Journal of Marketing Management

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjmm20

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Commodifying love: value conflict in online dating

Alisa Minina, Stefania Masè & Jamie Smith

To cite this article: Alisa Minina, Stefania Masè & Jamie Smith (2022): Commodifying love: value conflict in online dating, Journal of Marketing Management, DOI: 10.1080/0267257X.2022.2033815

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2022.2033815

Published online: 07 Feb 2022.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rjmm20

JOURNAL OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT
https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2022.2033815

Commodifying love: value conflict in online dating

Alisa Minina[a], Stefania Masè[a] and Jamie Smith[b]

[a]Department of Marketing and Communication, Ipag Business School, Paris, France; [b]Marketing Department, ISC Paris, Paris, France

ABSTRACT

We analyse 21 in-depth interviews with online dating service users to understand how consumerist market logic transforms human relationships, challenging the view in consumer research of market capitalism as empowering consumers by showing how neoliberal market ideology can hinder value creation in consumption experiences. Second, we develop the notion of value conflict as an active antecedent of value co-destruction in service settings that generates multiple forms of uncertainty, contributing to negative experiential outcomes. We explain the strategies consumers apply in pursuing romantic love in a shared marketplace while preserving their freedom of choice. Finally, we extend research on multiple value regimes in shared contexts by illustrating what happens when conflicting notions of value are not reconciled between actors.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 10 November 2020
Accepted 26 November 2021

KEYWORDS
Value co-destruction; digital consumption; online service consumption; consumer culture theory; value conflict

> Freedom, though it has brought him [modern man] independence and rationality, has made him isolated and, thereby, anxious and powerless (Fromm, 1969, p. viii)

Introduction

As stated in the above quotation, freedom can be a powerful agent in transforming the human condition. Freedom of choice can be seen as an empowering instrument of consumer self-expression, fantasies, feelings and fun (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), or as an oppressive tool of market capitalism that lures individuals into a trap of 'endless and apparently inexhaustible wants' (Campbell, 1997, p. 166; see, also, 2005; Cronin & Fitchett, 2021; Illouz, 2007). This duality of empowering and constraining aspects of market freedom raises the question of whether the market ideology of endless consumer choice is applicable to all aspects of human existence.

Consumer researchers have challenged the neoliberal premise of accepting unregulated consumerism as a magic panacea for all societal troubles (Cronin & Fitchett, 2021; Fitchett et al., 2014; Lambert, 2019). According to Illouz (2007, 2019) and Tadajewski (2018), consumption is not only a liberatory pleasure, it poses the danger of becoming an end in itself, distracting consumers from political and economic inequalities. As argued by Illouz (1997, 2007, 2019), over the course of the last century the realm of human

CONTACT Alisa Minina a.minina@ipag.fr Department of Marketing and Communication, Ipag Business School, 184 Bd Saint Germain, Paris 75006, France

© 2022 Westburn Publishers Ltd.

relationships has been infiltrated by market ideology: the most representative example happens to be the romantic love, where it has become difficult to disentangle romantic feelings from consumer experiences. Emotional capitalism, as defined by Illouz (1997, 2007), expresses this interdependence between emotion and economic relationships in that they do not stand alone but rather shape and influence each other. In her analysis of emotional capitalism as a cultural frame, Illouz argues that romantic relationships in contemporary society follow the logic of economic exchange, while mass communication and the Internet serve as active agents introducing the principles of mass consumption to the realm of romantic encounters, turning love into an economic transaction. This shift towards a market of love marks a significant historical and sociological movement. Theorising on this disentanglement, sociologists have compared human relationships to market exchange (Bauman, 2003; Illouz, 2007, 2019).

In line with the call to resist the domination of market ideology over all spheres of social action (Illouz, 2007; Lambert, 2019; Saren, 2015), we adopt a critical perspective, investigating the negative impact of market ideology on value creation through the theoretical lens of emotional capitalism. We build upon insights from Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) and Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) in our investigation of consumer experiences in the service domain, focusing on the role of value conflict in perpetuating – and in being influenced by – the commodification of love in online dating. We identify and define dimensions constituting the recently introduced concept of value conflict (Minina et al., 2020) describing a possibility of misalignment of elements and practices in the interactive value formation space which conduce into value co-destruction, or 'the diminishment of value during interactions between actors' (Echeverri & Skålén, 2021, p. 228). In this space between value co-creation and value co-destruction, actors are active in a service ecosystem where they seek a beloved partner while experiencing fun and freedom at the same time, rationalising and finding strategies to resolve the conflicting values in their personal and interpersonal relationships.

While our work is grounded in the CCT research tradition, allowing us to decipher the way personal judgements and preferences are negotiated within the context of social norms, the SDL perspective gives a narrow definition of the context of analysis through the concept of service ecosystem (Akaka et al., 2015). This central notion in SDL, defined as a 'relatively self-contained self-adjusting system of resource integrating actors connected by shared institutional logics and mutual value creation through service exchange' (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, p. 24), highlights the contextual nature of value. It is exactly on this point that CCT and SDL can be observed as 'natural allies' (Arnould, 2007, p. 57), the first offering a valuable lens to profoundly investigate how consumers perform in those contexts and how they use and co-create value in the service ecosystem. The deeper analysis of CCT into consumption meaning and practices can offer SDL a valuable perspective to deepen and clarify some of the fundamentals of this approach. On the other hand, CCT can expand its borders by incorporating the strategic-oriented analysis of SDL.

In our investigation we address the following research question: How does value conflict contribute to the commodification of love? Building upon extant CCT research on multiple value regimes defined as 'different conceptions of what is valuable and of what types of value outcomes should be prioritized' (Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017, p. 180), we define value conflict as a struggle between competing value regimes in a shared marketplace that can lead to ambivalent meanings in the consumption process.

We draw upon 21 semi-structured depth interviews with online date seekers, engaging with consumers' narratives of their online dating experiences. In our analysis we follow the social constructionist approach (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), broadening our unit of analysis beyond consumer subjectivity (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011; Fitchett et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2020; Penaloza & Venkatesh, 2006). We examine the actors within the service ecosystem, subject-subject relationships, habitualised actions, and consumer meanings in the marketplace of love – online dating services. Specifically, we document the conflicts that arise when market ideology pushes consumers to treat each other like market objects, conflicting with social and cultural values of love, altruism, and reciprocity, which traditionally provided a normative framework for human relationships (Illouz, 1997).

In our discussion of value creation and destruction in online dating, we respond to the call for CCT researchers to consider the 'intersections of market-based progress with aspects of contemporary life beyond consumption' (Cronin & Fitchett, 2021, p. 18) and to develop new reflexive approaches that problematise the origins of existing preconceptions (Rokka, 2021). We analyse the micro-social experiences of online date seekers within the normative framework of the ideology of emotional capitalism (Illouz, 2007), highlighting the macro-forces that provide the normative structure of consumer meanings and condition consumption practices in relational service contexts (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). This analysis helps us understand the sources of the rules, norms, and values negotiated by consumers and the struggles consumers go through in their attempts to reconcile conflicting notions of value.

With this work we aim to advance the critical understanding of consumer agency and the role of the market as a resource structuring social relationships (Arnould et al., 2019; Arnould & Thompson, 2015; Rome & Lambert, 2020). We problematise the agentic view of consumers as empowered market actors and illustrate how neoliberal market ideology can be detrimental to value creation.

On a more specific level, we first contribute to CCT research on multiple value regimes in shared contexts by illustrating the multiple fields of conflict that arise when competing notions of value are not reconciled by fostering value hybridity – that is, a mixture of multiple value regimes facilitated by the institutional actors (Figueiredo & Scaraboto, 2016; Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017; Türe, 2014). Second, this work advances the current understanding of interactive value formation (Cabiddu et al., 2019; Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Echeverri & Skålén, 2021; Plé & Cáceres, 2010; Smith, 2013) by defining the notion of value conflict as an antecedent of value co-destruction in service settings. Value conflict contributes to the misalignment of procedures, understandings and engagements that constitute practices in interactive value formation, resulting in value co-destruction (Echeverri & Skålén, 2021). Third, we further the current understanding of value co-destruction as a result of misuse of resources in interactions between a customer and a firm (Plé & Cáceres, 2010) to include instances of resource misuse in customers' interacting with each other. Finally, we build upon critical CCT accounts of value creation (Hietanen et al., 2017; Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014; Penaloza & Mish, 2011; Venkatesh & Peñaloza, 2014) to problematise the neoliberal normalisation of use-value in SDL research. Specifically, we show how macro-level forces of market ideology play out in a context where different parties have different conceptions of value (Gummerus, 2013).

In the following sections we provide the conceptual foundations for our analysis by introducing the main tenets of the theory of emotional capitalism and by putting forward the view of markets as complex constructs involving many different actors and spheres of interaction. We then provide an overview of our research context and methodology. Next, we present our empirical analysis, developing the notion of value conflict, describing the mechanisms of value co-destruction that it generates, and discussing its role in the commodification of love. Finally, we discuss the importance of our findings for understanding consumer agency, market ideology, and value creation in consumer research.

Theoretical framework: emotional capitalism

In the context of this study, capitalism is conceptualised as a cultural frame that shapes and defines norms, values, and practices structuring social life (Illouz, 1997, 2007). The intermingling of capitalism and emotions is not an obvious one. Emotion, such as love, is often considered spontaneous and irrational, whereas the capitalist mindset is based on self-interested transactions. The work of sociologist Eva Illouz elucidates this apparent oxymoron. Together with art and religion, love is a transcendental feeling impossible to control or even understand by rationality (Illouz, 1997). Our study focuses on romantic love, characterised by passion and sexual desire. While romantic love involves fleeting feelings, it is also a practice modelled by the cultural frame of capitalism, that is, individuality, freedom, and self-affirmation. The initial stage of romantic love, a peculiar moment when romantic emotions are at their apex, has been redefined by web dating apps, threatening the sense of irreplaceability of the beloved person and affecting the perception of potential lovers as more like commodities.

