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# Value Co-Destruction: A Conceptual Review and Future Research Agenda

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## Abstract

The service-dominant (S-D) logic lens for understanding value co-creation and customers' interactive roles in the service exchange has emerged as a focal theme of interest among service academics and practitioners. While recent investigations have also focused on the process of value co-destruction—that is, how potential negative outcomes occur—the concept and its distinction from value co-creation remain unclear. This conceptual review synthesizes the concept of value co-destruction and proposes a framework consisting of two interrelated dimensions—actor–actor interaction and individual actor—and their components at three temporal points of the service encounter. We distinguish value co-destruction from other closely related concepts and take steps to integrate the value co-destruction concept into the S-D logic framework and the concept of value co-creation. The proposed integrative framework can help researchers and service practitioners alike to identify, analyze, and rectify the value co-destruction components in the service exchange and, thereby, avoid potential negative outcomes of service interactions. A threefold research agenda is proposed to obtain a more balanced understanding of the two dynamically interrelated concepts of value co-creation and value co-destruction and their application in practice.

## Keywords

value co-destruction, co-creation, service-dominant logic, service actor, conceptual review

## Introduction

When aiming for optimal service design and provision, it is essential to understand how value is formed. Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008) proposed the service-dominant (S-D) logic for viewing service as the subject of exchange in all interactions in any given economy. Focusing on beneficial resource integration, the underpinnings of S-D logic hold that value co-creation occurs through a “reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship” (Vargo, Maglio, and Akaka 2008). Complemented by subjective perceptions, S-D logic views the customer and provider as generic actors involved in value co-creation, and the value established therein is determined and experienced phenomenologically by the benefiting actor(s) (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008). The evolution of S-D logic and value co-creation has significantly impacted the service research literature, with discussions extending to the areas of managerial interest and theoretical and meta-theoretical development.

In more recent developments of S-D logic, it has been established that non-beneficial service exchange interactions may also occur from the perspective of at least one of the involved actors (e.g., Corsaro 2020; Järvi, Kähkönen, and Torvinen 2018; Maglio et al. 2009; Wang et al. 2018). For instance, facilitating customer participation in a firm's processes with the aim of strengthening customers' relational bonds can lead to negative outcomes for employees, such as increased job stress and

reduced job satisfaction (Chan, Yim, and Lam 2010). Accordingly, an unconventional approach, that of value co-destruction, has emerged in the discussion of the intentional or unintentional misuse of resources that results in a decline in well-being for at least one of the involved actors (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010). This growing body of literature has discussed, on the one hand, value co-destruction as a distinct phenomenon in the service exchange (e.g., Echeverri and Skålén 2011; Luo et al. 2019) and, on the other, an opposing, dark side of value co-creation (e.g., Hansen 2017; Hsu, Nguyen, and Huang 2021), potentially contributing to the emergence of a vicious cycle through increased costs and loss of time, money, and other resources, as well as dissatisfaction and negative word-of-mouth among customers (e.g., Smith 2013). Especially in the era of artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technological advancements, value co-creation and co-destruction can be seen as dynamically present in service exchange (Čaić, Odekerken-Schröder, and Mahr 2018). Thus, it

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is important for scholars and practitioners applying S-D logic to acknowledge that service interactions may not always be co-creative, that is, mutually beneficial, and that value co-destruction can equally occur.

However, value co-destruction is not yet as well understood as value co-creation (e.g., Cabiddu, Moreno, and Sebastiano 2019; Han, Praet, and Wang 2021; Luo et al. 2019), and thereby, more research is needed not only to clarify the concept of value co-destruction but also to distinguish it from other related concepts (Kuppelwieser and Finsterwalder 2016). To address this research gap, this conceptual review paper synthesizes the scattered literature related to the value co-destruction phenomenon, re-conceptualizes the concept, and employs the lens of S-D logic to propose a framework for explaining value co-destruction as a process between the actors involved in service exchange, within the scope of a service encounter. The proposed framework illustrates the dynamic interplay between the dimensions of individual actor perceptions and actor-actor interactions before, during, and after a service encounter. Thus, we showcase how value co-destruction emerges as a distinct yet mutually related phenomenon with the S-D logic notion of value co-creation, delineating features unique to the value co-destruction process. Integrative insights into value co-destruction may help management and service design practitioners navigate the value co-creative/co-destructive components of service encounters, thereby avoiding potential negative outcomes of actors' interactions throughout the course of service exchange. Furthermore, we outline a threefold research agenda to guide researchers in further endeavors to better understand the concept and process of value co-destruction within the S-D logic lens—(1) a microfoundational view of the value co-creation and value co-destruction processes, (2) leveraging the potential for value co-creation and mitigating value co-destruction through design, (3) and theorizing the dynamics between value co-creation and value co-destruction in service ecosystems.

## Theoretical Background

### *The S-D Logic View of Co-Creating Value*

The growing body of S-D logic literature holds that value is always co-created in the process of service exchange, wherein each actor (regardless of the relationship type) is a contributor to beneficial resource integration (Vargo and Lusch 2011). The theoretical roots of S-D logic and value co-creation are complex (Saarijärvi et al., 2013), contributing to a well-established understanding of actors' expectations (e.g., Oliver 2006), roles (e.g., Breidbach and Maglio 2016; Moeller et al. 2013), and motivations (e.g., Aarikka-Stenroos and Jaakkola 2012) in the reciprocal value propositions and in co-creation practices/behaviors (e.g., Echeverri and Skålén 2011; Marcos-Cuevas et al. 2016; Oertzen, Odekerken-Schröder, and Mager 2020).

In its adoption of a generic actor focus, S-D logic posits that proposing value is by no means solely the firm's role in the value co-creation process (Vargo and Lusch 2008). Rather, value

propositions are considered mutual and reciprocal, initiating and guiding resource integration among actors (Baumann, le Meunier-Fitzhugh, and Wilson 2017; Frow, Varey, and Payne 2011). Aligned with generally positive connotations of the notion of value, S-D logic regards value as a perceived improvement in well-being (Vargo, Maglio, and Akaka 2008) and as subjectively and phenomenologically determined by each beneficiary as value-in-use (Vargo et al. 2010; Vargo and Lusch 2004). Further, the phenomenological nature of value emphasizes the service experience in consideration of not only the current service encounter but also each actor's past, present, expected, and imaginary experiences (Helkkula, Kelleher, and Pihlström 2012). Therefore, value can be considered both phenomenological and interactional, that is, "co-created through the interactions that actors have with each other" (Plé 2017, p.163).

Scholars have proposed potential frameworks for the value co-creation process (e.g., de Oliveira and Cortimiglia 2017; Payne, Storbacka, and Frow 2008), the mechanisms of value co-creation (e.g., Saarijärvi 2012; Storbacka et al. 2016), and the types of outcomes resulting from the process (e.g., Agrawal and Rahman 2015). It is considered that value co-creation occurs not only between dyadic resource integration interactions—and in isolated service encounters—but also among networks of actors and in a variety of encounters (Bitner et al., 1990), in service ecosystems across a multitude of engagement platforms (e.g., Akaka and Chandler 2011; Storbacka et al. 2016). Emphasizing the value of resources due to their focal role in connecting actors in the service ecosystem (Chandler and Vargo 2011), service exchange enables not only access to but also the creation of novel resources (Wieland et al. 2012). Value co-creation is considered relative to individual actors' engagement, interaction activities, and employed platforms, which may drive engagement by connecting actors "within and across different environments, such as digital spaces, physical places, as well as with processes and activities" (Storbacka et al. 2016 p.3014).

However, it has long been suggested that some such interactions may be non-beneficial (Maglio et al. 2009) and that service exchange may also result in negative outcomes (Etgar 2006; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004), leaving at least one actor worse off (Grönroos and Ravald 2011). While companies should adhere to customers' needs and requests to ensure successful value co-creation efforts (Roggeveen, Tsiros, and Grewal 2012), value co-creation activities may not always be recommended in practice (Jaworski and Kohli 2006). Acknowledging that no service can be "100-percent error-free" (Fisk, Brown, and Bitner 1993), literature on negative service events has widely examined factors such as service failure and recovery, brand transgression, and product-harm crises (Khamitov et al., 2020). The service quality literature has examined perceived poor service quality (Grönroos 1984; Pitt, Watson, and Kavan 1995; Zeithaml 1988), developing models for generating indicators of customers' perceived service quality in divergent online and offline contexts (e.g., Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml 1991; Pitt, Watson, and Kavan 1995; Zeithaml 1988). These tools provide organizations with such

indicators as customers' perceptions and satisfaction, which may be traced back to organizational aspects (Spreng and Mackoy 1996; Zeithaml 1988).

