

Modes of resource integration driving value co-creation: an empirical investigation in virtual brand communities (VBCs)

Caridà A*., Edvardsson B**., Colurcio M*.

* University of Catanzaro, Magna Græcia, Italy

** Karlstad University, Sweden

ABSTRACT

Purpose – Research on Resource Integration (RI) from the S-D logic perspective is in an early stage of development (Peters et al., 2014). Recent conceptual studies address more explicitly the topic of RI (per se) pointing out the need both for a strong theory (Peters et al., 2014), and for a practice-based approach to enrich the understanding of how resources are integrated (Korkman, Storbacka and Harald, 2010). Despite the compelling nature of the RI many scholars call for empirical research.

The aim of this paper is to empirically explore and analyze how value is co-created through actor's resource integrating efforts. The study is based on data from virtual communities' context and focuses on resource integration through the practice lens. We identify different ways of integrating resources and show the outcomes in term of either intended and unintended value.

Design/Methodology/approach – This paper is based on a descriptive (Selltitz, Wrightsman, and Cook, 1976) and qualitative analysis method (Baker and Foy, 2003).

Findings – In this paper, we frame the topic of RI both from the S-D Logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008) and practice lens (Reckwitz 2002; Korkman 2006; Corradi, Gherardi and Verzelloni, 2010). We will define resources as an enabler, a dynamic concept (Zimmerman, 1951; Pels et al., 2009) that is constituted and reconstituted through the practice of resource integration itself. Consistent with the view that resources are becoming (Zimmerman, 1951; Pels et al., 2009; Edvardsson et al. 2014), resource integration is positioned as an integrated part of value co-creation process that emerges through three main activities: i) integration on resources, ii) operation on resources, and iii) assessment on value.

Practical implications – The work contributes both practically and theoretically. First, it provides some contributions to the understanding of how resource integration occurs and how value (intended or unintended) stems from it. Second, it provides a new framework grounded in resource integration in practice within Virtual Brand Communities (VBC).

Originality/value – We contribute by addressing the call for a clearer understanding of the resource integration process and resulting value outcomes (Korkman, Storbacka and Harald, 2010; Kleinaltenkamp et al., 2012; Edvardsson et al., 2014). Furthermore, we provide a new concept of VBCs as a practice for resource integration able to synthesize the activities through which frozen resources become unfrozen, and thus as the locus where RI occurs.

Key words Resource integration, practice theory, value, virtual brand community, virtual community

Paper type – Research paper

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Introduction

The topic of resource integration (RI) has been emphasized in different areas of marketing and management literature. RI is a key aspect of the discussions about service-dominant (S-D) logic, although studies on it from the S-D logic perspective are in an early stage of development (Peters et al., 2014). Although not directly mentioned, most studies depict RI as the antecedent of value creation (Lusch and Webster, 2011; Edvardsson and Tronvoll, 2013), as the fundamental (pre) condition of both the service provision/exchange (FP1) and of the value co-creation processes (FP9) (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Only recently, some scholars have called for deepening RI as a concept per se and for building both a strong theory on it (Peters et al., 2014), and a practice-based approach to frame the RI process (Kleinaltenkamp et al., 2014; Korkman, Storbacka and Harald, 2010). Indeed, despite the widespread of the RI phenomenon in the business context, it remains a theoretical construct that requires a pragmatic approach: “*there is much to learn about the practices of integrating resources and how to design and configure the integration process* (Kleinaltenkamp et al., 2014).

According to Kleinaltenkamp et al. (2014) RI is the means through which resource integrators (actors) co-create phenomenologically determined value through process(es) and forms of collaboration. As collaboration between actors is now facilitated by technological advancements and the internet, interest in RI processes and value co-creation mechanisms increased. Indeed, the interactive technologies allow for the broad application of techniques and tools to stimulate the participation and the engagement of the entire firm network from the generation of the idea to its selection and launch (Caridà, Colurcio and Melia 2014; Schau et al., 2009).