In the context of this work, we analyse individual consumer experiences through the lens of the ideology of emotional capitalism (Illouz, 2007, 2019), which provides the normative framework for consumer meanings and consumption practices. Specifically, it allows us to connect micro-social consumer experiences with macro-historical processes by highlighting the 'context of context' (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011, p. 381) that conditions the consumption practices and phenomena within which consumers operate in the marketplace, such as the commodification of love in online dating. The theory of emotional capitalism (Illouz, 1997, 2007) thus becomes a source of critical contextual knowledge (Rokka, 2021) through which we can recognise the forces that condition the meanings that consumers take for granted.

In modern societies the bond between economic rationality and romantic love was normally accepted and acceptable, marriages were considered a good investment, and dating activities were organised and managed by families. Romantic love started to be thought of as a form of self-expression in post-modern societies, termed dating and increasingly associated with leisure activities (Illouz, 1997). The real starting point for this transformation was the emergence of psychoanalysis at the beginning of the 1900s in the US when emotions came to occupy the fulcrum of cultural exchange, coinciding with the spread of techniques and professional advice to better understand and so manage emotional life (Illouz, 2007). This was especially true for dating, whose absorption into the sphere of mass communication and leisure opened the way to a series of consumption practices concerning how to correctly date, dress, and behave (Illouz, 2007; Patterson & Hodgson, 2006). The communication of these emotions via

advertising and other media opened up a different view of romantic life, also impacting interpersonal communications via the rational understanding of one's own emotional life. This passage from collective to personal choice, from the private to the public sphere of action, led romantic love to be idealised, rather than associated with real relationships (Illouz, 2007).

This capitalistic rush into emotions may have expanded self-knowledge while diluting romance:

Weber has poignantly conveyed the fact that the gains of modernity are also losses, and that sociology cannot help adjudicate between *conflicting values*. Modernity has brought irretrievable losses in the meaning of love, most notably the connection between love and moral virtue and the dissolution of the commitment and stability of pre-modern love, but these losses are the price we pay for greater control over our romantic lives, greater self-knowledge, and equality between the sexes. (Illouz, 1997, p. 296)

The inherent conflict between hedonistic consumption as a symbolic ritual of 'love' and the sphere of production is a central theme in discussing emotional capitalism (Illouz, 1997). The modern aspirational romantic 'utopia' is intertwined with consumer capitalism. On the one hand, it is driving it, and on the other creating conflict and struggle. Illouz (2019) expressed this conflict as frame uncertainty, or 'the difficulty actors encounter in identifying others' courses of action, and the associated values' driving their behaviour (Illouz, 2019, p. 77). According to Illouz, frame uncertainty can manifest in multiple forms such as existential, emotional, normative, procedural, role, or evaluative, depending on which area of interaction this uncertainty manifests in. This lack of understanding results in non-commitment, non-choice, and quick, easy endings – behaviours which Illouz (2019) terms 'unloving' and sees as profoundly impacting society.

In the digital dating service ecosystem, people are consumers and products at the same time (Hirschman, 1987). The large offer of easily accessible potential romantic lovers proposed (and pushed) by online dating services exerts a strain on the process of finding an irreplaceable romantic partner. Online dating turns the individual self into a public commodity available for consumption by others (Illouz, 2007, 2019). Building upon literature that views value destruction as a misuse of resources (Grönroos, 2011; Plé & Cáceres, 2010; Smith, 2013), here we adopt Illouz's (2019) conceptualisation of frame uncertainty. This allows us to shift the focus from individual consumer subjects to the normative structure of meanings that arise in their interactions with each other.

We argue that conflicting values destabilise interactions between market actors through the breakdown of certainty mechanisms, while the neoliberal market ideology of online dating transforms individual selves into commodities, fostering the devaluation and objectification of human subjects in a consumption community. This objectification of humans, combined with the decontextualising influence of the Internet disembedding actors from their life worlds (Gummerus, 2013) and the lack of sanctions for unethical behaviours, possesses a real threat for actors in the service ecosystem.

The next section is dedicated to the description of the multidimensionality of value as the source of possible conflicts between actors.

Multiple understandings of value

Despite multiple attempts by marketing scholars to define value, it continues to be an elusive concept. This is partly due to the inherent malleability of the notion of value, as it can take many forms when applied to different objects of evaluation (Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014; Venkatesh & Peñaloza, 2014), as well as its subjective, interactive, experiential, and context-dependent nature (Collins et al., 2014; Holbrook, 1999; Vargo & Lusch, 2008a). Utilitarian subjective notions of value such as value in use (Grönroos, 2011; Plé & Cáceres, 2010), situational value (Bardhi et al., 2012), and value in disposition (Türe, 2014) coexist with collective value frames such as social, normative, cultural, and symbolic values (Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014; Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017; Venkatesh & Peñaloza, 2014). Not only does academic research understand value in different ways, but also different actors in a shared social setting can have different perceptions of what value is (Gummerus, 2013).

With the aim of bringing coherence to the complexity of the concept of value, Holbrook (1999) outlined the three key dimensions of customer value: extrinsic versus intrinsic value, self-oriented versus other-oriented value, and finally, active versus reactive value. The extrinsic-intrinsic dimensionalisation differentiates the utilitarian means-end approach to consumption experience from the appreciation of consumption as an end in itself. The self-oriented value is emphasised when the subject prizes consumption objects selfishly. When other-oriented value becomes a priority, the consumer looks beyond the self, appreciating the beneficial effects that the product or its consumption has on others. Finally, the active versus reactive value dimension reflects whether things are done by a consumer to a product, or whether the value results from things done by a product or service to or with the consumer. In our current investigation we apply this dimensionalisation to outline the main fields of conflicting notions of value in consumption experiences, as well as to explain how the misalignment of value notions within a consumer or between consuming subjects contributes to value co-destruction in online dating.

The dimensions proposed by Holbrook (1999) deal with the contextual nature of value, which represents one of the meeting points between SDL and CCT, two areas of studies with different traditions but parallel visions in the analysis of the multiple nuances defining market phenomena (Arnould, 2007). The SDL perspective defines value as contextually created by the encounter of multiple actors active in the service ecosystem (Lusch et al., 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2008a, 2008b). This perspective of analysis 'converge[s] with work on meaning production in CCT research' (Penaloza & Mish, 2011, p. 11).

CCT researchers use the terms, 'value' and 'meaning', interchangeably, but with different connotations in their singular or plural form. Value (singular) is the personal predisposition or response tendency of the singular actor, while values (plural) describe the rules, norms, or ideals that underpin personal value (Holbrook, 1999). These last values are identifiable with the social norms and standards shaping different markets and filtered by actors with their judgements (value) to associate meanings to their actions (Penaloza & Mish, 2011).

The SDL perspective on successful value co-creation posits that a customer would feel better off after engaging with a service than they were before (Grönroos, 2008). Research has emphasised the active role of consumers in value co-creation and value co-destruction through consumer-firm interactions (Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Grönroos,

2011; Wieland et al., 2012). Contextually and normatively informed value creation has been embraced by both CCT (Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014; Penaloza & Venkatesh, 2006; Venkatesh & Peñaloza, 2014), and SDL (Kuppelweiser & Finsterwalder, 2016; Vargo & Lusch, 2011). The two perspectives recognise the participation of a variety of actors in value creation, internal and external to the service ecosystem (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Vargo et al., 2017; Vargo & Lusch, 2011; Vargo et al., 2008; Wieland et al., 2012).

Value creation can emerge from usage or possession of resources, or even from mental states (Grönroos & Ravald, 2011). The co-creation of value is not an automatic result of the consumer-firm exchange but rather reflects an interaction of factors which collectively compose the service ecosystem. As argued by Grönroos (2011), the actions of the firm in interactions with customers can have both positive and negative impacts on value co-creation, as the firm serves as a value facilitator providing resources to customers.

In case of the misuse of their own or others' resources by one of the parties, the interactions between market actors can have adverse consequences, leading to value co-destruction (Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Plé & Cáceres, 2010; Smith, 2013). Harris and Ogbonna (2002) and Järvi et al. (2018) identified employees, service providers and customers as potential sources of the mishandling of resources, whose detrimental consequences can be observed in one or more actors participating in the service exchange (Akaka et al., 2015; Järvi et al., 2018; Plé & Cáceres, 2010). Echeverri and Skålén (2021, p. 228) propose a broader perspective on value co-destruction defining it as 'an interactional process that connotes a change of value in a negative direction', going beyond the relational interaction, and including eventual antecedents or external events (Corsaro, 2020). The two authors investigate the relationship between value co-destruction and value co-creation, proposing the concept of an interactive value formation space where the alignment or misalignment of resources and practices leads respectively to value co-creation or co-destruction (Echeverri & Skålén, 2021).

Our analysis sheds light on how value co-destruction can be extended to a service ecosystem around love where consumers are date-seekers. In this investigation, value co-destruction processes do not occur through interactions between consumers and the service provider or employees, but in the process of consumers interacting with each other.

In the following section we discuss value conflict as both a consequence and a mediator of the commodification of love. Through the cultural framework of emotional capitalism, we present value conflict as an antecedent of value co-destruction.

