

## Chapter 80

# A Consideration of Value Co–Creation in Branding of University Research–Laboratories

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### ABSTRACT

*Since service dominant logic and co-creation have been applied to branding in the higher education sector as bottom-up building of brand, research laboratories have become an essential factor in university branding. This paper aims to explore branding of research laboratories based on value co-creation processes through real experiences in research laboratories. The authors' hypotheses have identified how research laboratory brand could be created and sustainably expanded based on co-creation between professors and students. Case studies in Japanese laboratories were assumed to have their operations based on service dominant logic to verify the hypotheses. In addition, the concept of trust as value-in-trust was evaluated through this research to identify ways in which research laboratory brands were directly and indirectly spread by co-creation. Thus, this research emphasized the concept that the core of stable and powerful brands was contributed by value co-creation of stakeholders who maintained their mutual trust.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Branding is a phenomenon that has become increasingly popular in higher education (Waraas and Solbakk 2009) over the last few years. Universities need to search for unique characteristics of what they represent in the era of global competition in order to differentiate themselves, and make efforts to attract international students and staff (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007) by strengthening their brands. Service research has become a considerable factor in creating universities' brands, and university branding management is changing as the flow of service changes according to the FP5 of Service dominant Logic (S-D logic) in which "All economies are service economies" (Lusch and Vargo 2006).

Customers are engaged in dialogue and interaction with their suppliers during product design, production, delivery and consumptions from the perspective of S-D logic (Lusch and Vargo 2006). These trends in studies have provided a new perspective for university branding and brands through the lens of co-creation (Payne 2009). In other words, brand identity is co-created with the participation of customers and other stakeholders (Merz et al. 2009) who are people (or groups) that are having been interested in the activities of universities (Harvey 2004).

There have been few previously empirical studies on university branding were (Chapleo 2010). Some researchers have tried to define university brands and successful university brand factors but not research laboratory (RL) factors. RL branding has become necessary and potential with the trend of experience and co-creation lens applied to higher education sector. Research laboratories which are workplaces for the conduct of scientific research (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>), are a common model in higher education especially at research institutes and universities. In addition, individual RLs could be considered as cells or elements of universities and their operations have been associated with the universities' activities. Because professors and students interact and share experiences in daily life, research, and other activities of in RL, co-creation processes occur there and value co-creation is thus assumed to be directly gained. Therefore, RLs can become a significant factor in branding based on value co-creation. RL branding has become necessary and potential with the lens of experience and value co-creation applied to higher education sector.

People normally think that a brand reflects external thinking and viewing, and the brand is what people outside think about it. However, the question is "What creates this way of thinking or viewing?" Only stakeholders with their actual experiences can provide an answer to this question. This means that the core and root resource of the stakeholders' value co-creation can create a real, trustworthy, and sustainable brand. Therefore, the main purpose of this research was to explore RL branding based on value co-creation processes through real experiences in RLs.

## **2. SERVICE DOMINANT LOGIC AND VALUE CO-CREATION**

Value in Goods dominant logic (G-D logic) is created at the moment of exchange. After that, customers use the goods, or the values-added inside them, value co-creation in the new mindset that occurs after value exchange. They currently describe customer values is something experienced by the customer in use situations (Smith & Ng 2012). In other words, values for customers mean that, they feel better after using a service process than before it has been offered to them. The service really helps them to solve their issues. Customers determine their satisfaction by themselves, not by the service suppliers. We can say that value is co-created when customers' needs and requirements are fully met.

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