Social interaction through web-based technologies (WBTs) discloses a high potential in sustaining companies competitiveness as it allows to collaborate with customers (Schau et al., 2009; Sawhney et al., 2005; McAlexander et al., 2003), as well as, with the entire firm’s network (e.g. experts, suppliers, etc.).

Many authors focus on the relationship between companies and their customers (Lusch and Webster., 2011; Hakanen and Jaakkola, 2012; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Nambisan and Baron, 2007), linking the concept of RI to the customer’s participation in a company’s value creating process: the RI is “the process by which customers deploy [...] resources as they undertake bundles of activities that create value directly or that will facilitate subsequent consumption/use from which they derive value” (Hibbert et al., 2012). Others extend value co-creation from a dyadic (firm-customer) perspective to the actor to actor (Lusch and Webster, 2011) or the network to network context (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012) as multidirectional and service beneficiary centered processes. From the network perspective some contributions remark the embedded nature of relationships and how value is driven by the individual’s ability to access, adapt, and integrate resources through routine practices within networks (Akaka et al., 2012). However, the practices of integrating resources and the methods for designing and configuring the resource integration process remain fuzzy (Kleinaltenkamp *et al.*, 2012), indeed, not all companies are keen on co-creating value with customers (Saarijärvi, 2012) through RI, as this strategy is a double-edged sword in a failure case. Highly co-created service failure arouses negative disconfirmation and greater dissatisfaction (Saarijärvi, 2012). The extant literature on RI has been rather abstract in nature and provides few implications for managers and practitioners to realize its potential value in practice. According to Edvardsson et al. (2014) RI relates to the methods through which resources

are integrated and used by actors, *“it consists of cooperative and collaborative processes between actors, leading to experiential outcomes and outputs, as well as mutual behavioral outcomes for all actors involved”*.

In this study, we adopt Edvardsson’s et al. (2014) conceptualization of RI and we broaden the concept of value as *“improved customer practice”* (Korkman, 2006) to include actor as part of the network. Both the concepts of resource integration and value as practice improvement (Korkman, 2006) relate the socio-cultural context. Practice is the action and the context interlinked (Korkman, 2006). It *“is not only to be decided by the individual customer, but is largely influenced by the systemic nature of the context, which includes social and material relationships, history, and perhaps even the context of one’s own practices”* (Korkman, 2006).

The overall aim of this paper, therefore, is to explore and analyze how value is co-created through actor’s resource integrating efforts. The study focuses on resource integration through the practice lens; it was set in the virtual communities context, that we consider as a practice for resource integration and thus for co-creating potential value (Colurcio, Caridà, Melia, 2015).

We aim to identify different ways of integrating resources through virtual communities linked to outcomes in term of value destruction and value co-creation (intended and unintended value). Differently from previous studies, that address the intended–unintended dichotomy to a positive–negative outcome trajectory (Snow and Soule, 2010), in our view this concept relates expected or unexpected outcome.

Our approach addresses the call of some authors for a practice-based approach to enrich the *“understanding of the actual practical process of resource integration, and how value stems from this integration”* (Korkman, Storbacka and Harald, 2010 p. 238).

Our study draws from three pillars: i) RI as the pre-requisite and part of the process of value co-creation and thus for value in context; ii) resources in practice include market facing, private and public resource (Lusch and Vargo, 2014; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012); iii) resources are becoming through the involved actors’ resource activities in practice (Zimmerman, 1951; Pels et al., 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2011; Löbler, 2013; Edvardsson et al. 2014).

The paper is structured in the following way. First, we review previous contributions on the topic. Second, we provide some illustrations to depict the topic of RI in the practice of online communities. Next, we define value co-creation as a process that emerges through three main phases: i) actors’ resource integration, ii) actors’ operation on available resource, and iii) actors’ assessment on value in context. Thereby, resource integration is positioned as an integrated part of value co-creation processes. Finally, we discuss implications and managerial challenges that follow from the study.