Research context: online dating as the marketplace of love

In this study we investigate the interplay of the processes of value creation (Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014) and destruction (Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Grönroos, 2011; Kuppelweiser & Finsterwalder, 2016) that occurs in consumer-consumer relationships online, as opposed to consumer-firm interactions. We apply the theoretical lens of emotional capitalism to online dating as the site where the neoliberal market ideology of self-interest and mutual competition (Hietanen et al., 2017; Illouz, 2007, 2019) propagated by service providers clashes with the institutionalised social norms of love and

relationships (Illouz, 1997). When consumers lack certainty as to which framework they are operating under, they lack direction; there is no tool kit, and both the norms and outcomes of social interactions are unknown (Illouz, 2019).

From the SDL perspective, the online dating market can be conceptualised as a service ecosystem or a sphere of interaction where value is collaboratively created or destroyed by and between individual actors, acting interdependently or independently, facilitated by service providers and institutional logics (Holmqvist & Ruiz, 2017; Wieland et al., 2012). Online dating can be seen as a non-collaborative consumption network where consumers act in their own self-interest, engaging in serial one-on-one encounters with each other ad infinitum until they settle with a chosen partner. This contrasts with brand communities and other subcultures of consumption which thrive on unity and belonging (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Schau et al., 2009; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), as well as with collaborative networks in which participants can take each other's interests into consideration (Figueiredo & Scaraboto, 2016). While extant research focuses on collaborative consumption communities and consumer networks, in online dating consumers compete with each other, constantly chasing a better bargain, be it a more desirable partner or a better relationship outcome (Illouz, 2019).

The commodification of love has increased in recent years, showing that 'the marketplace of love is a very big business' (Patterson & Hodgson, 2006, p. 456). As argued by Illouz (2007, 2019), online dating has boosted the transformation of love into an economic transaction, while the logic of market and the ideology of choice serve as sociological frames organising encounters. In this marketplace we see the inherent tension between the consumer's desire for freedom, the pornification of culture promoting the ideology of sexual liberation (Rome & Lambert, 2020), and the socioculturally embedded notions of value consistent with traditional gender relations. In a radical departure from notions of love and romance, the online dating setting becomes the arena of the commodification of love, rationalising the process of partner selection. In this service ecosystem, love is the object of the marketplace to the detriment of romance.

Research method

The research design included a sample selection through voluntary participation and consent, focusing on a diverse group of online date seekers with a geographic commonality. A diverse sample in terms of age, gender, and lifestyle emerged from the sample selection process and was coherent with the study objectives. Following the interpretive tradition in consumer research (Arsel, 2017; Hopkinson & Hogg, 2006; McCracken, 1988), we used semi-structured in-depth interviews to access the stories and lived experiences of consumption of 21 online date seekers who resided in Paris at the moment of data collection (Table 1).

Male and female participants between 23 and 54 years old were recruited via online calls for participation on dating applications and social networks. The first author created online dating profiles in order to analyse value propositions, advertisements, and interface of major online dating companies (Tinder, Happn, The League, Bumble). These profiles included an open call for participation in research of consumers' online dating experiences and included contact details, allowing the app users to reach out to the researcher if they were willing to share their consumption stories.

Table 1. Participants of the study.

	Pseudonym	Sex	Sexual orient.	Age	Education	Profession	Apps used	Frequency
1	Vincent	M	Heterosexual	36	MSc	IT manager	Tinder, Meetic, CelibParis	Daily
2	Gérard	M	Heterosexual	31	MSc	Administrator	Tinder, Happn	Monthly
3	Lara	F	Heterosexual	35	MSc	Yoga teacher	InnerCircle, eHarmony	Weekly
4	Jules	M	Bisexual	37	PhD	Engineer	Tinder	Daily
5	Mark	M	Heterosexual	26	MSc	Consultant	Tinder	1 week/ month
6	Simon	M	Heterosexual	23	BSc	Press intern	Tinder	4 times/ week
7	John	M	Heterosexual	38	MSc	Business controller	Tinder	3 times/ week
8	Johnny	M	Heterosexual	34	BSc	Data analyst	Tinder, InnerCircle, Happn	Daily
9	Alice	F	Heterosexual	54	MSc	Administrator	Meetic, Tinder	Temporary stop (met someone)
10	Rose	F	Heterosexual	23	BSc	University lecturer	Tinder, Coffee Meets Bagel	Daily
11	Ella	F	Heterosexual	25	BA	Online editor	Tinder, Bumble	Daily
12	Didier	M	Heterosexual	51	MSc	Engineer	Tinder, Happn	Daily
13	Alan	M	Heterosexual	28	MSc	Salesperson	Bumble, Tinder, Happn	Temporary stop (met someone)
14	ASG	M	Heterosexual	34	BA	Supervisor	Tinder	Daily
15	Derek	M	Heterosexual	38	MSc	CEO	Tinder, Happn Voyons Nous	Occasional use
16	Sofia	F	Heterosexual	33	MSc	Student	Badoo, Tinder, OkCupid, Happn, AdopteUnMec	Daily
17	Carmen	F	Lesbian	29	MSc	Programme Manager	Tinder	Daily
18	Andromeda	F	Heterosexual	56	MSc	Coach	Meetic, EliteSingles	Occasional use
19	Spongebob	M	Heterosexual	28	BSc	Operations Manager	Tinder, The League	Weekly
20	Natalie	F	Heterosexual	30	MA	Entrepreneur	Tinder	When travelling abroad
21	Vero	F	Flexible	29	MSc	Marketing	OkCupid, Tinder	Weekly

Before their interview, participants signed a research consent form which provided detailed information about the purpose of the study and the research procedures. The participants were informed of their right to refuse to answer any single question, to withdraw from the interview completely at any point, and to exclude their data from the study. The duration of interviews varied on average between 40 and 60 minutes, depending on the participant's accessibility. All participants were guaranteed confidentiality and each participant chose a pseudonym that would be further used in data analysis and display.

The interviews, conducted in an open and nondirective manner (McCracken, 1988), moved from biographical questions that gave insight into the participant's profile to a set of grand-tour questions that allowed the participants to tell their story on their own terms. This included special-incident questions, where the participants were asked to recall memorable stories from their online dating lives, and specific category questions. These focused on participants' usage patterns and motivation for using the dating apps, their attitudes towards online and offline dating, partner selection criteria, and their relationship strategies and future plans. The interview transcripts were read and analytically coded using NVivo software to identify the key themes and issues in the data, with particular attention given to understanding the contextual nature of consumer experiences and the interactions between multiple actors in the service ecosystem. In several cases, follow-up interviews were conducted to go deeper into participants' consumption stories. By following up the stories of our participants, we were able to identify the conflicting notions of value that were negotiated throughout the online dating experience.

The first step in the analysis involved analytical reduction of data through coding and categorising the interview transcripts (Figueiredo, 2012; Holt, 2002). To structure our analysis, we used a combination of descriptive coding, summarising the basic data topics for further indexing and categorising, followed by provisional coding that involved theoretically informed pre-generated categories (Miles et al., 2014). We then focused on the interplay of consumer entities (i.e. the users of dating apps, their consumption patterns and practices, and their motivations, perceptions, and feelings about their service experience) with service entities (the specifics, interfaces, and value propositions of different dating apps and the supporting service ecosystems). The broader society of friends and families that transmit societal rules, norms, and values affecting users' approach to relationships in general and online dating in particular was also noted. This framework uncovered a certain practice logic. During analysis, we went back and forth between our data and the literature in order to contextualise our understanding of processes of value co-creation in online dating. In the second stage of our analysis, we employed pattern coding (Miles et al., 2014), focusing on the dialogue between the micro-level of consumers' personal stories on dating apps, the meso-level of service offerings, and the macro-foundations of emotional capitalism (Illouz, 1997, 2007, 2012, 2019). The analytical process (Table 2) involved collaborative interpretations based on discussions between researchers (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989) with the purpose of ensuring the trustworthiness of our understanding and representation of the data and its relationship to the relevant constructs in the existing literature. Finally, in the third stage of analysis,

Table 2. Thematic data analysis and interpretation.

First stage of analysis: analytical reduction of data through categorisation	Illustrative participants' quotes	Second stage of analysis: finding the overarching themes and patterns in the data	Third stage of analysis: reconstruction of theory and developing the conceptual framework
Individual users Consumption patterns and practices Motivations Expectations Concerns Beliefs about online dating Beliefs about relationships in general Feelings about service experience **Socially embedded influences** Beliefs Rules Norms Values **Service entities** specific service offerings interfaces value propositions supporting service ecosystems	'I think attraction is important in a relationship. And obviously on [dating app name], it is more shallow, you're swiping through pictures of them' 'It's just a way to have sex I would say. Most of the time people deny this' 'It's all drilled into us from a young age that you don't know who anyone is on the internet!' 'I think I have an old model of how people should meet. You know, the old way, the way our parents met, not like this . . . ' 'when you remove the match, they just delete all information, because they consider it the painless way of doing it' 'they are a company trying to make business and their ideal situation would be if everybody stays stuck in the app because then they would generate profit. Their profit is not based on success on exit'	• Blurred ethical boundaries and double standards • Reluctant belonging to community • Enjoying freedom of choice • Misalignment of expected use-value with embedded social values • Objectification and devaluation of partners • Mental unease & frustration • Disembeddedness of encounters from real life contexts and consequences of action • Developing uncertainty and danger mitigation strategies	Value Conflict Dimensionalisation Extensively reported in Table 3.

reconstruction of theory (Burawoy, 2009; Kates, 2006), we looked at the phenomenon in light of existing theories of value creation and critical consumer research with the purpose of extending the theoretical body.