It is acknowledged that negative service exchange outcomes can also result from problematic customer behaviors or failed customer participation in service activities, which adversely affects service providers (Fisk et al. 2010; Harris and Daunt 2013; Haumann et al. 2015). For instance, dysfunction (Greer 2013) or value imbalances between actors may occur through the perceived devaluation or diminution of value as a result of their interactions (Vafeas, Hughes, and Hilton 2016; Verleye et al. 2017). Furthermore, the notion of "problem customers" highlights the integral role of actors' willingness to engage in successful value co-creation (Bitner, Booms, and Mohr 1994, p.98).

As illustrated above, the literature has tended to generate insights into the emergence of negative outcomes of service interactions following a unilateral approach aimed at improving service management (Parasuraman 1998), that is, *value destruction*. For instance, reported service failure complaints received from customers may be treated as either legitimate or illegitimate, depending on whether failure in the service provision can be verified from the company's standpoint (Reynolds and Harris 2005). Even highly interactional constructs, such as dysfunctional customer behavior (e.g., Greer 2013), tend to position customers as a managerial risk rather than as equal resource-integrating actors engaging with the provider in a reciprocal service exchange. The assumption that the risks of value co-creation may be managed by one-sided actions originates from the transactional approach to value creation, in which customers are regarded as targets or objects of marketing (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Therefore, an overreaching S-D logic-informed approach is needed to understand how the dynamic interaction processes between generic actors unfold and catalyze negative outcomes, especially when compared to the extensive knowledge concerning S-D logic and value co-creation, which tends to emphasize positive outcomes (e.g., Shah et al. 2021). Accordingly, several calls have been made for investigations into the complex networks of actors involved in negative service experiences and the emergent concept of value co-destruction (with the "co-" prefix indicating an interactional view of the process; Čaić, Odekerken-Schröder, and Mahr 2018; Grégoire and Mattila 2021; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010).

### The Emergent Concept of Value Co-Destruction

Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres define the concept of value co-destruction "as an interactional process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the systems' well-being (which, given the nature of a service system, can be individual or organizational)" (2010, p.431). While various studies have supported the definition of value co-destruction as a distinct process leading to negative outcomes (e.g., Robertson, Polonsky, and Mcquillen 2014; Skålén, Pace, and Cova 2015; Smith 2013); in contrast, others have referred to value co-destruction as an outcome of such a service exchange

process (Kashif and Zarkada 2015; Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014; Worthington and Durkin 2012). Further, diverging perspectives have emerged concerning the relation between the concept of value co-destruction and the S-D logic notion of value co-creation. Some studies have, indeed, conceptualized value co-destruction as a concept opposed to and distinct from value co-creation (e.g., Echeverri and Skålén 2011; Luo et al. 2019), while others have conceptualized it as a flipside (Neuhofer 2016), downside (e.g., Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014), dark side (Hansen 2017; Hsu, Nguyen, and Huang 2021), or negative side of value co-creation (e.g., Kaufmann, Loureiro, and Manarioti 2016). Emergent studies have also explored factors explaining value co-destruction (e.g., Gkritzali, Mavragani, and Gritzalis 2019; Lintula et al. 2018; Smith 2013), as well as its potential antecedents (Järvi, Kähkönen, and Torvinen 2018), resource misintegration manifestations (Laud et al. 2019), and negative value appropriation (e.g., Corsaro 2020).

Divergent approaches have also explored the value co-destruction phenomenon with respect to value co-creation (e.g., Paredes et al. 2014; Skålén, Pace, and Cova 2015; Verhoef, Beekers, and van Doorn 2013) and related actor roles (Čaić, Odekerken-Schröder, and Mahr 2018), reporting findings of negative outcomes related to value co-creation attempts in empirical research contexts. This emphasizes the potential implications of value co-creation/co-destruction, which have been characterized as distinct yet coexisting (e.g., Chowdhury, Gruber, and Zolkiewski 2016; Plé 2017), as a continuum (Carù and Cova 2015; Makkonen and Olkkonen 2017), as dynamically interconnected (Laud et al. 2019; Lund, Scarles, and Cohen 2020; Plé 2016), and as ambidextrous (Čaić, Odekerken-Schröder, and Mahr 2018). What is consistent among the emergent studies is the belief that value co-destruction may occur despite the generally positive focus of value co-creation adopted by S-D logic (Vargo, Akaka, and Vaughan 2017).

In an attempt to develop a novel understanding of value co-destruction, a growing number of emerging contributions in recent years (Shah et al. 2021) has demonstrated a strong interest in the phenomenon across various contexts. However, diverse and wide-ranging terminological and conceptual discrepancies underscore the need for more investigations into the phenomenon, into how it unfolds, and into its implications (e.g., Kaufmann, Loureiro, and Manarioti 2016; Kristal et al. 2016; Kuppelwieser and Finsterwalder 2016; Järvi, Kähkönen, and Torvinen 2018). Furthermore, the emergent body of knowledge lacks a consistent terminology and consensus regarding understanding the outcome of value co-destruction, besides the highly abstract notion of a decline in an actor's well-being. Accordingly, research on value co-destruction is regarded as a current service research priority with respect to customers' increasingly collaborative roles and responsibilities in facilitating well-being through the service exchange (Ostrom et al. 2021). Therefore, an integrative conceptualization of value co-destruction is needed, one that employs and complements the S-D logic approach to value co-creation and that distinguishes



between the process of value co-destruction and its potential outcomes.

## Methodology

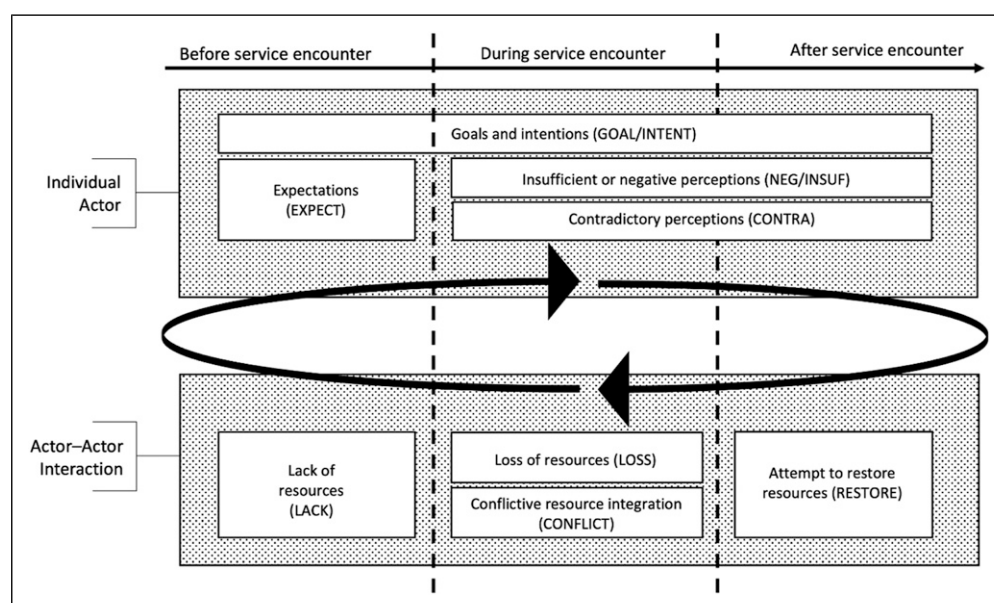
Conceptual contributions that aim to enhance the current theoretical understandings of a given phenomenon are important to advancing scholarly development within a research field (Hulland 2020; Jaakkola 2020). Conceptual review articles offer theoretical syntheses, such as integrative frameworks, to research domains that have not yet gained sufficient attention (Hulland 2020; Yadav 2010). Hence, the conceptual review methodology was deemed appropriate for addressing the emerging yet disjointed conceptual domain of value co-destruction. A systematic approach to reviewing the relevant literature is the focus in developing a rigorous conceptual contribution (Jaakkola 2020). Accordingly, we offer a systematic approach to reviewing the relevant literature and develop a conceptual theory synthesis explicating how the value co-destruction process unfolds from the perspective of a generic actor according to S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2011). The systematic review process is elaborated in detail in Appendix 1.