Literature review

The resource integration

This study is developed from reflections and remarks regarding three main theoretical streams of research: i) studies on resource integration from a service-dominant logic perspective, ii) research on online communities and iii) studies on practice theory.

The sharing and matching of resources between many actors is a recurring theme in Service Dominant Logic (S-D logic) research. Nevertheless, few studies address the synergistic process of the actors who share and combine their resources to create value as a concept per se and through the explicit “RI” terminology (Colurcio, Edvardsson, Caridà, 2015). Indeed, although the management of the RI represents the key condition for ensuring the recursive process, studies on the systemic

nature of resource integration and on the ways in which the activities of actors (resource integrators) are coordinated and adjusted to each other are scarce (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012; Edvardsson et al., 2014). According to an S-D logic perspective the RI is the fundamental (pre) condition of both the service provision/exchange (FP1) and of the value co-creation process (FP9) (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Value is the outcome of activities and interactions in which resources are integrated; it is co-created and assessed in use (Laamanen, Skalen 2014; Gummerus, 2013). The emphasis of S-D logic on the collective dimension of value creation draws the attention to the economic and social actors that interact and exchange resources across and through networks (Laamanen, Skalen 2014; Vargo and Lusch, 2008), as well as, to the nature, mobilization and use of resources (Kleinaltenkamp et al., 2014) and thus to the development of the RI process. It relates the incorporation of an actor's resources into the processes of other actors' in accordance with their expectations, needs and capabilities and implies a social and cultural process that enables an actor to become a member of a network (Gummesson and Mele, 2010). In this view, it is a continuous process relating a series of activities performed by an actor (Payne et al., 2008) that occurs through a specific set of interactions between actors and particular resources (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006; Peters et al., 2014). More specifically, interaction allows actors to access to additional resources, and thus to create new exchangeable resources through integration (Vargo and Lusch, 2011): *"through their interactions, partners integrate knowledge, skills and other resources to put together a network of firms possessing a set of competencies capable of offering a value innovation that is an innovative value proposition which enable higher value co-creation"* (Mele et al., 2010). Indeed, value co-creation is a process of multiple interactions and multidirectional resource integration (Vargo and Lusch, 2008) that require first of all the dynamic alignment/matching of resources between actors. Resources are not simply in existence but rather must come into being (Löbler, 2013), they can be viewed as a dynamic concept (Zimmerman, 1951; Pels et al., 2009) that is constituted and reconstituted through the practice of resource integration itself: "resources are not: they become. The usefulness of any particular potential resource from one source is moderated by the availability of other potential resources from the other sources, the removal of resistance to resource utilization, and the beneficiary's ability to integrate them" (Vargo and Lusch, 2011, p. 184). Therefore, resources are becoming (things, persons, machines, money, institutions, or concepts) only when they are integrated through interaction to perform an intended activity (Löbler, 2013).

Virtual Brand Communities and practice

The technological evolution foster the social interactions between firms and their network; it has led to the emergence of collaboration platforms (Camarinha-Matos, 2009) – e. g. the virtual brand communities (VBCs), that require the technological, strategic and relational alignment and collaboration among the members to enhance mutual value outcomes. VBCs enhance the firm's opportunities to access to members' resources, as knowledge and new ideas, (Colurcio et al., 2012) to create new combinations of previously disconnected and unrelated informational elements that can be unique and of value (Kristensson, Gustafsson and Archer, 2004).

According to a managerial perspective, VBCs are catalysts for value co-creation (Skålén, Pace and Cova, 2015) where members have both the role of provider and beneficiary to co-create value for the entire firm network - themselves, brand communities, and firm (Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder, 2011).

