

The influence of service employee institutional work on consumer brand-related practices and brand meaning cocreation

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Purpose - This paper aims to build an understanding of the process of Brand Meaning Cocreation (BMCC). We provide empirical insight into what service employees do to navigate competing institutions in service interactions and the influence this has on consumer practices and meaning-making processes.

Design/Methodology/Approach - The research is based on 40 interviews with bank service staff and customers that lasted between 60 and 90 minutes each. Interviews were conducted in Vietnam and informants were contacted through purposeful sampling applying the snowball technique. Data were analysed applying the Gioia et al. (2012) method. This involves identification of second-order themes and third-order aggregates based on first order-incidents that help reveal the BMCC process.

Findings - The results reveal service employee practices used as institutional work (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006) in service interactions and consequential consumer practices, that contribute to BMCC of brand authenticity and legitimacy. This helps managers understand how employee institutional work stimulates consumer practices and so facilitate or constrain BMCC.

Research Implications – This study uncovers the process of BMCC that occurs in interactions between service providers and consumers (Tierney et al. 2016). We contribute an empirical understanding of how service employees navigate multiple competing institutions to (re)frame customer service interactions and in consequence contribute to consumer practices and BMCC.

Originality/Value - We extend and integrate extant branding and cocreation literature and shed light on the process of BMCC. The interactional process through which this occurs has not been explored and firms need to understand how institutional work influences the cocreation processes of customers, including practices, in order to facilitate mutually beneficial cocreation opportunities and outcomes (Karpen et al. 2012) that influence brand meaning.

References

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