We searched for relevant peer-reviewed records in four interdisciplinary databases. Aiming to derive descriptions and explanations of how value co-destruction may unfold as a process, our search focused on articles that specifically investigated the phenomenon. In total, 59 unique and relevant scholarly articles in the broad fields of service research, marketing, management, information systems, tourism, and sports management were included in the systematic review. A concept-centric approach was applied to filter the key components (unit of analysis) of the value co-destruction process from the reviewed literature (Webster and Watson 2002; cf. Appendix 2).

To employ the lens of S-D logic to examine how value co-destruction unfolds, we based our observations on general actors (Vargo and Lusch 2011). S-D logic posits that “value is always cocreated” and, further, “value is cocreated by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary” (Vargo and Lusch 2016). Concerning the general lens of value co-creation, Vargo and Lusch (2016) state that value is created neither individually by the beneficiary nor dyadically by two single actors but rather “through the integration of resources, provided by many sources, including a full range of market-facing, private and public actors” (p.9). With such a general actor view, deriving differences between meso- and micro-level observations is unwarranted (Vargo and Lusch 2011; Wang et al. 2018). Carefully following the temporal use of components derived from the data, we arranged the components within the two dimensions according to their appearance before, during, and after the service encounter. As a result, we propose an integrative framework (MacInnis 2011) for the value co-destruction process (cf. Figure 1). Thus, our analysis embraces the ambivalent nature of the service exchange (Carù and Cova 2015), showcasing how individual actor components interplay with actor–actor interaction components in a dynamic value co-destruction process, complementing the prevalent S-D logic view that regards each actor as a contributor to beneficial resource integration in service exchange (Vargo and Lusch 2011).

## Integrative Framework of the Value Co-Destruction Process

Drawing from our conceptual review, value co-destruction can be described as an interactional process between involved actors (e.g., Castillo, Canhoto, and Said 2020; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010; Smith 2013). As actors integrate resources either



**Figure 1.** An integrative framework for the value co-destruction process: Individual actor and actor–actor interaction dimensions and interplay among their components.

directly (e.g., person to person) or indirectly (e.g., via appliances or applications), the value co-destruction process may emerge from actor–actor interaction, such as the misuse of resources (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010), conflictive or incongruent resource integration practices (Echeverri and Skålén 2011), or the loss of resources (e.g., Smith 2013) and lack of required resources (e.g., Robertson, Polonsky, and Mcquillen 2014). However, we argue that value co-destruction for individual actors cannot be determined solely according to such actor–actor interactions, which can be observed, for instance, through resource integration practices (Carù and Cova 2015). Rather, its drivers are simultaneously linked to individual actors' behaviors and perceptions, as constantly and phenomenologically experienced by the focal actor (e.g., Smith 2013). For instance, such factors as goals and intentions drive individual actors' behavior, potentially triggering unintentional value co-destruction (e.g., Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010; Uppström and Lönn 2017) or intentional misbehaviors (e.g., Kashif and Zarkada 2015; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010; Worthington and Durkin 2012), such as revenge (e.g., Kashif and Zarkada 2015; Smith 2013) and opportunism, emerging from the service encounter (e.g., Ertimur and Venkatesh 2010; Pathak, Ashok, and Tan 2020). As previous experiences are also known to shape individual actors' expectations of the service exchange and the unfolding outcomes (Luo et al. 2019; Plé 2016), such perceptions during and after a service encounter may vary from negative outcomes (e.g., Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas 2016; Williams, Kang, and Johnson 2016) to potential deviations in the positive outcomes anticipated by the focal actor (e.g., Echeverri and Skålén 2011; Smith 2013; Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014) to neutral perceived outcomes (e.g., Prior and Marcos-Cuevas 2016), thus triggering value co-destruction.

The evident division between these two dimensions—actor–actor interaction and individual actor—manifests in the literature as an inconsistency in the discourse on value co-destruction as a process (focusing on actor–actor interaction) and an outcome (focusing on individual actors' perceptions; for example, Robertson, Polonsky, and Mcquillen 2014; Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014). As actors' perceptions may evolve throughout the service encounter, we argue that both actor–actor interaction and individual actor dimensions should be observed in parallel to understand how value co-destruction unfolds. Furthermore, in line with the notion that both value co-creation and co-destruction may occur “most of the time, depending on unstable, liquid and ever-evolving interaction” (Carù and Cova 2015, p.352), we see that a value co-destructive service encounter may trigger subsequent cycles of value co-creation (e.g., Echeverri and Skålén 2011) or value co-destruction (e.g., Smith 2013). Therefore, we argue that actor–actor interactions mutually trigger value co-destruction in a dynamic interplay with the factors that are dependent on individual actors.

By organizing these perspectives in our conceptual review into actor–actor interaction and individual actor dimensions, we

conceptualize that four value co-destruction components in both link inter-dimensionally before, during, and after a service encounter, potentially driving new cycles of value co-destruction and ultimately heralding insufficient or negative outcomes perceived by the focal actor, multiple actors, or systems of actors. We propose an integrative framework for the value co-destruction process that captures this dynamic and cyclic interplay between the two dimensions in the sequence of the service encounter (see Figure 1). Further, we showcase how the emergent linkages between the two dimensions may be conceptually integrated into the S-D logic framework.

### *Individual Actor Dimension*

The individual actor dimension represents the intrinsic approach to and perceptions of the service exchange, posited according to the temporal appearance before, during, and after the service encounter. The dimension comprises four components: goals and intentions (GOAL/INTENT), expectations (EXPECT), negative or insufficient perceptions (NEG/INSUF), and contradictory perceptions (CONTRA; cf. Appendix 3).

**Goals and Intentions (GOAL/INTENT).** The first value co-destruction component in the individual actor dimension is goals and intentions (GOAL/INTENT), which represents a range of non-static intentions and goals motivating the actions of an individual actor. In fact, value co-destruction can result from either the accidental or intentional misuse of resources in an interaction between actors (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010). For example, unintentional value co-destruction occurs when intended value co-creation interactions reduce an actor's well-being accidentally. However, the literature tends to emphasize occurrences in which actors intentionally misuse resources for their own benefit (i.e., increased well-being), to the detriment of other actors (Laud et al. 2019; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010), aiming to generate value imbalances between actors (Kashif and Zarkada 2015). Reflecting on individual actors' divergent and evolving intentions or goals for service encounters accordingly, actors may adopt divergent roles in the value co-destruction process, ranging from the intentional initiation of value co-destruction to supporting the value co-destruction initiated by another actor and even to recovering value from an ongoing value co-destruction process (Echeverri and Skålén 2011). Further, value may be co-destructed either knowingly (intended co-destruction) or unknowingly (intended co-creation). For instance, in the context of a technology-enabled game of treasure hunt, some participants may be aware and others unaware of the unintentional negative effects of their actions on nature while pursuing a positive nature experience (Vartiainen and Tuunanen 2016).

Another perspective is that individualistic goals may spawn knowingly opportunistic acts, thereby driving value co-destruction. For instance, an automobile producer might aim to develop the brand's image by engaging consumers in co-creation and by sharing online video material about the brand; however, consumers may only share video content that serves

their own agendas, such as environmental activism (Ertimur and Venkatesh 2010). As the provider cannot know whether consumers' goals conflict with those of their own, the outcomes of the service encounter may be negative for the company (e.g., brand image weakening) and positive for the customer (e.g., raising environmental awareness).