Even though value co-creation has been investigated in the realm of VBCs (Skålén, Pace and Cova, 2015; Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder, 2011; Schau et al., 2009; Rowley, Kupiec-Teahan, and Leeming 2007; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001), it remains unclear how companies should engage in this relationship to make it work (Dahlander and Magnusson, 2008). Indeed, an analysis of empirical

contributions reveals that companies' ambitions to collaborate with virtual communities have often been unsuccessful and that successfully building and maintaining online communities remains a challenge (Schröder and Hölzle, 2010). Some authors (Skålén, Pace and Cova, 2015; Russo Spena and Mele, 2012; Schau et al. 2009) adopt a practice theory to clarify the process of collective value creation within brand communities. By focusing on how something happens and what the consequences are (Fuglsang and Eide, 2013), the practice has been a central approach for studying various topics (Kowalkowski et al. 2012), such as the value co-creation process in VBCs (Skålén, Pace and Cova, 2015; Russo Spena and Mele, 2012; Schau et al. 2009).

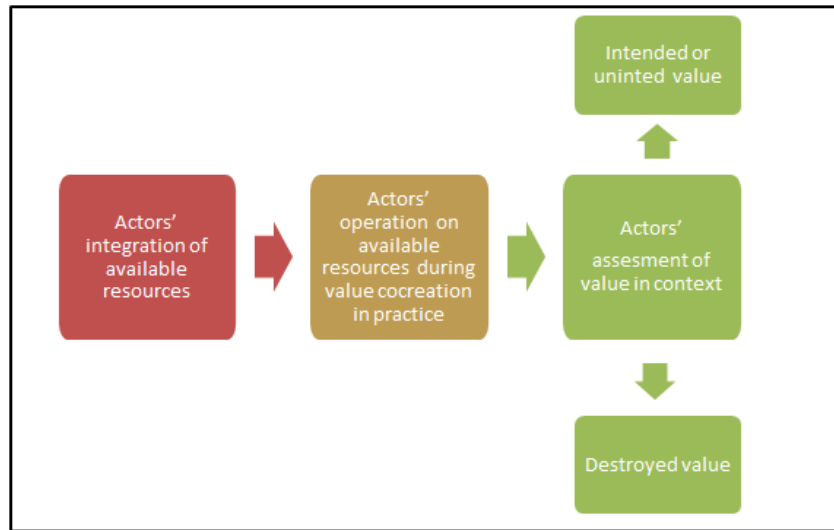
For example, Schau et al. (2009) provide a set of 12 collective value creating practices - linked and implicit ways of understanding, saying, and doing things - through which consumers co-create value. These practices have a common anatomy that links behaviors, performances, and representations. It relates three main elements i) procedures (e.g. explicit rules, principles, precepts, and instructions); ii) understandings (e.g. knowledge of what to say and do, skills and projects, or know-how); and iii) engagements (e.g. ends and purposes that are emotionally charged insofar as people are committed to them). Value co-creation emerges only when different practices fit together (Schau et al., 2009) and thus if the process of RI occurs. Similarly, Russo Spena and Mele (2012) depict the co-creation process as a set of practices (e.g. co-ideation, co-evaluation, co-design, co-test and co-launch) for each phase of the innovation process, and specifically as a set of actions that actors perform in their everyday life by integrating certain resources (i.e. tools, know-how, images and language). Authors define the community as one of the main actors in the practice of innovation.

According to Schau et al. (2009), Skålén, Pace and Cova (2015) firm and brand community members successfully co-create value when the enactment of the elements of practices - procedures, understandings, and engagements – aligns. The authors identified three aggregates of collaborative practices: interacting, identity, and organizing practices. These three relate respectively to the concrete ways of communicating the creation of the VBCs identity, and the VBCs working methods and rules. Each of these practices includes several collaborative practices such as dialoguing, questioning and answering, translating, branding, managing etc. Differently from previous contributions and according to a value co-destruction perspective (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011) authors broaden their focus both on the alignment and misalignment processes to better understand firm-brand community value co-creation. Skålén, Pace and Cova (2015) consider the misalignment of practices as the main cause of the lack of value co-creation in the VBCs, they provide some realignment strategies to remedy misalignments events.

The Resource Integration in the practice of virtual brand communities

Even if not directly mentioned or investigated contributions cited above frame the RI as a key element to address the process of mutual alignment of relevant practices to co-create value. Consistent with the view that resources are becoming (Zimmerman, 1951; Pels et al., 2009; Edvardsson et al. 2014), the framework we propose describe RI as a process that emerges through three main activities during which frozen resources become unfrozen (figure 1).

