



**8th Annual Conference of the
EuroMed Academy of Business**

**Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Value
Chain in a Dynamic Environment**

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Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Value Chain in a Dynamic Environment

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FOREWORD

The Annual Conference of the EuroMed Academy of Business aims to provide a unique international forum to facilitate the exchange of cutting-edge information through multidisciplinary presentations on examining and building new theory and business models for success through management innovation.

It is acknowledged that the conference has established itself as one of the major conferences of its kind in the EuroMed region, in terms of size, quality of content, and standing of attendees. Many of the papers presented contribute significantly to the business knowledge base.

The conference attracts hundreds of leading scholars from leading universities and principal executives and politicians from all over the world with the participation or intervention of Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers, Company CEOs, Presidents of Chambers, and other leading figures.

This year the conference attracted about 300 people from over 70 different countries. Academics, practitioners, researchers and Doctoral students throughout the world submitted original papers for conference presentation and for publication in this Book. All papers and abstracts were double blind reviewed. The result of these efforts produced empirical, conceptual and methodological papers and abstracts involving all functional areas of business.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many people and organizations are responsible for the successful outcome of the 7th Annual Conference of the EuroMed Academy of Business.

Special thanks go to the Conference Chair Professor Diego Begalli, the Conference Organising Committee and the University of Verona, in Italy, for accomplishing an excellent job.

It is acknowledged that a successful conference could not be possible without the special co-operation and care of the Track Chairs and Reviewers for reviewing the many papers that were submitted to this conference. Special thanks to the Session Chairs and Paper Discussants for taking the extra time to make this conference a real success.

The last but not the least important acknowledgment goes to all those who submitted and presented their work at the conference. Their valuable research has highly contributed to the continuous success of the conference.

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BOOK OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

THE CO-DESIGN DEVELOPMENT AS A PROCESS OF TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

The issue of value co-creation can be studied under multiple perspectives both in product and service sector. This paper investigates the emergence of co-design as a specific form of value co-creation, which involves simultaneously product and service dimensions, and emerges through the interactions between designers and customers. The issue is approached through an Actor-Network Theory perspective, as a mean to investigate the relational ties within the co-design network, analyzing the specific case of one of the most important online co-design community. This study shows that co-design involves both service and product components and emerges as successful story of translation process whose phases of problematization, interessement, enrolment and mobilization generate the re-negotiation of traditional identities and roles of designers and customers.

INTRODUCTION

In the actual flourishing of co-creative initiatives and business model entirely based on the concept of co-creation of design, the main claims are that the world is changing and the power is increasingly passing into consumers' hands and designers have now huge opportunities of express themselves freely through online co-design platforms and propose their creative ideas directly to consumers which can collaborate with them in order to co-create value. These quite straightforward statements are questioned if we analyse the issue using Actor-Network Theory, which shows an extremely higher complexity. There is no such clear distinction about the new roles and identities of customers, designers and online platforms, that can enhance co-creation of value. In our effort to follow the actor (Callon, 1986b) we have chosen to start from Threadless, one of the more frequented and developed online co-design community, which can be viewed as a punctualized (Callon, 1991) non-human actor and at the same time part of the actor-network constituted by its relations with the designers and its relations with customers. Then the emergence of co-design can be analysed as an innovation diffusion process and described using the sociology of translation (Callon, 1986b; Latour, 1987).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From the literature review about co-creation emerges a quite diffuse agreement on citing the studies of Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000; 2004a; 2004b) as the main references. The central point is that customers and market are changing together and market is becoming a forum in which customers play an active role in creating and competing for value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). The complexity of creating conditions for a co-creative environment, such as encouraging an active dialogue, mobilizing customers communities and co-creating personalized experiences can be reduced using Information Technologies and the Internet (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). This led us to taking into consideration a case of online co-design community following the literature on online platform in NPD (Nambisan, 2002; Nambisan & Baron, 2007).

This approach of co-creation of experiences is recalled in the literature on Service-Dominant logic, fostered by the idea that consumers desire personalized and co-created experiences also in the product context (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The jointly growth of studies on co-creation and S-D logic has also led to the development of literature stream that take both the issues in close relation, such as the New Service Development (Alam, 2002; Matting et al., 2004).

To analyse the specific issue of co-design we have relied on the Sanders and Stappers (2008) definition of co-creation as "any act of collective creativity, i.e. creativity that is shared by two or more people." (p.6) and the more narrow definition of co-design as "collective creativity as it is applied across the whole span of a design process" (p.6) so the conceptual relation between the two concepts is that: "co-design is a specific instance of co-creation" (p.6).

EMPIRICAL SETTING AND DATA

Threadless born in 2000 as a little start-up based on a website of t-shirt design competitions, where designer simply submit their design and are voted by the online community, then the best design is printed by the company and sold online. At the beginning of the website the printing timing was once every some months, depending on the sold-out of the previous contest and then in 2004 the printing was every weeks. The observations about actors and dynamics of translation are done directly on the website as participant customer and member of the community from 2010-2013. A part from this long period of participation in the community, another period of observation is done from October 2014 to December 2014.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Co-design is analysed and approached using ANT in the above described empirical setting, the four main phases of translation process - problematization, interessement, enrolment and mobilization - are analysed and described. What emerges is that co-design can be considered a successful story of translation and at the end a black-box (Callon, 1987) or stabilized actor-network. The identities of designers, customers and design itself are questioned by the problematization addressed by Threadless, the negotiation among actors about identities is supported with the enrolment of allies in the actor-network, in particular customers and community members as customers' spokesmen. The final phases of an effective mobilization of the whole category of consumers by its representatives, which can take part into the negotiation and transaction (Callon, 1986b), lead to the emergent co-design.

Keywords: *co-design, co-creation of value, ANT, Actor Network Theory, translation.*

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