Brand and Value Co-Creation: A Case Study of a CFL Expansion Franchise

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Saturday, June 6, 2015
20-minute oral presentation
(including questions)
(Frontenac)

Abstract 2015-251
4:30 PM

Scholars have suggested that the theoretical understanding of brand and value co-creation needed to improve in order to increase the effectiveness of managers (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Recently, Woratschek, Horbel, and Popp (2014) highlighted the same need in sport management. The purpose of this study was to unveil the practices that could lead to brand and value co-creation in the relationship performance between the Ottawa REDBLACKS and their stakeholders prior to the launch of the franchise. It consisted of a single exploratory case study of the REDBLACKS, a Canadian Football League (CFL) expansion franchise that officially joined the league in 2014 (CFL.ca, 2014).

A decade ago, Vargo and Lusch (2004) challenged the perception of marketing as a simple expression of the functional value of a product. Their service-dominant logic implied that the dominant predictor of value is the relational component found around the transaction between the firm and its consumers. Jones (2005) also pushed the boundaries of value by positioning the stakeholders of a brand as active agents of value creation. As a result, research on value co-creation has argued for the need to go beyond the sole contribution of fans and include the stakeholders – e.g. sponsors, media, community, etc. – in the process of fostering successful brand and value creation (Roser, DeFillipi, & Samson, 2012). Hence, multiple stakeholders should be considered as active in co-creating the meaning of a brand (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2013).

This study used a qualitative framework based on Jones’ (2005) model of brand value. Semi-structured interviews were performed with 20 participants from the focal organization’s network of stakeholders. The sample was built through a purposeful and snowball sampling method that added key stakeholders identified from the literature. Archival data of media publications, and radio podcasts were also gathered in order to complement the interviews. The study followed a deductive and inductive analysis process which allowed for combining previous findings to emerging themes (Forman & Damscroder, 2008). This resulted in the identification of five main themes of co-creation practices including: establishing relationships, supporting public relations, sharing resources, enhancing the experience, and driving brand image. Further, a model of brand and value co-creation that includes five hypotheses pertaining to stakeholder-firm relationship performance was created. The multiple perspectives gathered from this case corroborate practices highlighted by previous research (Echeverri & Skalen, 2011; Woratschek et al., 2014) while emphasizing the presence of risks in the collaboration between the REDBLACKS and its stakeholders towards successful co-creation.

This research answered numerous calls to action from previous researchers to describe types of co-creation processes (Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009; Payne et al., 2009). Models of co-creation have still to be applied to some specific marketing sectors and many authors still wonder what stakeholders actually do to co-create brand and value (Echeverri & Skalen, 2011; Jones, 2005; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). The data of this study helped to advance our understanding of these questions by providing original insights for researchers and practical recommendations for managers. Sport managers and stakeholders can also use the findings to adapt their practices in order to create new or better co-creation ventures with their relationship partners. The study also suggested that future research should investigate the threat of co-destruction (Plé & Cacéres, 2010), the co-creation practices that are specific to another professional sport context, and the characteristics of co-creation in network relationships.