Figure 1: The Resource Integration Process



Source: Our Elaboration

First activity relates the integration of available resources. It requires both the alignment and eventually realignment strategies to ensure their matching. Second activity focus on the operation on available resource, as resources become with activities during value co-creation in practice (Zimmerman, 1951; Pels et al., 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2011; Löbler, 2013; Edvardsson et al. 2014). Finally, the third activity relates the actors' assessment of value in context. It affects the trade-offs between the benefits and sacrifice of a certain product and relationship (Korkman, 2006) that is embedded in the customer everyday practices (Korkman, 2006). Value emerging from this process can be positive or negative depending on the actor's resource alignment or misalignment. The following section provides some illustrations to depict the RI process in the practice of VBCs.

SPAR Bag Design Contest

The SPAR Bag Design Contest aims to attract heterogeneous participants - professional and amateur designers - with diverse backgrounds, interests and skills to submit creative and original designs for shopping bag imprints. Participants were further invited to vote and comment on the bag designs of fellow participants. 150 finalists out of 5297 submitted bags have been selected by a committee of seven SPAR employees (Gebauer, Füller e Pezzei, 2013). Box 1 shows the users' negative reactions to the outcome of the contest and to the decision of the jury.

Box 1

If it's not a mistake, it must be sad joke of sad people... How Sonia Sophie write above: 'I saw so many great designs, great ideas'- I agree 100% It's not even worthy opponent in competition. And this bag will be printed 1 million times??? Jury take some strong drugs (?), or what (???) funny_bunny .

Can you believe this setup of a competition? They blocked me asmba from posting any comments & even threatened me with an email. PLEASE SEND COMPLAINTS ABOUT THIS CONTEST TO SPAR: presse@SPAR.at or office@SPAR.at. bob

The SPARBag Contest admin could have specified that this contest was actually based on WordPlays, and nothing graphical of some sort... WASTE OF TIME!!! damang

Source: Gebauer, Füller e Pezzei, 2013.

First of all, the jury decision of basing the winner selection on the word play instead of the bag graphic design didn't allow non-German speaking participants to appreciate the outcome of the contest or to catch value coming from their engagement in the community (lack of a common knowledge and culture of community members - German participants vs. non German participants). Furthermore, the lack of rules and information about procedures, as well as the brand indifference toward the community (lack of feedback and banishment activities) produced the misalignment between the practice elements - procedure, understanding and engagement – that don't allow the actor's resource matching or the further phase of operation on resources. In this case the value assessment related a negative and unexpected value both for the community members and the brand (e.g. dissatisfaction, mistrust, feeling of unfairness, negative word of mouth, and relinquishment of the community).

Formabilio.com

Formabilio.com is a network of designers, companies (partners) and supporters created by an Italian furnishing startup company who uses interactive technologies to source and shape ideas to designers by emphasizing the style, quality and tradition of the made in Italy (Caridà, Colurcio and Melia 2014). It organizes a call for ideas to gather the most original and innovative ideas from the creative crowd of the community through a digital platform. Ideas are chosen by the community of design enthusiasts, manufactured by small enterprises of the made in Italy and sold online on the web-platform Formabilio.com. Box 2 clarifies both the roles and the value community members can reach from their engagement in the Formabilio project.

