and implicit. The tacit knowledge is developed from "dialogue with people about the situation, through which the practitioner can come to understand the uniqueness, uncertainty and potential value conflicts that must be addressed and thereby reaches 'a new theory of the unique case' that informs action".

Desmet and Hekkert (2007) suggest that in order to understand emotional responses to human-product interaction understanding the users' concerns given the context of interaction is critical. These concerns may be universal or culture and context-dependent.

Another interesting and critical aspect in co-creation and co-construction of experience is the influence of other customers in the environment (Grove and Fisk 1992) found higher number of negatively perceived recalls of interactions with other customers as compared to interactions with supplier, service provider or the environment. McGrath and Otnes (1995) use the term

"unacquainted influence" to represent the influence of other customers in eliciting affective responses and satisfaction of customers.

It is widely acknowledged that customers and service providers/suppliers perform specific socially constructed roles, shaped by respective social expectations to achieve satisfying relationships (Solomon et al., 1985) This approach is related to the dramaturgical and symbolic interactionist theoretical framework (Goffman 1969). Another notable model of the service experience that emphasizes the situation and context is the servuction system (Bateson, 1985), the components of the system that are visible to a customer (Customer A) comprising of contact personnel, the inanimate environment, and Customer B (representing other customers in the system). Davies, Baron and Harris (1999) found that within a servuction system, service experiences of customers are determined by both content and process elements, further advocating the importance of community in co-creation

C. Cultural/societal level and relations between the meaningful relations and practices- community of practice

"One of the key values of value co-creation is that it satisfies the need for creative activity while addressing the need for social interaction" (Sanders and Simons 2009). One notable aspect in this area is the influence of culture. Desmet and Hekkert (2007) indicate that though some studies found correlations between culture and experience, the precise relationship remains inconclusive because culture is a complex and layered construct. Leong and Clarck (2003) discovered three structural levels of culture (the external, tangible, and visible 'outer level;' the 'middle level' of human behaviour, rites, and regulations in the form of words and language; and the 'inner level' of the manifestation of human ideologies), that is similar to the multi-layered conceptual framework proposed in this paper. This further suggests that the proposed conceptual framework to facilitate co-creation is an attempt to explore the possibilities further.

Related to culture, is the concept of 'Tribalization of society' or existence of consumer tribes (Cova & Cova 2002) with possibilities of companies cooperating with consumer tribes for marketing. Wipperfürth (2005) described cases of brands hi-jacked by consumer communities who choose products for its social value and do not necessarily accept the brand image dictated by the company.

Social constructionism challenges the traditional position in relation to authority and

doubts expertise. Cases of numerous initiatives by communities that led to successful co-creation and co-production of products and services, which were assumed earlier lying under the domain of 'expert' marketing agents or service executives calls for a collaborative approach while questioning the top down structuring of the more traditional – often bureaucratic – approaches which may be taken for granted. This calls for focusing on "… primarily skills in knowing how as opposed to knowing that – and moving fluidly in relationship and of collaborating in a mutual generation of new futures and which explicitly values the views, experiences and voices of service users" (Parton and Sciences, 2003).

D. Ecological level and relations among individual-meaning and practices-communities of practice-society

In ecological perspective (Gibson, 1979), an individual is a member of a community, which itself is a part of the society as a whole. Because considering customers or any other participant in the co-creation process as separate from the environment may result into unrealistic situation, therefore, studies have recommended exploring the experiences of customers as situated in the ecological systems of human action, organizations, cultures, and nature. The emphasis is on the participant's understandings that are entwined amongst all and the individual knowledge that co-emerges with collective knowledge. Rappaport (1977) highlight the importance of studying person-environment fit using of community psychology as an ecological perspective.

Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991) suggest to focus on the process of continuous invention and exploration, emerging through the relations among consciousness, identity, action and interaction, objects, and structural dynamics of complex systems. In essence, it represents auto-kinetic system with relations among individual, meaning and practices, communities of practice and society as a whole.

Implications

The use of the proposed conceptual framework provides not only a research agenda for exploring further the four proposed levels preferably not as separate, but as integrated entity, but it has implications for practitioners who can strive to design the affordances to facilitate positive co-construction of experiences to realize mutually rewarding co-creation. Viewing the different levels of the proposed framework as building blocks of design for facilitation, the major

implications are discussed in this paper.

To start with, there is a need to view market and marketing with a different perspective. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) suggest to view market as a space or forum of potential co-creation experience, which challenges the basic tenet of traditional economic theory and dualistic positions of customers and suppliers or demand and supply. The basis of value in this perspective is co-creation experience as constructed by participants (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004, p. 10).