In addition to consent, confidentiality, and right to exclude data, the ethical considerations in this paper include psychological and social-lifestyle risks to benefits analysis. This pertains not only to the participants but also to wider audiences and society at large. The participants who encountered traumatic experiences chose to share these with the researchers and to give consent to publication. The authors considered that to not report these experiences, to exclude them, would be unethical. Given that the consent was explicit and that anonymity and the permission to publish were acknowledged, the authors agreed to include these events in the findings. In other words, the authors considered there to be more potential of harm by excluding these traumatic experiences than by including them.

An equally difficult ethical dilemma was to include inflammatory language regarding gender, such as comparing women to a thing or a commodity. Language which denigrates women was present in interview responses, but it was not limited to women. Men were also deprecated. Our research question focused on value conflict and the commodification of love. Language which supported our study was therefore included with the objective of investigation as opposed to voicing and disseminating inflammatory language.

Findings

Value conflict

Guided by Holbrook's (1999) framework for value analysis, we were able to outline the three main fields of value conflict and their manifestations in the context of online dating: 1) the conflict between extrinsic and intrinsic value dimensions, manifesting as the conflict between the social values framing cultural perceptions of love and relationships and the use-value of consumption as an end in itself; 2) the conflict between self-oriented and other-oriented value dimensions, manifesting as double standards and moral ambiguity in service encounters; and 3) the conflict between active and reactive value dimensions, manifesting as reluctantly belonging to the consumption community and the rejection of collective identity. The three fields of conflict in relation to their manifestations in online dating context and their contribution to value destruction are discussed in the next sections.

Extrinsic vs. intrinsic value

In their approach to online interactions, the users of dating apps experienced conflict between extrinsic and intrinsic notions of value in setting goals for, as well as evaluating the outcomes of their service experience. The extrinsic value, informed by social values, posited the ideal of a long-term relationship as a desirable outcome of online dating. The perceived intrinsic use-value manifested as prioritising the subjective benefit of consumption as an end in itself (Grönroos, 2011). The intrinsic value of online dating was embedded in the consumerist logic of choice and the unlimited access to multiple potential partners (Illouz, 2019). While social values often represented acceptable notions

Table 3. Value conflict dimensionalisation.

Fields of conflict	Facilitated by	Manifestations in online dating context	Elements contributing to value co-destruction	Value outcomes
Extrinsic vs. intrinsic value	Service design providing consumers with unlimited choice of potential partners Social networks of family and friends representing cultural values	Conflict between social values framing cultural perceptions of love and relationships and the perceived use-value of consumption experience	*Existential and emotional uncertainty* – misalignment of intended value outcomes between consumers	Disappointment and frustration with service experience by one or both of the parties involved
Self-oriented vs. other-oriented value	Internet-mediated experience of disembeddedness of encounters from real life contexts and consequences of action Lack of sanctions in de-institutionalised consumption context	Double standards and moral ambiguity in service encounters, applying higher ethical standards to the other than to the self Objectification of the other, fuelled by consumerist desire for a 'better bargain'	*Normative and procedural uncertainty* – lack of clarity about the rules and norms of interaction creating confusion and distress	Encounters with verbal abuse, violence, harassment, ghosting threaten physical and psychological well-being of consumers
Active vs. reactive value	Habitualization of app usage Negative past experiences and subjective feelings of shame about using dating apps	Reluctant belonging to consumption community and rejection of collective identity – wanting to use the service but not wanting to be defined by its usage	*Role uncertainty and evaluative uncertainty* in choosing potential long-term partners and in deciding how long to stay on the app	Fatigue and cynicism emerging from the prolonged usage of dating apps

of monogamous relationships among the participants' social networks of family and friends, perceptions of use-value were propagated by the advertising campaigns of the online dating platforms, the user interface of the dating apps, and users' expectations of meeting multiple partners and the associated sexual freedom.

In users' negotiation of these competing value notions, the processes of value co-creation and co-destruction could be triggered simultaneously, depending on whether the perceptions of social and use-value were aligned or misaligned. During the interviews the informants emphasised loyalty, caring, trust, and intellectual and emotional closeness as the desired characteristics of the ideal relationship. Nevertheless, these characteristics did not align with their view of the service experience. Lara referred to online dating as 'unnatural', yet she still had active profiles on multiple dating apps in the hope of meeting a long-term partner. Carmen initially stated that she was looking for a 'real love relationship' with a woman who has a great sense of humour and similar interests in life; however, her partner choice criteria on the dating apps did not align with her stated partner choice criteria in 'real life':

> You just see faces, you just swipe. (. . .) At some point it feels like, 'Okay, her arms are great. Her nose was better'. You see what I mean? It's stupid, but . . . I get to set high expectations. And I guess, you can just block the dialogue as well. (. . .) It is very easy to communicate through a cell phone, everybody does it. Everybody is used to it. But being face to face, it is much more complicated. (Carmen, 29)

In Carmen's account, we see how despite looking for a 'real' relationship based on emotional and intellectual compatibility, when faced with the interface of the online dating app, her 'high expectations' were reduced to the physical attributes of another person as a marketplace commodity, as she admits that it is easier to engage in digital communications than to meet someone face to face. Other participants deliberately embraced the market logic of online dating, separating it from their personal and social life spheres. Mark, a 26-year old management consultant, admitted that he would feel 'disturbed' if he needed to introduce a girl he met on an online dating app to his friends and family. Because of this, when using the app, he hoped not to 'stumble upon' a girl with whom he could form a genuine attachment. Ella, a 25-year-old online editor, reflected on the disposability of online relationships.

> Relationships have become, with regards to actually dating, kind of a lot more disposable. Like you can swipe, and kind of like someone and like go and see them and just wanna hook up with them, and get bored and then just move onto the next one, do you know what I mean? (Ella, 25)

In discussing their attitudes towards online dating, Mark and Ella were experiencing the conflict between attachment and autonomy (Illouz, 2019), where the attachment represents the desired relationship outcome according to extrinsic social values, and the autonomy is the necessary element for enjoying the intrinsic use-value of accessing the unlimited choice of potential partners. Treating another person as a commodity to which one does not get attached allowed them the freedom to move on to the next partner when they tired of the previous one.

Unlike collaborative consumption contexts, where consumption communities collaborate to create greater value for the brand and for each other (Blocker & Barrios, 2015; Schau et al., 2009; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), in online dating consumers use the elements of service design to maximise the intrinsic use value, be it having a greater

choice of more attractive partners or enacting boundaries to protect themselves from partners deemed undesirable. In order to separate online encounters from other life contexts, participants employed boundary-building tactics, as we can see from the example below:

> It happened maybe two or three times when I added a girl on Facebook and she started to talk to me, she was like, calling me, and I was like 'We don't know each other, stop doing this, you are not my girlfriend', so I was like 'Okay let's stay on the app'. (Mark, 26)

Staying on the app allowed Mark not to let people he met through online dating into his personal circle. In fact, he felt uncomfortable with attempts by his online dating counterparts to close the distance by increasing the frequency or interactions of moving from the app to more personal communication channels like social networks or phone. Those participants who used multiple dating apps were constantly comparing their experiences on these apps, motivating their choice to use one and/or leave another. The application interface and the ability to access multiple attractive options played a major role in defining the user experience, overriding the desire for more meaningful connections.

In an informal conversation before our interview, one of the male participants jokingly called his favourite dating app the 'Deliveroo for hot chicks', comparing it with the local food delivery service. We consider this statement emblematic of how some participants, such as the one quoted, enrol dating platforms into people's commodification. This objectification of people in the online dating scene represents an explicit mechanism of commodification. In denigrating potential partners as merchandise or 'similar and competing commodities' (Illouz, 2019, p. 120), attitudes have evolved in a negative direction.

The interface of the apps combined with promotional communications play a role in shaping users' expectations of the service experience, allowing them to engage in binary evaluation of potential partners (that is, hot or not) guided by a list of desired attributes. For instance, on Tinder, the possibility of swiping through hundreds of potential romantic partners every day and the logic of ease and flexibility is further reinforced by the advertisements – #swipelife, 'single does what single wants', 'single never has to go home early' – highlighting the opportunities for its users to pursue individual self-interests, rather than a long-term relationship. Consider the example of Jules, who decided to leave Tinder and use another application where he thought he could build a more meaningful connection with a potential partner, but quickly switched back to Tinder when he was not satisfied with the appearance of women represented there:

> (. . .) there is just a wall of pictures, and I mean I am not interested in their physical appearance, because you have just a wall of girls who are not very good-looking. So maybe if I were using Tinder, I would get one girl at a time, but there you just start the website and there is a wall like that, it was just . . . It was like no, I don't want this. (Jules, 37)

> . . . for me long term relationships are about values, human values. If you have the same values about life, humanity . . . (. . .) And I meet for a rendezvous and the morning after I have another new profile, and I see 'oh there are new profiles, oh great let's go on', and the girl or the man you saw last night, they are at the bottom of the list. (Derek, 38)

In the stories of Jules and Derek we can witness how their expressed social values related to long-term relationships are overpowered by the market logic of commodified relationships facilitated by service design. The conflict between perceived use value and social values contributes to value destruction by generating existential and emotional uncertainty (Illouz, 2019), or through a lack of clarity about the role of the self and the other in the situation, the obligations of reciprocity, and the intended value outcomes of dating counterparts. None of the interviewed participants entered the online dating world with the intention to treat people as market commodities, but many ended up being guided by the perceived use-value of endless partner choice in their consumption and partner selection criteria.

Value conflict between the extrinsic and intrinsic value dimensions can also occur between different consumers when the same actions that create value for some users diminish value for other users, as multiple understandings of value and expectations from the online dating experiences clash in the marketplace.