Box 2

*"G: Very good! I like your idea. Probably you can use a part of it for the lamp backing. Anyway my vote is 5, the maximum. S: I think you're right. I can regain more space. Thank you so much for your suggestion".
Giancarlo e Silvia, Formabilio designers.*

*"The knowledge exchange within the community allows for the optimization of products and solutions. I remember a conversation of a designer who provided suggestions to better fit an idea. The proposal has been changed according to the suggestions and has been evaluated successfully in the following contest"
Denis, CEO Euroline –Partner.*

*"Formabilio goes between us and designers to solve problems or to redefine some details of the product. ...bridges the gap between the actors of the community as it interprets the need of both supplier and designers. Furthermore, it is possible interact personally with designers during the events organized by Formabilio"
Denis, CEO Euroline –Partner.*

*"The platform allows us to offer to the creativity of designers all our skills, competences and all our 60 years' experience and tradition, to further their opportunities and ours."
Katia, Manager Ivo Fontana Mobili – Partner.*

*"I believe Formabilio is a good chance to keep in touch people wants share ideas and knowledge. It allows the stand out of young professional designer and their cooperation with potential customers and firms."
Maddalena, Formabilio designer.*

*"We have no doubt that the furniture industry is suffering the recession and that needs for change and revolution. A part of this change is shown in the very innovative development and sale system applied by Formabilio. We grew up in term of relationships with other suppliers and designers. We have information about materials and manpower costs that before were not easy accessible; furthermore, the reference system enacted by Formabilio allowed us to be engaged in other projects outside the community"
Denis, CEO Euroline –Partner.*

Source: Caridà, Colurcio and Melia 2014

As quotes in the box reveal, Formabilio is the hub of the network. The company enhances the integration of resources among all players involved in the project establishing connections and relationships. Formabilio orchestrates interaction by promoting and facilitating the resource integration through the clear definition of rules and precepts, instructions about the submission and evaluation of the ideas process, as well as, the clarity of the community purposes (e.g. to produce and share value with all player involved in the project). Formabilio supports the learning process within the community by channeling and allowing the matching of the actors´ skills and knowledge to improve their effectiveness as resource integrators and to set up a new ways of creating value.

All actors are resource integrators and perform both the roles of provider and beneficiary integrating human (e.g. knowledge, skills, time, and effort) and non-human resources (e.g. the platform technical infrastructure). They are aware of the possibility of gaining advantages from their engagement in the community. Indeed, designers have the opportunity to increase their professional competences as well as to obtain trust and reputation as a “professional designer” by peers, firms and potential customers (e.g. each Formabilio product is marked with the designer and manufacturer names). Moreover, they also extract economic value from the collaboration as they gain monetary reward for each sold product they designed (a fee of 7% on all sold products). For partners, value firstly depend on the business and network opportunities to tackle new technological and market frontiers (e.g the acquisition of new knowledge) and cope with the challenge of global competitiveness. Such type of value leads to, or is a precondition for economic and financial value.

Lego Mindstorm

Lego Mindstorm provides opportunities for armchair inventors, robotics fanatics and LEGO builders ages 10 and older to build and program virtual realities through the combination of classical bricks with electric motors and sensors, robots that do what they want. Lego offers software, tutorials and interactive tools (forum, chat, ratings, comments, etc.) to orchestrate the process through which value is created.

Box 3

User A: What do you think are better and more convenient to use in your robots and technic creations? Treads or wheels?

User B: Wheels are easier to attach but the treads look cooler

User C: Treads are easier to control from NXT, they use all drive motors for drive. Wheels are harder to control and this system don't use steering motor for drive so it is weaker...

Lego team: This is a topic for our help team to discuss problems you and other users are having! Please don't post here unless you are: Me, Nanobrickman, Nxtelsa, or bluehat. Thanks in advance for cooperating.

Lego Team-Nxtelsa Anyone know how to answer rbnrbrtsn's question? I have never had this problem myself so I tried Google but I didn't find anything. Please help rbnrbrtsn if you can! I will keep working on it. (Lego Mindstorm community)

Source: our elaboration

The brand through the moderators (e.g Lego team) facilitates the knowledge exchange between the community members. Differently from other VBC, such as Dell-Ideastorm (Di Gangi, Wasko 2009), where due to lack of technical knowledge and expertise moderators neglected the potential value of the idea proposed generating dissatisfaction and anger within the community, the Lego moderators encourage the participation of the crowd to satisfy technical requests coming from the community itself (box 3). This practice allows the brand to prevent the possible misalignment of procedure, understanding and engagement due to the lack of technical knowledge and expertise. It ensures Lego to strengthen and to operate on the process of resource integration, in order to prevent the possible community members complaints (intended/expected value), and to extend its business interests towards new business areas, such as the robotic surgery and the educational context (unintended value).