For practitioners, one of the major challenges is to mobilize collaborative processes to facilitate co-creation because "People support what they create" (Littlejohn and Domenici, 2000, p. 53).

Research practice

The proposed conceptual framework provides the research agenda to explore the possibilities of designing affordances and focusing different levels of the proposed framework may create the environment for desired engagement among stakeholders to realize co-creation. In order to explore the field of co-creation and to make shared meanings with the insights obtained, there is a need to adopt a non-dualistic view about research and practice. The actual co-creation processes need be analyzed '*in situ'* using multiple perspectives in a collaborative manner using collaborative ethnography or similar collaborative enquiry research methods with an approach to generative theory. 'Netnography' (Kozinets, 2002) as a research technique may help in obtaining rich data and insights from online communities involved in co-creation activities. There is a need to explore, validate and critic the proposed framework in order to provide opportunities for practitioners to design affordances for mutually rewarding co-creation activities while constructing fulfilling and meaningful experiences for self and others in the process.

Role of organizations

It is worthwhile to view co-creation as a human activity system and therefore, to explore who is engaging in it, what are their intentions and goals, what are the resulting products, objects or creations along with the norms and rules and the larger community involved (Jonassen & Rohrer 1999). As in any community activity, due to the human interactions, experiences will be co-constructed among participants in a continuous and dynamic manner. Therefore, it is important for the organizations and facilitator to explore emerging problems, remove perplexities, solve

issues and address concerns related to the co-creation process by focusing multiple levels as proposed in the model. The role of organization and facilitator in the process of co-creation is to facilitate building and maintenance of a supportive environment for co-creation. The proposed conceptual framework highlights the importance of dealing with multiple levels in order to design affordances to bring co-construction of positive experiences during co-creation that is described as the main role of organizations in the new paradigm of marketing.

During co-creation, organizations can actively influence the process but the role of organizations is just of a value facilitator and co-creator of value (Payne, Storbacka & Frow 2008). Grönroos (2008) mentions co-creation as a journey through the third space (Gutierrez, Rymes & Larson 1995:445). This third space may be viewed as analogous to semiotic spaces. Designing "semiotic spaces" to facilitate abstracting and generalizing experience by providing access to resources and tools for participant is an important role of facilitator that may help in exploring the evolving and negotiated meanings as well as individual construction of meaning and experiences during the interactions (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). In addition, it will be interesting to explore the possibility of existence of anti-structure elements (Turner 1972) similar to pilgrimage during the journey of co-creation.

Adopting a non-dualistic view, the facilitator is also a researcher who studies the process and generates understandings that may open new paths to action (Gergen, 2009).

Facilitating individuals in community is possible while focusing community because when ideas are shared within a community, the "surround" (Kauffman, 1993) may intensify individual cognitive activity. Exploring and recognizing multiple perspectives that may offer a new set of correspondences, or even contradictions, to individual constructions facilitates interpretation and transformation for construction of experience by the cognizing individuals (Fosnot and Perry, 2005, p. 31).

The role of facilitator is analogous to role of designer - *"Designers need a clear idea of what experience is; what its components or elements are; and, perhaps more importantly, whether we can even design or script experience, or simply be content to facilitate it or keep from hindering it"* (Forlizzi and Ford 2000).

Barab et al. (1999) propose using intentional dynamics for driving autocatakintetic systems to enhance the order-producing process. The order-producing process is viewed similar to auto-poetic system. In living systems, the mutual dependence allows for self-other relations at

many levels similar to the proposed conceptual framework in this paper. Figure 2a depicts the mutually defining roles of self and non-self at the inner level of individual in the proposed framework. According to Barab et al. (1999), the role of the facilitator is to maintain awareness of all the levels of these nested relations, to support the individual in relation to each. At the same time it is important to acknowledge that individuals have input into their surrounding communities of practice, the community of practice itself comes with the drawing force of a macrostructure (see Figure 3d). But, no community of practice commands full or final authority. Individuals find themselves in a variety of communities.
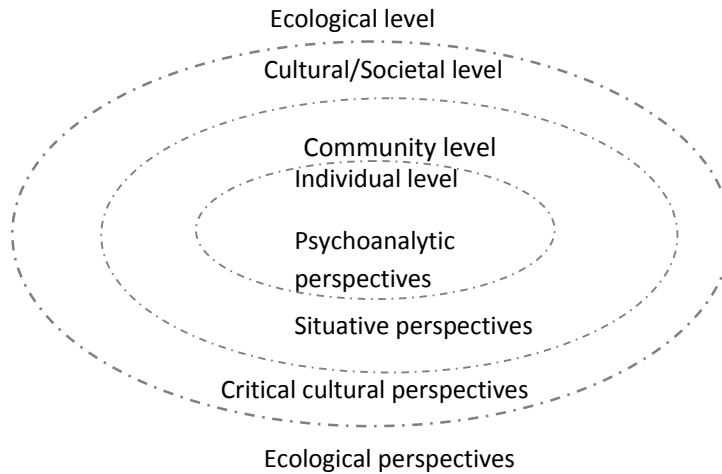
Understanding nuances of social construction of experiences requires post-modern and creative approaches. And, therefore it may be challenging for marketing researchers and marketing practitioners, majority of whom are trained and habitual of using positivist research methods. There is a need to adopt multi-disciplinary approach using the learning and experience of practitioners and researchers from various fields like development management, public policy, social work, public health, service marketing, design, design research etc in order to perform non-obtrusive in-situ enquiries.