On another note, the willingness or motivation to engage in value co-creation can be negatively affected by asymmetries between actors and their diverging ability to engage equally in related interactions (Skarli 2021). An actor's low motivation or indifferent orientation toward interactions might drive value co-destruction. For instance, an actor's uncertainty about the benefits of the planned service encounter could negatively affect their motivation to engage in co-creation activities (Sjödin, Parida, and Wincent 2016). Moreover, service processes are often unpredictable and conflicting (von Becker, Aromaa, and Eriksson 2015), and intentional co-destructive behaviors, such as opportunistic acts, can occur in service interactions when feasible (e.g., Ertimur and Venkatesh 2010; Yin, Qian, and Shen 2019).

As the relationship between co-creative and co-destructive behaviors tends to evolve dynamically, individual actors involved in service interactions may lack control over the collectively formed value (von Becker, Aromaa, and Eriksson 2015). Thus, we depict that individual actors' intentions to co-destroy value or not to engage in value co-creation (e.g., Chowdhury, Gruber, and Zolkiewski 2016; Marcos-Cuevas et al. 2015; Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014), their opportunism or deviancy (e.g., Ertimur and Venkatesh 2010; Frow, McColl-Kennedy, and Payne 2016; Kashif and Zarkada 2015), and unpredictable changes to an individual actor's motivations or intentions (e.g., von Becker, Aromaa, and Eriksson 2015; Skålén, Pace, and Cova 2015; Smith 2013) may all herald the emergence of value co-destruction.

**Expectations (EXPECT).** As a second component of the individual actor dimension, we depict their expectations (EXPECT) of the nature or level of other actors' actions (Lefebvre and Plé 2011; Marcos-Cuevas et al. 2015; Williams, Kang, and Johnson 2016) and of the anticipated outcome of service interactions based on their prior experiences (e.g., Hsu, Nguyen, and Huang 2021; Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014). Thus, an individual actor's perceptions of whether the expected outcome has been reached may ultimately define whether value will be co-created or co-destroyed (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas 2016), and an adequate outcome of a service encounter may be defined based on expectations rooted in a period before the service encounter itself (Smith 2013). Failure to achieve such expected outcomes during the service encounter may drive intentional misbehavior (e.g., Cabiddu, Moreno, and Sebastiano 2019; Kashif and Zarkada 2015; Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014). For example, Kirova (2021) found that integrating digital consumer technologies for tourists, such as touch screens, in a wine museum contributed to value co-destruction, as visitors found the applications too modern and detrimental to the expected

traditional and escapist experience. On another note, value co-destruction may occur when an expected outcome is not realized to the full extent, such as pleasure from service use, and when the invested resources are exhausted or lost (Smith 2013). If the expected level of service quality or experience is not met, value co-destruction may occur, for instance, through actors' subjective experiences, misbehavior, or sabotage of their interactions during the service encounter (Kashif and Zarkada 2015; Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014). In addition to unfulfilled or overly optimistic expectations, negative expectations, such as fear of exploitation (Pathak, Ashok, and Tan 2020; Sjödin, Parida, and Wincent 2016), may lead to value co-destruction.

**Negative or Insufficient Perceptions (NEG/INSUF).** While individual actors enter interactions pursuing wanted outcomes, different actors have divergent perceptions of the outcomes unfolding during service exchange (Uppström and Lönn 2017). Negative outcomes of service encounters are perceived particularly in situations in which customers view another actor (e.g., the service provider) as misusing resources, rather than in situations in which they are willing to share responsibility for misconduct (Hsu, Nguyen, and Huang 2021). Individual actors' reluctance to take responsibility for the perceived emergence of negative outcomes may also drive value co-destruction (Castillo, Canhoto, and Said 2020), and the perceived failure to derive positive outcomes from service encounters may be regarded as a more severe consequence than perceived failure in the service exchange process itself (Hsu, Nguyen, and Huang 2021). As the outcomes unfolding from the service exchange are subjectively determined by the individual actor (value determination), the emerging value may not reach an appropriate level from the perspective of the expectant (Prior and Marcos-Cuevas 2016). Imagine, for example, that a bank customer hoping to open a new bank account is asked to wait more than 2 hours for an absent manager to sign a form before the customer can submit their application; the situation might end with the customer opening the account successfully but not within an appropriate/expected timeframe or with the expected service quality (Kashif and Zarkada 2015). Thus, value co-destruction could manifest as a form of altering or diminishing the perceived appropriate outcome (e.g., Lv, Zhang, and Li 2021; Vafeas, Hughes, and Hilton 2016).

Outcomes of service encounters perceived as negative or insufficient may also drive subsequent cycles of value co-destruction. Such novel cycles may manifest in situations in which outcomes perceived as insufficient or negative drive further conflict in subsequent encounters between actors (Smith 2013). For instance, a dissatisfied tourist calling their travel agency with the intention to complain ends up waiting in a phone queue throughout their entire lunch break, leading to further negative outcomes (Smith 2013). Thus, we see that value co-destruction can become a vicious cycle, triggering further outcomes perceived as negative or insufficient (Lund, Scarles, and Cohen 2020).



**Contradictory Perceptions (CONTRA).** As the value emerging from the service exchange is always determined by the focal actor, interactions may lead to outcomes perceived as positive by one actor and negative by another (Mills and Razmdoost 2016; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010). For instance, such a duality between value co-creation and co-destruction (Fyrberg Yngfalk 2013; Parmentier and Fischer 2014; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010) may emerge when a company takes on new activities that lead to positive outcomes for one stakeholder but negative outcomes for others, risking the company's overall "license to operate" (Meynhardt, Chandler, and Strathoff 2016, p.2987).

While actors' interactions in the service encounter, consisting of resource integration practices, may take a strictly value co-creative or value co-destructive form, processes may also be mixed, wherein value co-creation and value co-destruction alternate throughout one service encounter or across a series of encounters (Echeverri and Skålén 2011). Such a mixed process begins when actors face contradictions in actor-actor interaction, transitioning from an initially co-creative process to the emergence of negative outcomes or vice versa (Echeverri and Skålén 2011). However, contradictory outcomes may also be perceived as emerging from the service exchange by a focal actor (e.g., Pera et al. 2021; Uppström and Lönn 2017; Vartiainen and Tuunanen 2016). For instance, video gamers may simultaneously face extreme pressure from fierce competition and develop admiration of their competitors (Pera et al. 2021). Similarly, Vartiainen and Tuunanen (2016) applied the concept of contradictions to identify the existence of both value co-creation and value co-destruction poles in gamers' experiences, concluding the notion that the service exchange may be inherently contradictory. Such trade-offs between value co-creation and value co-destruction were also identified in the employment of social robots in the context of elderly care; contradictions were found in the perceptions of patients, such as concerning the robots' safeguarding function, which may empower the elderly, while simultaneously, the patients' families may rely too much on the presence of the robot, leading to an unfortunate withdrawal from real social interactions (Čaić, Odekerken-Schröder, and Mahr 2018).

### Actor-Actor Interaction Dimension

When it comes to critical service encounters, actors' resource-integrating interactions are a hotbed for the value co-destruction process. Accordingly, the second proposed dimension—actor-actor interaction—focuses on actors' resource integration within the process of value co-destruction among the following components: lack of resources (LACK), conflictive resource integration (CONFLICT), loss of resources (LOSS), and attempt to restore resources (RESTORE; cf. Appendix 4). In the following, we discuss each component in detail.

**Lack of Resources (LACK).** We depict the lack of resources (LACK) as the first value co-destruction component within the actor-actor interaction dimension, which takes place prior to the

service encounter. Value co-creation is a resource integration process that requires resource inputs from all involved actors. If an actor lacks resources, such as the time or skills needed to engage in value co-creation, the process can fail and can reduce well-being for one or multiple actors (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010). The importance of pre-possessed resources, such as information (and transparent communication; for example, Engen et al. 2020; Kirova 2021; McColl-Kennedy et al. 2012) and trust (e.g., Baker and Kim 2019; Gheduzzi et al. 2021; Järvi, Kähkönen, and Torvinen 2018), has been highlighted in various studies, and lack thereof may potentially trigger value co-destruction (Quach and Thaichon 2017).