Self-oriented vs. other-oriented value

The conflict between self-oriented and other-oriented value dimensions manifests in online dating as double standards and moral ambiguity. In their reflections on their service experiences, participants applied higher behavioural standards to others than to themselves. This resulted in blurred ethical boundaries, as informants opposed online dating to 'real life', treating it as a separate fantasy context where they could abandon the socially accepted codes of conduct and engage in unethical behaviours and mistreatment of others. The theme of applying different moral standards to situations in digital versus real life was especially evident in the situations of deciding the exclusivity of the relationships or ending communications when the dilemma arose of whether to be transparent with the other person or to just disappear.

> I would much rather somebody be honest and straight up say, 'You know, this isn't working'. I think that if you don't feel the same, then it's always going to hurt. But you can make it hurt less. (Rose, 23)

> What do I want them to do? I don't know, just be honest. And tell me why, like you kind of feel those things from the beginning. (Johnny, 34)

As we can see from the accounts of Rose and Johnny, participants in the online dating process expect their dating counterparts to take other-oriented value as their point of departure. That is, they want others to consider their feelings and to be honest and open when the decision to end the relationship is taken by another party. However, when they were the initiators of the relationship dissolution, participants appreciated the ease and convenience of being able to end the relationship quickly without an explanation, which would not be as easy if they had met a relationship partner offline through networks of family and friends. Our findings are consistent with the arguments of Illouz (2007, 2019), who called the Internet a disembodying technology that decontextualises social interactions, making it difficult to make sense of the other person as a whole. Adopting a social constructionist perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), we argue that the anonymity of

internet encounters turns online dating into a deinstitutionalised social setting where behaviours are unpredictable and uncontrolled, as there are no specific sanctions for unethical behaviours.

> If I've been seeing a guy like a few times, I probably wouldn't ghost them. (. . .) I think I would at least have the decency to send a message explaining the situation, the reason why I think it's good to like sort of stop it. But I wouldn't ghost them. If I'd have met someone like maybe once or twice, maybe I'd ghost them. But if someone did that to me, I'd be like . . . So . . . And if someone ghosted any of my friends, I'd be like, 'He's a d*ck, blah, blah'. But then I've had many friends who've ghosted guys. And I was like that was the best thing to do. (Ella, 25)

> You just have to click 'unmatch', or on WhatsApp 'block', you can just block people. (Vincent, 36)

In Ella's account we can see how the value conflict emerges from the uncertainty about the appropriate code of conduct in online encounters. While Ella acknowledges her double standards in online dating, her account still illustrates the conflict between the rules of politeness and the convenience of 'ghosting', or no longer responding to another person's messages. Vincent, on the other hand, embraces the convenience of the online experience. According to Alan, a 28-year old salesperson, ending relationships online is much easier, because many other potential partners are available on the app – in 5 minutes one can start a conversation with someone else, and in 24 hours one can already be dating a new partner. Just like Alan and Vincent, in their withdrawal from communications, many participants prioritised the self-oriented value, the decision to 'unmatch' or 'block' the other person without much consideration for their feelings. In online dating the conflict between self-oriented and other-oriented values contributes to value destruction by generating normative and procedural uncertainty (Illouz, 2019), that is, a lack of clarity about perceived values and norms of interaction, as well as specific rules and codes of conduct. Or, as Spongebob put it:

> Someone's doing something, and then you're telling yourself, 'She's a sl*t', or 'He's an *sshole', or something like that. You know, I don't know. There's no proper code, I don't know any proper codes for that. Just like, kind of know, but not really. (Spongebob, 28)

Devaluing his online dating counterparts by calling them derogatory words helps Spongebob make sense of their behaviour, especially in cases where other people act in their own self-interest and are not guided by other-oriented values in their experiences of online dating. The moral ambiguity is also related to the uncertainty of knowing the true intentions of a person on the other side of the dating app. Jules mused about the potential number of sexual partners a woman who uses dating apps might have.

> I suppose that a girl being on [dating app name] is supposed to get lots of physical things going on with guys, so she is going to be much more careful around that, so if I want to do something, I will not cross the boundary quickly. I think it's the difference between real life and [dating app name], that on [dating app name] the girl has met lots of guys trying to hit on her very quickly. (Jules, 37)

The perception of the digital context as a surreal gamified experience gave our participants freedom from experiencing the negative consequences of unethical behaviours, in contrast with the hypothetical real-life situations where they would meet

potential partners through common social networks of family and friends. The tendency of online dating app users to draw boundaries between 'real life' and online dating and the negative feelings of frustration and disappointment that emerge as a result of the prolonged usage of dating apps (that is, not achieving the socially accepted goal of finding a long-term relationship), parallel the argument of Jones, Cronin and Piacentini (2020) that certain forms of consumer escapism are capable of amplifying the frustrations of real life. While the people and situations they encounter online are indeed quite real, the decontextualising influence of the Internet allows them to commodify their online dating encounters, separating the instances of online dating from the rest of their lives.

Active vs. reactive value

The third field of value conflict is the conflict between active and reactive value dimensions – that is, whether the value involves things done by a consumer or something that is done to a consumer by a product or service (Holbrook, 1999). Consumers embraced the active value of having access to dating apps; however, at the same time they did not want to be known as someone who uses them, and they did not want their potential long-term partners to be using these apps either. Female users of a popular dating app, for example, Alice and Sofia, referred to the platform as 'the bargain basement' and 'the jungle' where you meet 'creeps'. However, they kept coming back even after trying several other apps, as they were attracted by the wider choice of potential dating partners. We can see this conflict as an instance of role uncertainty in which participants act in a context that lacks an established institutional order, shared goals, or typified forms of action and thus creates confusion about expected role performance (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

The conflict between active and reactive value dimensions in online dating is also characterised by a lack of evaluative certainty, or capacity to evaluate others according to established standards (Illouz, 2019). We can see this conflict manifested in the following accounts of Mark and Ella who reflected on their online dating experiences:

> It is the image of our society; we consume everything, and we are in a paradox . . . I accept this. To think that one can live a serious relationship with this app is despair . . . you are not in the right place, and you are looking for something . . . (Mark, 26)

> Every time I swipe through it, I feel like I'm just not that impressed, which sounds really horrible . . . But I don't know, I think it just makes you maybe miss your ex or whatever, when you're swiping through people. Beforehand I was excited going through people, but now I just kind of feel like I'm more like missing my ex when I go on it. And I spoke to a few people, and I find it just so ugh. I don't know. (Ella, 25)

Paradoxically, despite being active users of online dating apps, Mark and Ella did not want to be perceived as someone who used them, nor did they want their potential partner to be an active user. Mark said that starting a serious relationship on the app was his greatest fear, and Ella emphasised that she does not want her potential long-term partner to even be interested in using dating apps. Just as in the case of access-based consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012), here we see resistance towards the brand community among the study participants – that is, they did not exhibit the traditional brand community markers, such as shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, or a sense of

moral responsibility (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001), in their use of dating apps. Going beyond the emotionally neutral utilitarian attitude characteristic of access-based consumption, participants in online dating actively rejected the identity of someone who uses online dating services, preferring to refer to themselves as casual users or as someone who ended up on a dating app by chance. Much of the commentary of our participants focused on the risks of using dating apps, the potential harm and a sense of vulnerability, and the concerns of safety-motivated users to develop a range of strategies, such as keeping conversations on the app for as long as possible, not giving their phone number to new acquaintances, and not adding people they met on the app to their social networks.

Value conflict as antecedent of value co-destruction

In our analysis, we see value conflict as an active antecedent of value co-destruction in online dating service settings. From the point of view of experience outcomes (Gummerus, 2013), we can see the consequences of destruction of value from the subjective assessments of our study participants. Various forms of uncertainty and instances of value misalignment and mistreatment by other participants in a shared service setting created a shared sense of frustration and disappointment, especially in those users who stayed on the apps for a long time. The habitualised and repetitive use of dating apps combined with the reluctance to use them generated feelings of fatigue and burnout. Our participants referred to online dating as 'draining and exhausting', saying that matches could make them feel 'depressed' and expressing a hope to meet someone right so that they could 'finally' finish using the dating apps. Didier called online dating a 'mass manipulation to make cash, and to exploit the vulnerabilities of people', while the trajectory of going from initial excitement to negative value outcomes can be observed in a comment from Ella:

> Beforehand I thought it was exciting and new, and now I just get so depressed by it. I find it really depressing! (Ella, 25)

The misalignment of values between different actors in the online dating context enables the intentional or unintentional misuse of resources (Grönroos, 2011; Plé & Cáceres, 2010). That is, when one participant is looking for a long-term relationship consistent with their social values, and another one is motivated by the perceived use-value of having unlimited access to attractive partners, both would perceive the actions of the other person as an inappropriate use of the platform. This poses serious issues for users on the receiving end of the mistreatment, as we can see in the following accounts from Rose and Andromeda below:

> But I guess you always hear horror stories of people who meet someone from an app and you know, get murdered or whatever. So, it's unlikely but I guess that is always a fear. (. . .) The first meeting with that person would first be making sure that they're not a weirdo. (Rose, 23)

> We had to chat over the phone, but I didn't feel like meeting, so I said 'Ok thanks for your time but I don't feel like going any further with this', and he said 'You're ugly'. (Andromeda, 56)

The fear and frustration expressed by Rose and Andromeda were quite common, as many female participants of our study have either encountered mistreatment on dating apps or heard about this happening to someone. While male participants were upset about the wide spread of false profiles and prostitution on the apps and recounted stories of their date requiring them to pay for her 'services' if they wanted to see her again, the female participants in the study recounted innumerable stories of verbal abuse, threats, insults, invasive questions of a sexual nature, and inappropriate pictures that they have experiences while using the app.

