

CONCEPTUALIZING VALUE CO-CREATION TO DETECT EMERGENCE AND ECOSYSTEMS (RE)FORMATION: A “META” APPROACH

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Purpose – The work aims at identifying the multiple actors’ dynamic interrelations that, through their value co-creation manifestations, give birth to the emergence of service ecosystems. The study adopts the Viable Systems Approach (Vsa) (Barile and Polese, 2010) lens to look at service ecosystems (Akaka et al., 2013) as it argues that the Vsa is a suitable meta-model for the analysis of emergence in ecosystems. The Vsa perspective adopts a holistic view and understands systems synergy as a meta-phenomenon deriving from the relationships between micro (individual), meso (relational level) and macro (institutionalization) levels.

Design– Since emergence is ephemeral (Taillard et al., 2016) and difficult to detect, the observation of the dynamics underlying value co-creation process can help to detect how ecosystems take shape. Thus, by clarifying co-creation appearance, ecosystems emergence can be interpreted. Based on a critical literature review, the study proposes a framework that addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: which are the main sub-dimensions and drivers of value co-creation’s evolving process across micro, meso- and macro-contexts?

RQ2: which are the dynamic links between micro-, meso- and macro levels that can generate ecosystem’s emergence and continuous reformation?

Findings – In response to the RQ1, value co-creation is reframed as a complex “phenomenon”, subdivided into three processes, *value-in-exchange*, *in-use* and *in-context*, associated to each of the three ecosystem’s levels: micro, meso and macro. Moreover, within each level three drivers: activity, relational modalities and resources were identified.

In response to RQ2, the final outcome of value co-creation is emergence, intended as the generation of new value, interacting modalities, practices and institutions and as the continuous renewal of the “newness” created over time. By identifying the main value co-creation processes and drivers, emergence can be configured as a result of an evolutionary process of value generation and regeneration (meta-level).

Research implications/limitations– The framework derives from conceptual analysis and can be understood as a first step for future research aimed at performing qualitative observation and/or measurement of value co-creation. The categorization of the main co-creation activities, relational modalities and resources can help decision-makers to manage strategically the process from the early stages, to understand how to encourage user’s involvement in progress and how to monitor service exchange.

Originality/value –The work adopts a phenomenological perspective on value co-creation that mediates between a twofold level of analysis exploring: 1) value co-creation as a complex result of the transformation between and among ecosystems levels (from micro to meso to macro); 2) ecosystem’s emergence as the synergistic outcome arising from co-created value (at a meta-level) that enables ecosystems reformation (institutionalization, from macro to meso and micro).

Key words – Service ecosystems, value co-creation, emergence, viability, reformation

Paper type – Conceptual paper

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