Moreover, value co-creation may lead to accidental value co-destruction due to a lack of requisite knowledge (Kashif and Zarkada 2015). For instance, Robertson et al. (2014) discovered that patients using self-diagnostic websites may not comprehend the information provided in the user interface due to a lack of resources (e.g., sufficient medical knowledge), and online providers may lack the resources required to provide consumers with complete and understandable information. This can lead to false or incomprehensible self-diagnoses that may negatively impact patients' well-being (Robertson, Polonsky, and Mcquillen 2014).

**Loss of Resources (LOSS).** As the second component in the actor-actor interaction dimension, we depict loss of resources (LOSS) during the service encounter, where gains and losses of individual resources (e.g., material, conditions, self, and energy) may be tied to obtaining anticipated outcomes, and they may help in acquiring further resources, such as social status and self-esteem (e.g., Smith 2013). Therefore, expectations regarding the requisite amount of resource investment versus actual resource integration in actor-actor interactions are highly influential when it comes to the perceived loss of resources (e.g., Smith 2013; Woodruff 1997). Resource loss may occur in service encounters taking place in dyadic (e.g., Pathak, Ashok, and Tan 2020) and networked actor-actor relationships (e.g., Čaić, Odekerken-Schröder, and Mahr 2018; Uppström and Lönn 2017); thus, losses may occur for one or many actors simultaneously.

**Conflictive Resource Integration (CONFLICT).** We depict conflictive resource integration (CONFLICT) taking place between actors during the service encounter as the third component in the actor-actor interaction dimension. Accordingly, resource-integrating actors may face conflictive interactions, which may culminate in outcomes perceived as suboptimal. In the literature, the concepts of misuse (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010), the mis- and non-integration of resources (Plé 2016), and the incongruence of practices (Echeverri and Skålén 2011) demonstrate a collaborative view of such conflicts or fallouts between the actors involved in resource integration during a service encounter. Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010) argued that value co-destruction occurs due to the misuse of available resources in interactions between actors, which results in negative perceived value for one or more of the involved actors.



Various studies support the idea that such misuse of resources is a focal manifestation of value co-destruction (e.g., Carù and Cova 2015; Chowdhury, Gruber, and Zolkiewski 2016; Frow, McColl-Kennedy, and Payne 2016). In linking CONFLICT with the individual actor component EXPECT, one of the actors may fail to integrate or apply the available resources in an appropriate or expected manner from the perspective of one or more other actors (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010). For example, value co-destruction may occur if Airbnb customers receive poor communication and last-minute cancellations from hosts and inadequate information and compensation due to failed customer service on the part of Airbnb (Sthapit and Björk 2020).

Further, actors' roles have been discussed in terms of the sources of value co-destruction (e.g., Čaić, Odekerken-Schröder, and Mahr 2018; Echeverri and Skålén 2011; Laamanen and Skålén 2015). Such diverging actor roles tend to encompass the practices of actors; for instance, it has been suggested that both value co-creation and co-destruction may occur as actors engage in congruent or incongruent practices, leading to divergent positive or negative outcomes (Echeverri and Skålén 2011). As an example, a customer may perceive a bus driver's overly cheerful greeting as inappropriate (leading to a negative outcome for the customer) and dismiss it with an impolite comment (leading to a negative outcome for the driver; Echeverri and Skålén 2011). In such an interaction, wherein actors draw on incongruent engagements (i.e., conflictive resource integration), value co-destruction may emerge (Echeverri and Skålén 2011). Inversely, actors who draw on congruent practices experience a positive value outcome, that is, value co-creation (Echeverri and Skålén 2011; Laamanen and Skålén 2015).

Such a conceptualization tends to be tightly linked with the individual actor dimension (and the EXPECT component) in terms of determining which practices might be congruent, that is, the expected practices of other actors involved in the interaction. Accordingly, incongruence between actors' resource integration roles in a service encounter may act as a driver of value co-destruction, and service interactions may encompass outcomes perceived as ambivalent by the participating actors (Mills and Razmdoost 2016). For instance, some consumers may consider open collaboration with the firm and other customers to be enjoyable, while others may consider it an unavoidable ritual and an annoying loss of time (Carù and Cova 2015).

Furthermore, two types of resource misuse can be identified: misuse by a single actor and misuse by several actors, both of which may trigger value co-destruction (Engen et al. 2020). Actors may also intentionally choose not to participate, resulting in the non-integration of resources (Gkritzali, Mavragani, and Gritzalis 2019; Plé 2016), which may be linked to a lack of resources, access to resources being blocked by another actor, or an unwillingness to integrate resources (Laud et al. 2019). For instance, an actor may be unwilling to integrate resources due to a deliberate withdrawal from interactions due to the actor's distinct, underlying, individual motivations, such as voluntary deprivation, defiance, or sabotage (Laud et al. 2019).

*Attempt to Restore Resources (RESTORE).* As the final component in the actor-actor interaction dimension, we introduce the attempt to restore resources (RESTORE) taking place between actors after the service encounter. After experiencing a loss of resources and, therefore, perceiving the outcome as insufficient or negative, an actor may deliberately assume negative intentions and engage in co-destructive actions in an attempt to restore previously lost resources. Thus, we regard the value co-destruction process as dynamic and consisting of multiple iterative cycles, where one cycle of value co-destruction can lead to another in a subsequent service encounter (Plé 2016). In such a series of events, a new cycle of value co-destruction may be triggered (attempt to restore resources), leading to a secondary loss of resources for one or multiple actors (Smith 2013). For example, loss of resources (e.g., money, time, or self-efficacy) may be experienced by a customer who does not receive their online order of groceries on time due to a system failure. These events might lead the user to complain directly to the company or disparage the company to other consumers (e.g., on social media) to regain resources (e.g., money or other compensation; Kashif and Zarkada 2015; Smith 2013). Such actions might also result in secondary resource loss for all involved actors (e.g., loss of reputation or loss of time; Smith 2013).

However, further cycles may also help actors cope with and recover from value co-destruction by regaining resources (e.g., self-efficacy, peer support), expressing and releasing negative emotions, or helping others avoid making the same mistakes (Baker and Kim 2019; Smith 2013). In the same vein, disappointed customers may try to recover their resources in a way that is incongruent with the service provider's expectations (Cabiddu, Moreno, and Sebastiano 2019). For example, communication overload and conflict among members of an online travel community may reduce the members' perceived benefits from interactions, which may trigger negative word of mouth and other counterproductive behaviors (Lv, Zhang, and Li 2021). Similarly, Baker and Kim (2019) studied guests who used hospitality services and experienced long wait times (i.e., loss of time), which led them to post exaggerated online reviews. Reviews were also written to hurt the firm as a form of revenge and to affect the firm's reputation or credibility negatively (Baker and Kim 2019).

### *The Integrative View of the Value Co-Destruction Process*

In scrutinizing the conceptual domain of value co-destruction, we bring forth an in-depth understanding of the concept and process, presented using an integrative framework (cf. Figure 1). As value is derived subjectively and contextually by the focal actor, the interplay between actor-actor interaction components (LACK, LOSS, CONFLICT, and RESTORE) and individual actor dimension components (GOAL/INTENT, EXPECT, NEG/INSUF, and CONTRA) becomes integral to viewing the dynamics of the unfolding value co-destruction process. Such emerging connections among value co-

destruction components are visible in the overlap among concepts in our analysis (cf. [Appendix 2](#)). Next, we discuss exemplar linkages between the components of the two dimensions and conceptually integrate these linkages into the S-D logic framework for value co-creation.

First, we discuss the actor–actor interaction component LACK, showcasing its close connection with the S-D logic lens, particularly in terms of customer engagement in resource integration activities ([Chandler and Lusch 2015](#)). As illustrated above with the example of the online self-diagnosis tool use-case, a user may lack the resources (e.g., clinical knowhow) to derive a factually valid self-diagnosis, whereas the provider may lack the resources required to provide users with sufficient accessibility and tools for use ([Robertson, Polonsky, and Mcquilken 2014](#)). This example showcases the linkages between value co-destruction components, as patients equipped with a low quality and/or quantity of information (LACK) may integrate resources in the service encounter only to generate false or inaccurate diagnoses and treatment plans (CONFLICT), thus driving a negative perceived outcome (NEG/INSUF; [Robertson, Polonsky, and Mcquilken 2014](#)). Furthermore, customers conducting online self-diagnoses may also lack resources (LACK) due to weakness or illness. Due to such challenges, customers may show poor judgment (GOAL/INTENT) in employing invalid self-diagnostic sites, which may hinder their personal aim of generating a trustworthy and valid self-diagnosis and treatment plan, leading to negative perceived outcomes (NEG/INSUF; [Robertson, Polonsky, and Mcquilken 2014](#)).

