

FROM THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE COLLECTIVE: CONCEPTUALIZING THE COLLECTIVE ACTOR EXPERIENCE

Topic: Experience, value-in-use, value-in-context

Purpose: Actor experience is a central concept in service-dominant (S-D) logic as value is always phenomenologically determined by a beneficiary. Due to the actor-to-actor (A2A) perspective, these beneficiaries can be individual (e.g., a customer) or collective actors (e.g., families, firms, nations). As phenomenology focuses on experiences of individual, conscious subjects, the purpose of this paper is to examine if and how the S-D logic notion of generic actor can be reconciled with the phenomenological perspective on experience.

Study design/methodology/approach: This conceptual study relies on the literature of collective experiences based on the phenomenological approach.

Findings: The study conceptualizes collective experiences as a special mode of phenomenological experiences (a) given in an individual's consciousness, (b) in the "we"-form (i.e., in the name of a collective actor), and (c) that are believed to be shared among the members of a collective actor. It also differentiates collective experience from related concepts such as intersubjective experience, co-created experience, and shared experience.

Research implications/limitations: The conceptualization of collective experiences reconciles the phenomenological and the A2A perspective solving a theoretical conflict in S-D logic. It enables a better understanding of many collective service phenomena, such as business-to-business customer experience.

Practical implications: Advancing the understanding of collective experiences helps practitioners clarify and avoid potentially ill-guided assumptions around their nature and perceived (ir)reality. In so doing, our research challenges managers to carefully consider the degree to which decisions are indeed representative of collective actors and their (desired) experiences (e.g., organizational buyers).

Originality/value: This study is the first to conceptualize collective experiences in service through a phenomenological perspective, thus, providing an original contribution that advances the S-D logic narrative.