Discussion and implication

Companies are increasingly looking for new strategies of integrating resources to foster value creation and innovation within and through collaborative networks. Collaboration with different actors (e.g. customers, companies, experts, etc.) is a key factor for the organisational success, performance improvement and survival in the competitive arena (Trott and Hartmann, 2009; Chesbrough and Crowther, 2006). Indeed, not only hi-tech companies, but also manufacturing firms (e.g. Formabilio, Lego, Ferrero/Nutella, Porche, etc.) operating in mature industries try to exploit the opportunity of interaction and collaboration enhanced by the internet based tools, such as the virtual platforms (Hutter et al., 2011).

VBCs can be considered a strategic and complementary asset (Dahlander and Wallin, 2006; Di Gangi and Wasko, 2009) for companies. They allow firms to channel and integrate resources coming from outside its boundaries – expertise, knowledge, ideas, creativity, and relationships – to put in the realm and practice of the RI. Even though RI is a necessary requirement to create value, as it is the fundamental pre-condition (Lusch and Webster, 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2008) and a phase of the process of value co-creation, it is not enough. Illustrations provided in the study highlight that value co-creation occurs when brand community procedures, understandings, and engagements are aligned, whereas, when their enactment misaligns, value co-destruction ensues (Skålén, Pace and Cova, 2015) (e.g. SPAR bag contest case). Through VBC, actors operate on resources and activate them with activities in practice. According to Löbler (2013), technology is a frozen application of skills and knowledge that become unfrozen only through usage: *“the integration process makes it a resource only when it gets integrated to provide a service”*. It allows to link the action and the context (e.g. subjects, objects, social community, culturally embedded rules, division of “doing” and tools) (Korkman, 2006), in order to perform the resource integration, and thus to fulfill in the realm of practice the process of value co-creation.

Previous studies (Russo Spina and Mele, 2012; Sawney and Prandelli, 2000), identify the community as one of the main actors in the practice of innovation.

It is a new platform for creating value in practice that results from the recombination of existing resources (Akaka and Vargo, 2013; Corradi, Gherardi and Verzelloni, 2010; Arthur 2009). Therefore, intended, unintended or negative value emerges in and through the VBCs and is enabled by web technologies, through the active doing and the resources integration.

Hence, when studying the practice of RI in VBC we identify and argue in this study for a dynamic systemic view. Actor-driven RI may vary over time (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2012), depending mainly on the nature actors’ intentions, knowledge and skills, access to resources but also the service ecosystem (Lusch and Vargo, 2014). Thus, the RI process depends on the context that, according to an iterative view, creates and is created by the same practice for integrating resources (e.g. VBC). The constant adaptation of the practice of VBC to the changing circumstances and context ensures its recursive framing of the RI as strategic practices (Wikner, 2010) that expands the unit of analysis from the mere action to the system that fosters action (Dourish, 2001).

This explorative study shows the importance to frame the VBC as a strategic practice that requires a formal organizational structure based on values, norms, and rules (Piller and Walcher, 2006; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). It is more than an interactive tool, or a collection of actions or a community of people, it needs to be addressed as a part of the organization formal structure and as a modus operandi, as it is the context where resources are integrated to potentially create value.

From the theoretical perspective, the study addresses the RI as a practice and in line with the view that resources are becoming (Zimmerman, 1951; Pels et al., 2009; Edvardsson et al. 2014) and, is an integrated part of actors’ value co-creation effort. Furthermore, the study highlights that the emergence of positive (intended or unintended) or negative values depend respectively on the

alignment or misalignment between and within the practice of VBC. Finally, the paper provides a new concept of VBCs as a practice for resource integration able to synthesize the activities through which frozen resources become unfrozen, and thus the locus where RI occurs.

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