Table 1: Levels of Experiential Learning (Fenwick, 2001) and Aligned Autocatakinetic Systems (Barab et al. 1999)

LEVEL	*INDIVIDUAL LEVEL*	*COMMUNITY LEVEL*	*THE CULTURAL OR SOCIAL LEVEL*	*ECOLOGICAL LEVEL*
Theoretical Perspectives	Psychoanalytic perspectives (What happens inside an individual): deals with emotions/affective components	"Situative" perspectives: deals with the relation between individuals and their communities of active participation and meaningful interactions	"Critical cultural" perspectives: deals with the role of power and inequity	Systems perspectives: deals with ecological systems of human action, organizations, cultures, and nature
Participation process	Explained using reflection of object relations theory – dilemma of ego (see Klein 1988) Realized after conscious attention to inside-outside encounters at subtle levels (Britzman, 1998)	While interactions between individuals and their communities, the available resources and tools, and the on-going activity (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Greeno, 1997) - Inventive and entwined with participation (Lave 1988)	Critical/self-reflection. Participants reflect on their experience.	Participant's understandings are entwined amongst all and the individual knowledge co-emerges with collective knowledge
Focus	Explains dynamics of longing of knowledge and the process of configuration of limits and possibilities for individuals' participation (See Todd 1997, Lacan 1978)	Adults don't learn from experience, they learn in it (Wilson, 1993) Social relationships and discussions are integral parts	Developing the awareness of the role of power, inequality and cultural system in construction of experience	A process of continuous invention and exploration, emerging through the relations among consciousness, identity, action and interaction, objects, and structural dynamics of complex systems (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, 1991)
Aligned autocatakinetic systems	Relations between the self – non-self	Relations between Individual - meaningful relations & practices	Relations between the meaningful relations and practices - community of practice	Relations among individual-meaning and practices-communities of practice-society

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework to facilitate co-creation

Ecological level

Cultural/Societal level

Community level

Individual level

Psychoanalytic perspectives

Situative perspectives

Critical cultural perspectives

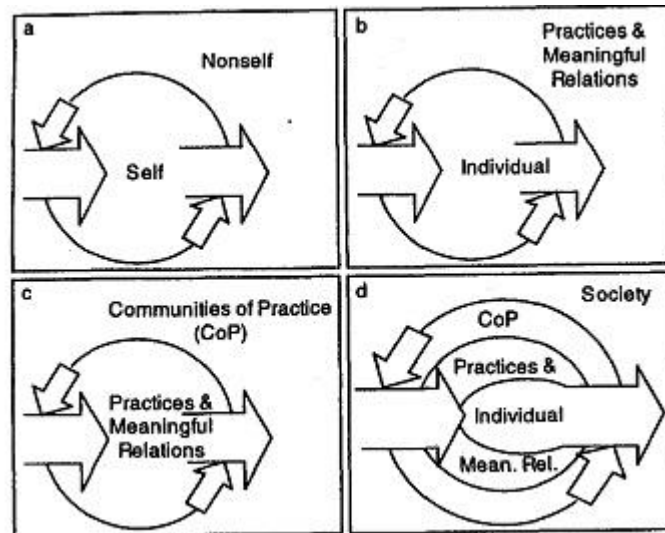Ecological perspectives

Fig 2: Autocatakinetic systems

Fig 2 represents a *"schematic representation of the relations between the self-non-self autocatakinetic system (quadrant a), between the individual-meaningful relations and practices autocatakinetic system (quadrant b), between the meaningful relations and practices-community of practice autocatakinetic system (quadrant c), and among the individual-meaning and practices-communities of practice-society autocatakinetic system (quadrant d). The large arrows represent the irreversible minimization of potential, and the smaller arrows symbolize the continuous circular relations from which the autocatakinetic system arises and is maintained"* (Barab et al., 1999, p.368).

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