Ella had a bad experience meeting a man through the app who looked nothing like his profile, and then she faced a difficult situation when he insisted on coming home with her. Alice, a 54-year-old administrator, was a victim of sexual assault by a man that she had met online. She never knew his real name. They went on a couple of dates, and, according to Alice, he seemed 'normal'. One evening they went back to Alice's apartment, and there was a certain degree of intimacy. Alice told him that she was not ready to sleep with him, but then he overpowered her. The next day Alice wrote him and told him that it was not okay, that the sex had not been consensual, and that she was going to report him to the online dating platform, then told him not to bother to respond. She later discovered that he had four fake profiles through which he presented himself with different names and ages. She reported each of the four profiles and wrote to the app administration that she had been date-raped but received no response from them. When reflecting on her experience during our interview, Alice said 'I picked through this crap before finding the right person'. When asked for her definition of 'crap', Alice said that she meant the dishonest men that one meets on the apps.

Our interview happened one year after the incident, at which time Alice was in a happy long-term relationship with a new partner and wanted to leave that story behind. Respecting her request, we didn't insist on further contacting the digital dating app about this situation. Based on Alice's narrative, we consider that automated reporting and blocking mechanisms are impersonal and do not allow human interactions with customer support. This accentuates the power of dating platforms leaving consumers in a type of limbo with no opportunity to receive personalised feedback and support. It can have dramatic consequences in delicate situations like the one described by Alice. Furthermore, we observed a stark contrast between the inaction of the app administrators and the official app community guidelines that emphasise honesty, kindness, and mutual respect, highlighting the non-tolerance policy towards all kinds of violence and harassment.

We can see from the accounts above that unlike in situations of service-consumer interactions, in consumer-consumer interactions in a shared market setting, the co-destructive misuse of resources can go far beyond the inappropriate use of the app interface to take dangerous forms when real people are treated as market commodities, being misused without having the organisational and institutional resources possessed by the service providers. To mitigate the destructive influences of resource misuse by other participants and to protect themselves from negative value outcomes, consumers employed certain mitigation strategies, which we discuss next.

Coping with value destruction: mitigation strategies

Throughout the process of online dating, the users developed their own sets of rules and strategies for playing the dating game. To navigate their online dating experiences, consumers engaged in a range of practices, or routinised types of behaviour (Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005), that they refined in the course of their use of online dating apps, with past experiences helping to shape future strategies for maximising consumption value and for dealing with undesired behaviours by their online dating counterparts that diminished the value for them. These strategies fall into three broader categories: 1) self-commodification in order to win the contest for attention of potential partners; 2) resource integration, or the attempts of consumers to use the resources provided to them in the most efficient manner in order to avoid value destruction; and 3) value translation, or redefining what value means for them in this particular service context.

In our study, most users developed multiple strategies of self-presentation in order to appear attractive to potential partners so as to be chosen. Mark preferred to fill his dating profile with pictures of himself surrounded by friends in order to appear as a social person, while Jules created two separate profiles in order to look for men and women. In their evaluations of potential matches, the informants tended to focus on the appearance of the people they see there, deciding whether they want to meet the other person based on physical attraction and the potential display of different habits, such as, for instance, travelling, partying, or smoking.

Productive integration of resources into the usage process by the actors participating in the service ecosystem has been highlighted as the key element of value creation by previous researchers (Grönroos, 2011; Gummerus, 2013; Smith, 2013). In online dating, where the misaligned value notions between the dating counterparts often result in the perceived misuse of resources by one or both of the parties involved, consumers attempt to mitigate value destruction through boundary building practices and establishing firm communication rules. For instance, communicating through the app was perceived by users as a safer option than giving up their social media profiles to strangers, as it gave them the opportunity to create boundaries with other users, using the interface in order to block someone when they no longer wished to continue interacting. The communication rules formulated over the course of the online dating experience helped consumers make evaluative judgements faster and more efficiently. For instance, Alice had her own set of rules for determining whether the men she met on the app were married:

> Very often men on the dating apps are dishonest. They can be either married or divorced, they have no need of a relationship and they are using apps when they want company. They can be lying about their marital status. Some of the signs include: 1) getting off the phone very quickly (because their wife is nearby), 2) always paying cash (because cash transactions cannot be traced). (Alice, 54)

In the quote above we can see how the heuristics employed by a consumer can help them mitigate the uncertainty of their online encounters. Over the course of prolonged use of online dating services, these heuristics and rules become habitualised (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), providing a bit more certainty and predictability to the dating routines. The experience of using the dating apps was described by Rose as a 'steep learning curve'.

Vincent chose a paid subscription to see quickly if someone liked him and adopted a strategy of rejecting the profiles of women who have children or who listed a tall partner in their profile preferences.

The second category of mitigation strategies involved cynical distancing (Cronin & Malone, 2019), manifested as an attempt to suppress personal feelings and to adopt a detached attitude of 'seeing through' the market logic of online dating, and the translation of value into another value regime (Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017), such as the reinterpretation of the value of relationships in the ideological language of sexual freedom (Bauman, 2003; Illouz, 2007, 2019) or finding value in short-term encounters instead of a potentially desired long-term outcome. We can consider the example of Natalie, a 30-year-old single mother and entrepreneur who likes to use dating apps when travelling abroad:

> We smoked weed, f*cked, and went our separate ways. It all took about an hour. (. . .) The only thing is, if you want to see the country, don't have sex until he shows you the country, because if you have sex before he can take you out sightseeing, then his grandma will suddenly die, his best friend will get into an accident, and his sister will go into labour. (Natalie, 30)

When talking about her long-term goals, Natalie admitted wanting a stable long-term relationship. However, she did not think that it was possible to find it using online dating, so she preferred to frame her dating experiences on the apps as living out her fantasies, feelings, and fun (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). The vignette above also involves a certain degree of boundary building, as Natalie's experience taught her to withhold sexual intimacy until she had received what she needed from a man (in Natalie's case, sightseeing). She translates her frustration from repeated encounters with rapidly disappearing partners into humour in order to support the 'fun' narrative of the situational value of 'liquid' relationships with other app users (Bauman, 2003). The data demonstrate that through self-commodification, resource integration, and value translation, consumers seek to escape value conflict by rejecting the communal relationship logic and embracing the market transaction logic of relationships, rationalising their expected value outcomes through the lens of free consumer choice. In other words, by acknowledging that love is dead and by abandoning attempts to find a 'real' relationship online, consumers attempt to mitigate 'the inherent contradiction' between an 'understanding of themselves as free, able, and equal, and the constraining, subjugating experiences shaping their relationships and (sexual) lives' (Rome & Lambert, 2020, p. 20).

We argue that value conflict contributes to value destruction in the online dating context by generating multiple forms of uncertainty, specifically the misalignment of intended value outcomes between consumers, the lack of clarity about the rules and norms of engagement, and the lack of clarity about partner evaluation and one's role in the consumption process. While operating under conditions of uncertainty, online dating app users embrace the market transaction logic in treating potential partners like market commodities, and at the same time expecting their dating counterparts to respect the communal relationship logic and to express genuine concern for their feelings and well-being. The commodification of love in online dating happens not as a consequence of value conflict per se, but rather as an outcome of market transaction logic overpowering the communal logic in person-to-person relationships. This value misalignment between

different actors leads to frustration and disappointment for the participants in the service experience. To cope with value co-destruction, consumers embrace the neoliberal market logic of service experience by developing mitigation strategies, such as: 1) self-commodification in order to win the contest for attention of potential partners; 2) resource integration for optimal efficiency of the app usage; and 3) value translation, or redefining what value means for them in this particular service context. The three fields of conflict in relation to their manifestations in the online dating context and their contribution to value destruction are represented in Table 3.

Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this paper is to further the theoretical understanding of the impact of neoliberal market ideology on value creation in online dating, when this ideology conflicts with the social and cultural values of love, altruism, and reciprocity that traditionally provided a normative framework for human relationships (Clark & Mils, 1993; Illouz, 1997). Analysing consumer experiences of online dating through the theoretical lens of emotional capitalism (Illouz, 1997, 2007, 2012, 2019), we investigate the normative structure of consumer meanings and consumption practices in relational service contexts (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011), unveiling the effects of capitalist normalcy in unexpected spheres of contemporary social life, like romantic relationships and dating. In doing so, we show how the macro-level ideological forces of emotional capitalism and the disembedding decontextualising influence of the Internet (Illouz, 2007, 2019) play out in a context where different parties have different conceptions of value (Gummerus, 2013) and where consumerist commodification of self and the other is facilitated by service design. This theoretical framework allows us to contextualise the practice of dating in a wider societal and historical context.

Passing from the last chance for dating into a 'first stop for many young professionals' (Patterson & Hodgson, 2006, p. 456), Internet dating services are redesigning contemporary romance. Proposing freedom and fun for simple and easy-going human encounters, service providers benefit from and encourage consumerism in romantic relationships. Their well-studied offers trap consumers in a loop of endless choice of accessible partners, contributes to user retention, and helps to encourage paid subscriptions. However, the same successful offer can eventually have detrimental effects on consumers' physical and psychological well-being. That is, the desired value outcomes for the service providers and for consumers are sometimes not the same. Online dating represents a context where the commodification of love, which, according to the social values embedded in consumers by their culture, should not be commodified, can lead to value destruction as romantic relationships turn into cheap commodities produced on an assembly line (Illouz, 2007). The commodification of love is thus favoured by the service ecosystem, as well as boosted by the frame uncertainty experienced by consumers. Market values overlap social values in a conflicting agora frequently leading to value destruction.

