

Inside the joint sphere of value co-creation

Mai Khanh Tran, Christina Goulding, University of Birmingham.*

Research on the role of consumers in value creation has advanced the consumer culture theory and added values to the field of marketing (Lanier and Schau, 2007; Lusch and Vargo, 2006). After management scholars Prahalad and Ramaswam began a series of essays suggesting the changing paradigm of firm-consumer interaction (2000), Gronroos further evolved the theory by introducing the concepts of different value creation spheres and had a strong focus on the **joint sphere** of value co-creation (2013). Joint sphere, by offering a dialogical manner between consumers, allows consumers to possibly cross the boundary into provider sphere and become the co-producers at an early stage. This encourages and facilitates their reflection of “the world”, their expression of multi-realities, and communication with larger audience (including firms) about the alternatives to realities.

With an interest in unconscious ability of humans in creative thinking, we decided to place the joint sphere in the creative space, and more specifically, the **blended space**, of the consumers. The concept of the blended space (or the blend) was introduced by Fauconierne and Tuner (1998). It connects input spaces, begins with a conceptual mapping between two or more mental spaces which can include different aspects of life and media: images – text – melodies, people, events, and even conflicts of human experiences. These elements and input spaces can be exploited and developed when sharing corresponding structural roles. This process takes place by compressing over times and, in some cases, over two or various spaces in a large history, which leads to cross-space links between the inputs.

Our notion of space and interaction “inside the joint sphere of value co-creation” is presented through our installation artwork in the shape of an open geometric box. The core materials of the box are the printed images, which are also part of our visual data collected through our immersion into a real-life project in 2015 to enhance young audience's engagement in classical music through technology. One crucial aspect of the project was the involvement of potential audience members in developing a technology product in order to tackle the challenge raised by a renowned city symphony orchestra in the United Kingdom and a global technology company. Consumers, once becoming co-producer of ideas, will get exposed to and contribute unconsciously a huge amount of heterogeneous data and information in various forms to assist their creativity. The shape of the geometric box reflects our view on the creative generation process of the consumers. The box, or the consumers' blended space, is the compression of vital relations and multi-dimensions of life accumulatively and continuously collected, constructed, and integrated.

Our notion of sphere is illustrated through the choice of an installation artwork since it is an artistic genre of three-dimensional works designed to transform the perception of “space”. Gallery visitors are encouraged to see our installation artwork from their own angles to explore the diversity of information which the participants in our research project have exposed to and contributed in. The homogeneity of visual data on different aspects of life, ranging from music benefits, technology, to screenagers' activities, will inform us of how the direct interaction, information exchange and co-development between experts and novice can turn spectators to creators.