As another example, a lack of sufficient user instructions in an online service portal may decrease potential users' willingness to use the service (GOAL/INTENT), triggering the perception that the service is of a poor quality (NEG/INSUF). In other words, to facilitate value co-creation, the service provider must engage with users through the sufficient distribution of instructions and other resources. Disengagement in such activities may lead to further resource loss for the customer (e.g., loss of time; LOSS), thereby driving value co-destruction due to the perceived failure to achieve the anticipated outcomes (NEG/INSUF; [Camilleri and Neuhofer 2017](#)).

Indeed, in the healthcare domain, patients' knowledge, skills, experiences, and expertise are particularly needed to engage proficiently in value co-creation activities ([Palumbo and Manna 2017](#)). Our analysis showcases that when experiencing a lack of resources, the motivation to engage (i.e., GOAL/INTENT) in such activities may decode a crucial trigger of value co-destruction ([Järvi, Kähkönen, and Torvinen 2018](#); [Sjödin, Parida, and Wincent 2016](#)). These aspects support the S-D logic notion that actor engagement is focal in value co-creation ([Chandler and Lusch 2015](#)), underscoring the internal willingness of the focal actor as a central condition for engagement in co-creation/co-destruction activities ([Storbacka et al. 2016](#)). Complementing such notions, we argue that linking individual actors' intentions, goals, and lack of resources drives value co-destruction and may reduce the motivation to engage in value co-creation.

Second, we show that loss of resources (LOSS) in the actor–actor interaction dimension is particularly interrelated with the individual actor's expectations (EXPECT). The S-D logic posits that value co-creation requires actors to connect by integrating possessed resources in service exchange ([Chandler and Vargo 2011](#)), potentially leading to the creation of new resources in the process ([Wieland et al. 2012](#)). Complementing such views, our analysis shows that unintentional value co-destruction may develop when actors expend more resources than anticipated (e.g., [Prior and Marcos-Cuevas 2016](#)). For instance, a customer collaborating with a company in a co-design process would expect to not only invest resources (e.g., time and knowledge) in the project but also receive other resources (e.g., networking or access to a designed product/service) in return (EXPECT). Therefore, if the customer does not receive the expected resources or expends more personal resources than anticipated (LOSS), unmet expectations may facilitate the emergence of outcomes perceived as insufficient (NEG/INSUF), driving value co-destruction instead of co-creation ([Smith 2013](#)).

Likewise, the S-D logic view holds that mutual delivery of the spoken value proposition is crucial in facilitating value co-creation ([Chandler and Lusch 2015](#)). Integrating the value co-destruction concept into this view, we argue that unilateral changes to proposed and delivered value may herald value co-destruction. For example, we discuss a company deciding to replace traditional face-to-face interactions with a digital interface. Here, customers may perceive a loss of personal contact and local knowledge (LOSS) when expecting to interact with frontline staff (EXPECT) but being faced with digital services instead, driving value co-destruction ([Uppström and Lönn 2017](#)). Another example of the interplay of the LOSS component with those of the individual actor dimension is Coca-Cola, which faced value co-destruction because the company designed a co-creation campaign for consumers and invited them to submit video footage of its products to facilitate brand engagement ([Ertimur and Venkatesh 2010](#)). However, as some consumers intentionally submitted low-quality footage, aiming to sabotage the brand image of Coca-Cola (GOAL/INTENT), the effort led to a loss of resources in terms of company brand (LOSS). Therefore, we see that depending on the actors' goals and intentions, value propositions offered to support value co-creation may be unilaterally transformed into value propositions that lead to the loss of invested resources and value co-destruction for at least one of the actors involved in the encounter. This view supports the idea that value propositions must be congruent and mutually communicated for value co-creation to take place ([Baumann, le Meunier-Fitzhugh, and Wilson 2017](#)).

Third, we discuss the interplay between the conflictive resource integration component (CONFLICT) and the individual actor dimension. The phenomenon of resource integration is regarded as a core activity in the service exchange process, wherein actors apply and integrate possessed resources for value co-creation (e.g., [Vargo, Maglio, and Akaka 2008](#)). Recently, attention has been paid to such aspects as conflictive actor–actor resource integration practices (e.g., [Echeverri and Skålén 2011](#)).

and the types of individual actor-related antecedents that potentially lead to challenges in resource integration (e.g., [Laud et al. 2019](#)). Complementing these insights, we showcase that conflicts in resource integration may be linked to individual actor components, demarcating value co-destruction before, during, or after the service encounter. For example, customers may experience a company misusing resources in marketing, where personal information is used in an unwanted manner (CONFLICT), thus failing to meet customers' expectations of privacy (EXPECT; [Plé 2016](#)). As another example, we illustrate these linkages between components in the case of a mandatory organizational workshop held by a consultant for company representatives ([von Becker, Aromaa, and Eriksson 2015](#)). Here, participants of the workshop could demonstrate their reluctance to participate by laughing at the workshop assignments and chatting among themselves while they are supposed to be working (CONFLICT; [von Becker, Aromaa, and Eriksson 2015](#)). Such negative stimuli are driven by participants' misaligned goals (GOAL/INTENT), leading to outcomes perceived as negative by practically all actors involved (NEG/INSUF).

Finally, we dissect an example representing service occurrences in which the RESTORE component interplays with those of the individual actor dimension. As negatively perceived service experiences may lead to the emergence of negative value and vice versa ([Akaka, Vargo, and Schau 2015](#); [Maglio et al. 2009](#)), secondary value co-destruction cycles may be triggered during or after a service encounter. For example, customers' initial resource loss (e.g., loss of time or money; LOSS) may drive further resource losses when they spend time queuing or making phone calls with the aim of obtaining compensation (RESTORE; [Smith 2013](#)). As such a reactive attempt to restore resources may herald more tangible resource losses and degrade customers' self-esteem or well-being (LOSS), the negative outcomes perceived by the customer (NEG/INSUF) may drive further value co-destruction ([Smith 2013](#)). However, proactive coping (due to learning and prior experiences) or reactive coping behaviors may also lead to value co-creation when the focal actor manages to restore lost resources and well-being ([Laud et al. 2019](#)). Further, when actions have a low impact on the service provider, emergent vengefulness (GOAL/INTENT) may contribute to further outcomes being perceived as negative (i.e., another cycle of value co-destruction; [Smith 2013](#)). Therefore, connecting with the view that a focal actor's disposition is central to engagement activities driving value co-creation ([Storbacka et al. 2016](#)), we see that the disposition of the focal actor may transition during or after a service encounter, from willingness to engage in value co-creation activities to willingness to engage in value co-destruction.

## Implications for Research and Practice: Setting a Future Research Agenda

This study develops an understanding of the dynamics of the unfolding value co-destruction process by proposing a conceptualization and integrative framework showcasing the

complex interplay between value co-destruction components across the two dimensions of actor–actor interaction and individual actor at different temporal points of the service encounter. Our framework explains how value co-destruction may ensue from actors' prior intentions or expectations of the unfolding outcomes. Moreover, actors' prior lack of required resources may contribute to co-destructive service encounters, manifesting as a loss of resources, as well as negative, insufficient, and contradictory outcomes of service encounters. Our work contributes to current understandings by aiming to integrate the emerging interdimensional linkages inherent in the value co-destruction concept into the S-D logic lexicon. Accordingly, we propose that value co-destruction is an alternative and parallel phenomenon to value co-creation occurring within a service encounter ([Prior and Marcos-Cuevas 2016](#); [Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014](#)), and we depict unique factors that distinguish value co-destruction from value co-creation in a threefold manner.