With this work we aim to contribute to the advancement of CCT research as a 'continuously evolving perspective on consumer society and markets that shapes cultural life' (Arnould et al., 2019, p. 87). Assessing consumption from particular socio-cultural systems embedded in globalisation and market capitalism (Joy & Li, 2012), we embrace the notion of the social construction of markets, and of marketing as a societal

practice that goes beyond the consumption exchange between actors (Penaloza & Venkatesh, 2006). This study problematises the agentic view of consumers as empowered market actors and challenges the dominant approach of studying service interactions from the marketer perspective that 'normalizes consumption as a foundational necessity stemming from consumer needs that capitalism can fulfil' (Hietanen et al., 2017, p. 9). In line with the calls from CCT and critical theory researchers, the dominance of capitalist market ideology over all social spheres is questioned (Cronin & Fitchett, 2021; Illouz, 2019; Lambert, 2019; Tadajewski, 2018).

On a broader level, this work furthers our critical understanding of consumer agency and the role of the market in structuring social relationships (Arnould et al., 2019; Arnould & Thompson, 2015). We illustrate how neoliberal market ideology can be detrimental to value creation in consumption experiences. We challenge the celebratory perspective in consumer research that frames market capitalism as a source of consumer empowerment (Arnould & Thompson, 2015; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) and suggest that CCT researchers should pay closer attention to the dark side of marketplace commodification and to the negative consequences that over-commercialised market settings can have for consumer well-being. In doing so we critically question the logic of consumption in a context 'where consumption either does not, and arguably should not, be the primary unit of analysis' (Fitchett et al., 2014, p. 503). Moreover, we question the oversimplifying normalisation of 'value' as a positive outcome in market exchanges (Hietanen et al., 2017), instead focusing on the conflictuality in consumer perception of different forms of value.

On a more specific level, first, we contribute to CCT research on multiple value regimes in shared contexts by illustrating and explaining the multiple fields of conflict that arise when conflicting notions of value are not reconciled through fostering value hybridity – that is, a mixture of multiple value regimes facilitated by the institutional actors (Figueiredo & Scaraboto, 2016; Minina et al., 2020; Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017; Türe, 2014). In their interactions with each other in the online dating marketplace, our consumers negotiate conflicting notions of value, leading to ambivalent meanings in the consumption process. In consumer stories of their online dating experiences, we can see how the culturally embedded notions of what is valuable in love – demonstrating genuine concern for the other person – enter into conflict with the pragmatic notions of value informed by the marketplace logic of exchange relationships, where the participants act with the expectation of receiving benefits from another (Clark & Mils, 1993). While the culturally embedded notions of value originate from outside the service consumption context, the pragmatic notions of value and the ideology of endless consumerism are supported by service design and the disembedding influence of the Internet, as well as by the perceived lack of sanctions for unethical behaviours on dating apps. We can see the commodification of love in online dating as an outcome of market transaction logic overpowering the communal logic in person-to-person relationships. This outcome reinforces and is perpetuated by consumers' conflicting values.

Second, with this work we contribute to advancing the current understanding of interactive value creation and destruction (Cabiddu et al., 2019; Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Plé & Cáceres, 2010; Smith, 2013). Recognising an interactive value formation space (Echeverri & Skålén, 2021) where practices and resources are modelled by actors, resulting in value co-creation and value co-destruction, we define and

develop the notion of value conflict as an active antecedent of value co-destruction in service settings. In doing so, we further the current understanding of value co-destruction as a result of the misuse of resources in interactions between different service systems (a customer and a firm; Plé & Cáceres, 2010) by documenting and explaining the antecedents of resource misuse within the same service system (interactions between customers). Specifically, we identify the main dimensions of value that clash in the marketplace and describe the mechanisms through which value conflict contributes to value destruction and the resulting value outcomes. Service providers benefit from and encourage consumerism in digital settings. The context of online dating confronts consumers with the marketisation of romantic relationships. This confrontation of embedded social values with treating relationships as cheap commodities can lead to value destruction (Illouz, 2007, 2019).

Our findings reveal that conflicting notions of value in a shared marketplace destabilise interactions between members of the service ecosystem, turning it into a deinstitutionalised field dominated by multiple forms of uncertainty and lack of control mechanisms (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) that allows for misuse of resources by the parties involved, leading to interactive value co-destruction. Finally, we highlight the complex and non-linear character of interactive value co-creation by illustrating the strategies through which consumers mitigate value conflict in a shared marketplace in order to avoid value co-destruction.

In this work we highlight the dehumanisation led by the application of market ideology to all the spheres of human private and social life which, if it does not result in a form of value destruction, at least leads to a profound sense of exploitation of the self. Unless consumers employ value translation strategies, replacing the culturally embedded conceptions of relationships as long-term, stable, and monogamous with the flexible ideals of liquid love, pure disattached relationships, and casual sexual freedom (Bauman, 2003; Giddens, 1990; Illouz, 2007, 2019), they cannot enjoy their service experience to the fullest. With this in mind, it is important for us as marketing researchers to transcend the considerations of managerial efficiency and to adopt a critical perspective from which to map the broader consequences of such value misalignments on consumer life worlds that extend beyond consumption, acknowledging that market efficiency cannot always be recognised as a solution for all customer problems (Cronin & Fitchett, 2021).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Dr. Alisa Minina is Assistant Professor of Marketing at Ipag Business School. In her research she adopts the sociocultural perspective as a framework for understanding consumption experiences, with the particular focus on globalization, consumer mobility, acculturation and consumption in service settings.

Dr. Stefania Masè is Assistant Professor at Ipag Business School, France, where she teaches Marketing, Strategy, and Digital Economy. She has a double Ph.D. from the University of Macerata, Italy, and *Lettres* Sorbonne University, France. Stefania has authored national and

international refereed publications like the *International Journal of Arts Management*, *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing, Palgrave Studies in Practice: Global Fashion Brand Management*, and the *ACR North American Advances*. In 2020, she published her first book for Springer titled *Art and business: perspectives on art-based management.*

Dr. Jamie Smith is Director of Undergraduate Programmes at ISC Paris. Following his PhD at De Montfort University in Leicester, UK, Dr Smith has had an academic career in France. Teaching Marketing at undergraduate, postgraduate and executive levels, Dr Smith has also worked with a number of Grande Ecole in France to further their international accreditations. His research interests have covered Competitive Intelligence, Integrating Ethics into Curriculum and more recently Value Creation in Online Communities. Publishing in both French and English, his work can be found in *International Management, Journal of Strategic Marketing, Question de Management, La Revue des Sciences de Gestion* and *ACR North American Advances.*

References

Akaka, M. A., Vargo, S. L., & Schau, H. J. (2015). The context of experience. *Journal of Service Management*, *26*(2), 206–223. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-10-2014-0270

Arnould, E. J., Press, M., Salminen, E., & Tillotson, J. S. (2019). Consumer culture theory: Development, critique, application and prospects. *Foundations and Trends® in Marketing*, *12*(2), 80–166. https://doi.org/10.1561/1700000052

Arnould, E. J., & Thompson, C. J. (2015). Introduction: Consumer culture theory: Ten years gone (and beyond). In A. E. Thyroff, J. B. Murray, & R. W. Belk (Eds.), *Consumer culture theory (Research in consumer behavior, Vol. 17)* (pp. 1–21). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Arnould, E. J. (2007). Service-dominant logic and consumer culture theory: Natural allies in an emerging paradigm. *Research in Consumer Behavior*, *11*(6), 57–76. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2111(06)11025-X

Arsel, Z. (2017). Asking questions with reflexive focus: A tutorial on designing and conducting interviews. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *44*(4), 939–948. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucx096

Askegaard, S., & Linnet, J. T. (2011). Towards an epistemology of consumer culture theory: Phenomenology and the context of context. *Marketing Theory*, *11*(4), 381–404. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593111418796

Bardhi, F., & Eckhardt, G. M. (2012). Access-based consumption: The case of car sharing. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *39*(4), 881–898. https://doi.org/10.1086/666376

Bardhi, F., Eckhardt, G. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2012). Liquid relationship to possessions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *39*(3), 510–529. https://doi.org/10.1086/664037

Bauman, Z. (2003). *Liquid love (Kindle)*. Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers.

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Anchor Books.

Blocker, C. P., & Barrios, A. (2015). The transformative value of a service experience. *Journal of Service Research*, *18*(3), 265–283. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670515583064

Burawoy, M. (2009). *The extended case method: Four countries, four decades, four great transformations, and one theoretical tradition*. University of California Press.

Cabiddu, F., Moreno, F., & Sebastiano, L. (2019). Toxic collaborations: Co-destroying value in the B2B context. *Journal of Service Research*, *22*(3), 241–255. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670519835311

Campbell, C. (1997). Romanticism, introspection and consumption: A response to Professor Holbrook. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, *1*(2), 165–173. https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.1997.9670296

Campbell, C. (2005). *The romantic ethic and the spirit of modern consumersm (Kindle edi)*. Alcuin Academics.