First, we argue that the value co-destruction process itself may not always entail the emergence of negative perceived outcomes; rather, positive yet insufficient outcomes may underpin the process. This phenomenon manifests as seemingly positive outcomes unfold, while the focal actor's expectations remain unmet (e.g., [Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014](#)), translating, for instance, into a perceived loss of resources ([Smith 2013](#)). Acknowledging that positive yet insufficient perceived outcomes of service encounters yield value co-destruction complements the understanding of the current S-D logic literature that has primarily discussed service exchange occurrences with positive outcomes in terms of value co-creation ([Vargo, Akakam, and Vaughan 2017](#)).

Second, while we see that value co-creation manifests in the resource integration of multiple involved actors ([Vargo and Lusch 2016](#)), we argue that value co-creation and co-destruction can fluctuate, and positive and negative/insufficient outcomes can emerge in parallel and contradict one another (e.g., [Frow, McColl-Kennedy, and Payne 2016](#); [Uppström and Lönn 2017](#); [Vartiainen and Tuunanen 2016](#)). Whether such occurrences can be deemed value co-destructive depends on the ultimate outcome experienced by the focal actor upon the end of the service exchange ([Jaakkola, Helkkula, and Aarikka-Stenroos 2015](#)). It follows that just as the focal actor determines the value emerging from a service exchange ([Vargo and Lusch 2016](#)), only the focal actor may determine whether value is, in fact, co-destroyed. Thus, our conceptualization supports the idea of ambivalence between the continuum of value co-creation and co-destruction, manifesting as dynamic and evolving interactions between actors ([Carù and Cova 2015](#); [Plé 2017](#)), wherein similar resource integration activities may result in outcomes perceived as positive by one actor and negative by another ([Mills and Razmdoost 2016](#); [Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010](#)).

Finally, we argue that individual actors' negative, insufficient, or contradictory perceptions during a service encounter may play an integral role in the value co-destruction process, cyclically leading to the reassurance of such perceptions through novel cycles of the process and, ultimately, to a negative

or insufficient outcome (e.g., Baker and Kim 2019; Kashif and Zarkada 2015; Smith 2013). In a similar manner, negative (e.g., opportunistic) goals and intentions (e.g., Ertimur and Venkatesh 2010) may contribute to value co-destruction, whereas positive goals and intentions may lead to either intentional value co-creation or accidental value co-destruction (e.g., Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010). However, individual actors' experiences and orientations are central to determining the value derived from service exchange (Baron and Warnaby 2011; Jaakkola, Helkkula, and Aarikka-Stenroos 2015; Ranjan and Read 2019), and value co-destruction may alternate with value co-creation: the initially positive intentions of an actor may transition during a service encounter, for instance, toward opportunistic intentions, leading to the misuse of resources and negative outcomes for the focal actor or other involved actors and vice versa (e.g., Ertimur and Venkatesh 2010). While investigations into beneficial resource integration in value co-creation have tended to adopt a linear stance (Gligor and Maloni 2021; Kohtamäki and Rajala 2016; Zainuddin and Gordon 2020), we conceptualize a perceived negative or insufficient outcome of the service encounter as both an integral component and a potential trigger of the cyclic value co-destruction process.

Furthermore, the two concepts of value co-destruction and value destruction have remained discursively entangled in the literature due to the lack of a clear academic distinction (Prior and Marcos-Cuevas 2016). The antecedents and implications of the potential negative outcomes of service interactions have typically been discussed from a unilateral perspective, that is, value destruction, for example, in the areas of service failure and recovery (Malhotra and Malhotra 2011; Maxham and Netemeyer 2002), customer misbehavior (e.g., Harris and Daunt 2013), service quality (e.g., Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml 1991; Spreng and Mackoy 1996), and product-harm crises (e.g., Dawar and Pillutla 2000). For instance, service failure has been regarded as an event with antecedents, outcomes, and potential contingency factors, whereas the value co-destruction perspective views process failures as manifested in conflictive resource integration and outcome failures as individual actor-specific outcomes of the service exchange perceived as negative (Hsu, Nguyen, and Huang 2021). In contrast, we outline that the value destruction concept is tightly linked to value co-destruction, employing a single actor (or system) scope in its approach to assessing the emergence of value. Thus, our framework of the value co-destruction process complements the value destruction view with an integrative focus on the overall service exchange, providing potential for radically new views, for instance, of the service failure and recovery process, which has been called for (Grégoire and Mattila 2021).

Therefore, our conceptualization provides an important contribution to the service research field and the affiliated areas of inquiry by helping researchers better understand the process of value co-destruction, along with its scope and potential outcomes, and by mitigating the prevailing misunderstandings and misuse of the concept. We also identify a strong interconnection between value co-creation and value co-destruction that supports the notion that actors' perceptions of value may

evolve over time (Keeling et al., 2021). Like the principle of yin and yang, we see that value co-creation and value co-destruction interact dynamically—either weakening or strengthening—during service encounters among service actors. Hence, we highlight the importance of studying the value co-creation and value co-destruction processes together to understand the dynamics between the two. Consequently, we recommend three interesting areas for further research—(1) a microfoundational view of the value co-creation and value co-destruction processes, (2) leveraging the potential for value co-creation and mitigating value co-destruction through design, (3) and theorizing the dynamics between value co-creation and value co-destruction in service ecosystems. Accordingly, we propose research questions for each area to guide the proposed future research agenda.

### *Microfoundational View of the Processes of Value Co-Creation and Value Co-Destruction*

We argue there is a need to break away from the prominent managerial focus on dyadic relationships (Grégoire and Mattila 2021) and to provide managers with a lens through which they can view the emergence of negative or insufficient value across dyads, triads, and networked relationships. Managers should be able to observe the roles that potential bystanders or other stakeholders play in the process as active resource integrators and potential contributors to value co-creation/value co-destruction, and these roles should be individually indulged or mitigated. Actor engagement has been suggested as an observable concept in terms of understanding the micro-foundations of value co-creation in service ecosystems (Storbacka et al. 2016). Complementing this thought, we see the need to go beyond the conceptual understanding of value co-destruction developed in our study and to model systematically the actor perspective of co-destructive engagement patterns occurring together with co-creation. In terms of value co-creation, such modeling has already been suggested as focal in terms of informing managers and designers (Storbacka et al. 2016).

Modeling how actors navigate value co-destruction and co-creation in the service exchange is necessary for several reasons: (1) value co-destruction and co-creation can occur at several points in the service exchange process, (2) value co-destruction can change during the course of a single or across a set of encounters, (3) the complexities of value co-destruction and co-creation are difficult to capture if temporal sequences are not observed, and (4) actors (e.g., service providers) can respond to these maladaptive situations in many ways. Furthermore, future research should develop and validate guidelines and tools for designing and developing services that foster dynamic provider–customer relations and positive outcomes of service interactions.

Consequently, we propose that researchers, as well as practitioners, investigate in more detail when, how, why, and to what extent individual actors' engagement activities contribute



to and distinguish between co-creative and co-destructive service exchange. The interplay between the components in the actor–actor interaction and individual actor dimensions, as proposed in our study, opens avenues for further research, particularly regarding how and to what extent LACK, LOSS, CONFLICT, and RESTORE occur and herald value co-destructive engagement activities. Further theorizing the dimensions of value co-destruction through contextual, in-depth investigations would complement a state-of-the-art understanding of customer satisfaction and service quality. Such endeavors could actively scrutinize actors' dispositions with regard to value co-destructive events, generating valuable knowledge in the design and modeling of improved value co-creation (Storbacka et al. 2016). Furthermore, the proposed individual actor dimension could be complemented by the features of the experiential design to support the emergence of phenomenological and experiential value (Helkkula, Kelleher, and Pihlström 2012; Vargo and Lusch 2008) across the micro, meso, and macro levels (i.e., mitigate value co-destruction and enable value co-creation). This would complement the emerging understanding of individuals as overall contributors to both value co-creation and value co-destruction (Ranjan and Read 2019), rather than viewing them as mere misbehaving or dysfunctional destroyers of value at the company level.

Thus, we propose the following research questions to be considered:

- How does actors' engagement in value co-destruction and value co-creation evolve over time in sequences of multiple service encounters?
- How, why, and at which temporal point(s) do actors cross the boundaries that distinguish co-creative service experiences from co-destructive ones?

### *Leveraging the Potential for Value Co-Creation and Mitigating Co-Destruction Through Design*

We see that the proposed value co-destruction components can be operationalized by service designers to derive further elucidated models of specific points of the service encounter and their value co-destruction potential. Furthermore, the proposed dimensions and their interrelated components may be employed to establish a deeper and more systemic understanding through the design of value co-destruction scenarios for each relevant customer group. In this way, pre-designing value co-destruction enables a systematic and continuous rectification of such processes, as they may be coupled with pre-identified corresponding ad-hoc co-recovery activities.

Identifying a strong interconnection between value co-creation and value co-destruction (Keeling et al., 2021), we argue that both positive and negative outcomes may emerge simultaneously, and the co-created value may lead to value co-destruction if the positive outcomes fail to approximate the individual customer's expectations in situ. Thus, we suggest that while service encounters tend to be designed to co-create value

with customers (e.g., Grenha Teixeira et al. 2017), service managers and designers stand to benefit from modeling and designing value co-destructive service occurrences and, subsequently, from developing links with potential value co-destruction scenarios and service recovery actions. Our framework highlights such a dynamic nature of value co-destruction in that crucial differences exist in shaping value co-destruction based on the temporal dimensions of actors' interactions (before, during, and after the service encounter), as well as on individual actors and contextual factors, such as the context and nature of the service exchange.

However, practitioners may find it challenging to detect the value co-creation and value co-destruction experienced by customers, especially with respect to technology-mediated service exchange. Therefore, we call for further research building on the current work to systematically investigate the interrelationships between the derived components of value co-destruction (as well as those of value co-creation). Such work could ultimately culminate in the development and validation of a scale of value co-creation/co-destruction components for a more systematic acknowledgment of the value co-creation/co-destruction potential of a given service. By employing such tools, managers should be able to map how value co-creation/co-destruction components interact within sequences of service encounters, depict the requisite levels of data for each stakeholder type at different temporal points, and, accordingly, engage with stakeholders through informative incentives. Further, monitoring, noticing, and responding to conflictive resource integration should be automated or technology-induced across divergent service offerings. While such proactive preparation may play a vital role in leveraging the value co-creation potential of the service and in mitigating value co-destruction, post-encounter activities may also be needed to leverage the value co-creation potential over previously realized value co-destruction. Thus, longitudinal research is needed to examine the temporal points of service encounters, wherein both value co-creation and co-destruction drivers are triggered, and to monitor whether the drivers temporally alternate across multiple service encounters and during the overall service exchange. Investigations into the timespan of a complete service process and single service encounters to identify the most critical temporal points of co-creation/co-destruction could, for example, lead to the development of AI-empowered tools.

As the proposed individual actor-level value co-destruction components can vary unpredictably, systematic—and preferably technology-enabled—efforts should be made to elevate customers' resources to a sufficient level by, for example, providing them with coordinated prior information regarding the offering, timeframe, and requirements of the service exchange. Further investigations should also consider the proposed actor–actor interaction components. The literature now recognizes different ways in which a lack of resources or conflicting resource integration can facilitate the co-destruction of value. However, it has yet to be determined whether such behavior is more critical in one phase of the service encounter/process than in another. In-depth insights into a contextual series

of service encounters and recognized patterns of value co-creation/co-destruction throughout the service process could be harnessed in developing the design of services and developing service development methods for optimizing, for example, customer touchpoints, according to the lowest risk of value co-destruction. Accordingly, subsequent research should develop and propose new methods for identifying, monitoring, and preventing the occurrence of novel value co-destruction cycles and/or for enabling value co-creation cycles to support the work of service managers and designers.

In line with the above, we propose the following research questions to be considered:

- How can the value co-creation/co-destruction potential be monitored and measured within sequences of service encounters?
- Which temporal points of the service process and service encounter are most critical for leveraging value co-creation potential and avoiding the potential risk of value co-destruction?
- What is the role of the temporal dimension in subsequent cycles of value co-destruction and value co-creation?

### *Theorizing the Dynamics Between Value Co-Creation and Co-Destruction in Service Ecosystems*

When value is not co-created, as expected by the focal actor, the service encounter may become value co-destructive (Smith 2013; Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014). Thus, we see that value “no creation” (Makkonen and Olkkonen 2017) may manifest as a form of value co-destruction, leading to outcomes perceived as inefficient by the focal actor. Further, service encounters may lead to insufficient or negative outcomes for one individual actor and positive outcomes for another actor or system of actors (Plé 2017; Stieler, Weismann, and Germelmann 2014), suggesting that a perceived negative service event unlikely originates from managerial faults, which is a prominent line of thought in the service failure and recovery literature (Grégoire and Mattila 2021). Rather, antecedents to such negative events may originate prior to the service encounter, potentially in value co-creative encounters, and they may evolve throughout and after the service encounter, as impacted by the customer’s experience, evolving goals and intentions, and prior expectations of the future. We see that such fluctuating value co-creation and value co-destruction processes are not identical, as the value co-destruction literature embodies unique features, such as positive yet insufficient outcomes underpinning the value co-destruction process, value co-creation being incorporated in parallel and alternated in a process ultimately determined as value co-destruction, and negative or insufficient outcomes of single service encounters fueling further value co-destruction.

Our framework goes beyond a dyadic or networked comprehension by simultaneously considering individual actor perceptions and actor–actor interactions, thereby illustrating the

largely “unmanageable” dynamics of value co-destruction among customers (von Becker, Aromaa, and Eriksson 2015; Carù and Cova 2015) and highlighting the emergent nature of value co-creation/co-destruction. Such an insight into value co-destruction may change how service managers view and, more importantly, resolve service failures. For example, service managers can use the SERVQUAL instrument to concentrate on parts of specific value co-destruction occurrences, which may be complemented by the lens of the proposed framework, providing a more holistic understanding of the value co-destruction process. Thus, we argue that our framework complements the service application fields by providing an elaborate view of the links between multiple cyclic and interconnected service encounters, as well as fluid interplay between individual perceptions and customers’ interactions in comparison to the more traditional manager–customer input–response dichotomy.

However, we concur that the phenomenon of value co-destruction should not only be studied separate from but also in connection with value co-creation to understand its uniqueness and the dynamics between the two (Čaić, Odekerken-Schröder, and Mahr 2018). Consequently, future research efforts should be aimed at deepening the understanding of how value co-creation and value co-destruction interact and occur in spatially and temporally multidimensional service encounters, in sequences of encounters, and throughout service exchange processes in service ecosystems. Such insights will enable the development of typologies and models of actors’ value co-creative/co-destructive interactions and experiences in service processes. Furthermore, an interesting perspective for empirical studies to investigate is the reflexivity of actors and resource integration as institutional arrangements (Vargo and Lusch 2016). As institutional logics may not only enable but also constrain value co-creation (Vargo and Lusch 2016, p.18), individual actors’ institutional logics may prove useful in determining and reacting to the cross-dimensional drivers of value co-destruction in a service encounter and in further outlining the interrelationships between ecosystem actors.

Based on the above, we propose the following research questions to be considered:

- How do value co-creation and value co-destruction interact and occur in spatially and temporally multidimensional service encounters, in sequences of service encounters, and across service processes?
- How do the value co-creation and value co-destruction processes unfold, and what are the key factors impacting the service exchange from the customer perspective?
- How do institutional arrangements guide actors’ processes of evaluating derived value in service ecosystems?

### **Conclusion**

In this conceptual review, we have provided a comprehensive view of the dynamic value co-destruction concept and process, linking it with other related concepts and motivating a call for further research on this topic. By identifying unique features of

the value co-destruction process, we take steps to integrate the concept into the S-D logic framework and, more importantly, into the value co-creation process. As with all reviews, our conceptual review has some limitations, and potentially relevant research may have been excluded due to the search terminology. By identifying a strong interconnection between value co-creation and value co-destruction, we outline a future research agenda for studying the two together, enabling an understanding of their dynamics and microfoundations, along with implications for design and development of services.

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### Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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