Chandler, J. D., & Lusch, R. F. (2015). Service systems: A broadened framework and research agenda on value propositions, engagement, and service experience. *Journal of Service Research*, *18*(1), 6–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670514537709

Clark, M. S., & Mils, J. (1993). The difference between communal and exchange relationships: What it is and is not. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, *19*(6), 684–691. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167293196003
Collins, A., Kavanagh, E., Cronin, J., & George, R. (2014). Money, mavens, time, and price search: Modelling the joint creation of utilitarian and hedonic value in grocery shopping. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *30*(7–8), 719–746. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2013.839572
Corsaro, D. (2020). Value co-destruction and its effects on value appropriation. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *36*(1–2), 100–127. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2019.1696876
Cronin, J., & Fitchett, J. (2021). Lunch of the last human: Nutritionally complete food and the fantasies of market-based progress. *Marketing Theory*, *21*(1), 3–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593120914708
Cronin, J., & Malone, S. (2019). Lifeway alibis: The biographical bases for unruly bricolage. *Marketing Theory*, *19*(2), 129–147. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593118787587
Echeverri, P., & Skålen, P. (2011). Co-creation and co-destruction: A practice-theory based study of interactive value formation. *Marketing Theory*, *11*(3), 351–373. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593111408181
Echeverri, P., & Skålén, P. (2021). Value co-destruction: Review and conceptualization of interactive value formation. *Marketing Theory*, *21*(2), 227–249. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593120983390
Figueiredo, B. (2012). *How Global Mobility Shapes Consumption Practices*. University of New South Wales.
Figueiredo, B., & Scaraboto, D. (2016). The systemic creation of value through circulation in collaborative consumer networks. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *43*(4), 509–533. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucw038
Firat, A. F., & Venkatesh, A. (1995). Liberatory postmodernism and the reenchantment of consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *22*(3), 239–267. https://doi.org/10.1086/209448
Fitchett, J. A., Patsiaouras, G., & Davies, A. (2014). Myth and ideology in consumer culture theory. *Marketing Theory*, *14*(4), 495–506. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593114545423
Fromm, E. (1969). *Escape from freedom*. Avon Books.
Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford University Press.
Grönroos, C. (2008). Service logic revisited: Who creates value? And who co-creates? *European Business Review*, *20*(4), 298–314. https://doi.org/10.1108/09555340810886585
Grönroos, C. (2011). Value co-creation in service logic: A critical analysis. *Marketing Theory*, *11*(3), 279–301. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593111408177
Grönroos, C., & Ravald, A. (2011). Service as business logic: Implications for value creation and marketing. *Journal of Service Management*, *22*(1), 5–22. https://doi.org/10.1108/09564231111106893
Gummerus, J. (2013). Value creation processes and value outcomes in marketing theory: Strangers or siblings? *Marketing Theory*, *13*(1), 19–46. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593112467267
Harris, L. C., & Ogbonna, E. (2002). Exploring service sabotage: The antecedents, types and consequences of frontline, deviant, antiservice behaviors. *Journal of Service Research*, *4*(3), 163–183. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670502004003001
Hietanen, J., Andéhn, M., & Bradshaw, A. (2017). Against the implicit politics of service-dominant logic. *Marketing Theory*, *18*(1), 101–119. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593117692023
Hirschman, E. C. (1987). People as products: Analysis of a complex marketing exchange. *Journal of Marketing*, *51*(1), 98–108. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224298705100108
Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *9*(2), 132–140. https://doi.org/10.1086/208906
Holbrook, M. B. (1999). *Consumer value: A framework for analysis and research*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203010679.ch4
Holmqvist, J., & Ruiz, C. D. (2017). Service ecosystems, markets, and business networks – What is the difference? A horizontal literature review. *The TQM Journal*, *29*(6), 800–810. https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-03-2017-0028

Holt, D. B. (2002). Why do brands cause trouble? A dialectical theory of consumer culture and branding. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *29*(1), 70–90. https://doi.org/10.1086/339922

Hopkinson, G. C., & Hogg, M. K. (2006). Stories: How they are used and produced in market(ing) research. In R. W. Belk (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods in marketing* (pp. 156–174). Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.

Illouz, E. (1997). *Consuming the romantic utopia: Love and the cultural contradictions of capitalism*. University of California Press.

Illouz, E. (2007). *Cold intimacies: The making of emotional capitalism*. Polity Press.

Illouz, E. (2012). *Why love hurts: A sociological explanation*. Polity Press.

Illouz, E. (2019). *The end of love: A sociology of negative relations (Kindle)*. Oxford University Press.

Järvi, H., Kähkönen, A. K., & Torvinen, H. (2018). When value co-creation fails: Reasons that lead to value co-destruction. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *34*(1), 63–77. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2018.01.002

Jones, S., Cronin, J., & Piacentini, M. (2020). The interrupted world: Surrealist disruption and altered escapes from reality. *Marketing Theory*, *20*(4), 459–480.

Joy, A., & Li, E. P. H. (2012). Studying consumption behaviour through multiple lenses: An overview of consumer culture theory. *Journal of Business Anthropology*, *1*(1), 141–173. https://doi.org/10.22439/jba.v1i1.3550

Karababa, E., & Kjeldgaard, D. (2014). Value in marketing: Toward sociocultural perspectives. *Marketing Theory*, *14*(1), 119–127. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593113500385

Kates, S. M. (2006). The extended case method in consumer research. In R. W. Belk (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods in marketing* (pp. 175–186). Edward Elgar.

Kuppelweiser, V. G., & Finsterwalder, J. (2016). Transformative service research and service-dominant logic: Quo vaditis? *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *28*(1), 91–98. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2015.08.011

Lambert, A. (2019). Psychotic, acritical and precarious? A Lacanian exploration of the neoliberal consumer subject. *Marketing Theory*, *19*(3), 329–346. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593118796704

Lusch, R., & Vargo, S. L. (2014). *Service-dominant logic: Premises, perspectives, possibilities*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139043120

Lusch, R. F., Vargo, S. L., & Malter, A. J. (2006). Marketing as service-exchange: Taking a leadership role in global marketing management. *Organizational Dynamics*, *35*(3), 264–278. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2006.05.008

McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Minina, A., Masè, S., & Smith, J. (2020). Navigating the marketplace of love: Value conflict in online dating community. *Advances in Consumer Research*, *48*, 537–540. https://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/2661930/volumes/v48/NA-48

Muniz, A. M., & O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *27*(4), 412–432. https://doi.org/10.1086/319618

Patterson, A., & Hodgson, J. (2006). A speeddating story: The lover's guide to marketing excellence. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *22*(5–6), 455–471. https://doi.org/10.1362/026725706777978613

Penaloza, L., & Mish, J. (2011). The nature and processes of market co-creation in triple bottom line firms: Leveraging insights from consumer culture theory and service dominant logic. *Marketing Theory*, *11*(1), 9–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593110393710

Penaloza, L., & Venkatesh, A. (2006). Further evolving the new dominant logic of marketing: From services to social construction of markets. *Marketing Theory*, *6*(3), 299–316. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593106066789

Plé, L., & Cáceres, R. C. (2010). Not always co-creation: Introducing interactional co-destruction of value in service-dominant logic. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *24*(6), 430–437. https://doi.org/10.1108/08876041011072546

Reckwitz, A. (2002). Towards a theory of social practices: A development in culturalist theorizing. *European Journal Of Social Theory*, *5*(2), 243–263. https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310222225432
Rokka, J. (2021). Consumer Culture Theory's future in marketing. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, January*, *29*(1), 114–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2020.1860685
Rome, A. S., & Lambert, A. (2020). (Wo)men on top? Postfeminist contradictions in young women's sexual narratives. *Marketing Theory*, *20*(4), 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593120926240
Saren, M. (2015). 'Buy buy Miss American Pie': The day the consumer died. *Marketing Theory*, *15*(4), 565–569. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593115607943
Scaraboto, D., & Figueiredo, B. (2017). Holy mary goes 'round: using object circulation to promote hybrid value regimes in alternative economies. *Journal of Macromarketing*, *37*(2), 180–192. https://doi.org/10.1177/0276146717690201
Schau, H. J., Muñiz, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, *73*(5), 30–51. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.5.30
Schouten, J. W., & McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *22*(1), 43–61. https://doi.org/10.1086/209434
Smith, A. M. (2013). The value co-destruction process: A customer resource perspective. *European Journal of Marketing*, *47*(11–12), 1889–1909. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-08-2011-0420
Tadajewski, M. (2018). Critical reflections on the marketing concept and consumer sovereignty. In M. Tadajewski, M. Higgins, J. Denegri-Knott, & R. Varman (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to critical marketing* (pp. 196–224). Routledge.
Türe, M. (2014). Value-in-disposition: Exploring how consumers derive value from disposition of possessions. *Marketing Theory*, *14*(1), 53–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593113506245
Vargo, S. L., Akaka, M. A., & Vaughan, C. M. (2017). Conceptualizing value: A service-ecosystem view. *Journal of Creating Value*, *3*(2), 117–124. https://doi.org/10.1177/2394964317732861
Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008a). Service-dominant logic: Continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *36*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-007-0069-6
Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008b). Why "service"? *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *36*(1), 25–38. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-007-0068-7
Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2011). It's all B2B . . . and beyond: Toward a systems perspective of the market. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *40*(2), 181–187. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2010.06.026
Vargo, S. L., Maglio, P. P., & Akaka, M. A. (2008). On value and value co-creation: A service systems and service logic perspective. *European Management Journal*, *26*(3), 145–152. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2008.04.003
Venkatesh, A., & Peñaloza, L. (2014). The value of value in CCT. *Marketing Theory*, *14*(1), 135–138. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593113500386
Wallendorf, M., & Belk, R. W. (1989). Assessing trustworthiness in naturalistic consumer research. In E. C. Hirschman (Ed.), *Interpretative Consumer Research* (pp. 69–84). Association for Consumer Research.
Warde, A. (2005). Consumption and theories of practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, *5*(2), 131–153. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540505053090
Wieland, H., Polese, F., Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2012). Toward a service (eco)systems perspective on value creation. *International Journal of Service Science, Management, Engineering, and Technology*, *3*(3), 12–25. https://doi.org/10.4018/jssmet.2012070102