

BAM 2023 CONFERENCE

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Challenges for co-creation in Zimbabwe cultural and creative industries

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Theme - Innovation in creative industries

Title: Challenges for co-creation in Zimbabwe cultural and creative industries

Authors:

Track – Entrepreneurship

Word Count - 1581

Abstract

Value co-creation is considered, by western researchers, an effective strategy for driving demanding of services and products created by creative and culture industries in developed economies. Examples of co-creation exist in several sectors of creative and cultural industries including fashion, music, product design, theatre, fine arts and others. However, little is presently known about the applicability of value co-creation in the global south's developing economies. Research in developed countries has found that the existence of pre-conditions for value co-creation is critical to its successful implementation as a marketing strategy. This developmental paper proposes an investigation into the existence of pre-conditions required to underpin successful implementation of co-creation as a market development strategy for Entrepreneurial Artists in Zimbabwe. The paper examines existing literature on pre-conditions for co-creation to build knowledge and propose questions to support a primary study of the Zimbabwean context. The paper is conscious not to assume the applicability of western centric theories to solve creative entrepreneurship challenges in Zimbabwe. Primary data will be gathered from lived experiences of lead author and Entrepreneurial Artists in Zimbabwe to determine the existence of pre-conditions and perceptions of co-creation amongst participants. Data will also be gathered from previous research conducted in locations similar to Zimbabwe such as South Africa where research on co-creation is present.

Keywords: Value Co-creation, Pre-conditions for value co-creation, market development strategy

Research Context

Value co-creation is recognised in creative industries (Machmud & Sumawidjaja, 2020; Ross, 2020; Tu et al., 2018) as a potentially successful strategy for mutually beneficial advantages to partners that can harness their collaborative synergies effectively. Indeed, the strategic potential of value co-creation goes beyond creative industries, (Alves et al., 2016; Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Chowdhury et al., 2016), and much can be learned from its application away from creative industries. However, the focus area for this paper is the applicability of value co-creation strategies in the creative sector of Zimbabwe. Value co-creation requires specific pre-conditions for successful implementation, (J. Gouillart, 2014) and the existence of those pre-conditions determines the appropriateness of value co-creation as a viable strategy.

There are a number of definitions for value co-creation, (Grönroos, 2012; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018; Vargo et al., 2008) but within all definitions are key characteristics which include collaboration between producers and consumers of products and services, integration of resources to create mutual benefit for all partners. Value co-creation also takes place in collaborative partnership between organisations to create value for their organisations, (Rădulescu et al., 2020) and value co-creation can take place between public and private operators, (Chen et al., 2020).

This paper focuses on value co-creation in Zimbabwe's creative industries because the strategy may be a viable option for entrepreneurial artists to use in creating sustainable demand for their products. However, value co-creation has not been researched enough in Zimbabwe to avail data that can be used to answer the questions which need to be answered before value co-creation can be adopted by entrepreneurial artists in creating sustainable demand for their products. Furthermore, value co-creation is a western centric strategy and its transferability into the Zimbabwean context is hitherto unknown.

Literature review

To develop working knowledge of the pre-conditions for value co-creation a review of existing literature was conducted. While there is a caveat in that existing literature, like value co-creation, is mostly western centric it is still important to establish a platform from which further investigations can be developed.

Pre-conditions for value co-creation

As previously stated, value co-creation is dependent on interaction, collaboration, commitment, (Chen et al., 2020; J. Gouillart, 2014) and active participation by partners to create value. Other preconditions are required to further enhance the potential success of value co-creation strategy including understanding of value or benefit for participation as a motivator for participating in co-creation, (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018). There also needs to be a platform on which co-creation can take place and clearly defined expectations on or contributions from all stakeholders and economic value created as a result of co-creation, (J. Gouillart, 2014). Others such as Hein et al, (2019) and Sheth, (2019) also recommend a clear understanding of the type of co-creation that will be used or applied and this can be selected from community marketing, design thinking, co-creative transformation, crowd sourcing, conscious capitalism and open innovation.

Value Co-creation for creative industries

The term creative industries is a term that is used to represent a large economic sector where the primary business activity is the creation of products or service using intellectual property, creative and artistic expression, (Moore, 2014). However, Cruz & Teixeira, (2015) and Mikić et al., (2020) suggest that a single definition for creative industries is difficult to pin down due to the variety of activities that take place in the creative industries. For this paper, it is important that the definition recognises that intellectual property is at the centre of creativity and that much of the creativity manifests in creative and artistic expression of the artists' talent through the products and services they offer for economic benefit, (Madichie & Hinson, 2022). Value co-creation in creative industries is widely researched Akaka et al., (2013), Chen et al., (2020) and Grobbelaar, (2020) but successful implementation varies between industries. Some sectors of the creative industries such as music, fashion and gaming enjoy more success in adopting co-creation strategies, Saragih, (2019) and Toscher, (2021) owing to their experiential qualities which enable customer engagement easily and effectively. Internet based businesses that adopt value co-creation benefit immensely when they have platforms that allow high customer engagement and opportunities for customer-to-customer engagement, (Montoro-Pons et al., 2021).

Value co-creation in Zimbabwe

The literature review found that value co-creation research in Zimbabwe or the rest of Africa is limited and, when examples of previous research are found, they are primarily in South Africa. Previous research in co-creation has covered knowledge co-creation, co-creation in project management, co-creation in women's entrepreneurship, co-creation in wine making, co-creation in tourism and proposals for co-creation concepts. The research of interest to this paper is the value co-creation framework proposed by Grobbelaar, (2020) for wine tourism in South Africa which sought to take advantage of consumer participation in wine tasting to create value-in-use for tourists and to create future demand for wine tourism for wine makers. A third actor in this value co-creation ecosystem would be the tour operators selling wine tours to local, regional and international tourists. The appropriateness of the value co-creation framework as proposed by Grobbelaar, (2020) is supported by Cubillas et al., (2017) who identified authenticity of experiences as one of the values-in-use when tourists are in the value production ecosystem. Successful tourist experiences can have follow-on value for wine makers, tour operators and other stakeholders. The creative sector in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Nigeria amongst others have co-creation hubs where creatives can go to find co-creative networks and ecosystems to collaborate with, (Madichie et al., 2022). The existence of co-creation hubs suggests that co-creation is taking place and may have taken place much longer than is reflected by the scarcity of research articles.

Research Questions

The existence of co-creation hubs in South Africa and Zimbabwe suggests that value co-creation exists or at the very least there is recognition of the benefits of value co-creation to entrepreneurial artists in the cultural and creative industries. This knowledge underpins the research questions for the paper as follows.

- 1) What do entrepreneurial artists in the cultural and creative industries of Zimbabwe understand by value co-creation?
- 2) What experiences do entrepreneurial artists have of working with other artists on mutually beneficial projects?

- 3) What benefits have entrepreneurial artists derived from working with other artists or believe that can get from working with other artists?

Data collection

The lack of a substantial body of secondary data guides this research towards primary research which will help to gain quality insight into the place of value co-creation amongst entrepreneurial artists in Zimbabwe's creative industries. This limitation in existing research influences this qualitative research methodology's adoption of inductive approach and grounded theory to collect data. Grounded theory is appropriate for creating holistic understanding of the state of co-creation in Zimbabwe's CCI because of the flexibility it allows in data collection. Objectivist grounded theory will allow the data collection process to observe and discover how Co-creation is presently perceived within CCI in Zimbabwe particularly amongst entrepreneurial artists. Data collection will take place in Harare, Zimbabwe in arts market clusters for observations of market dynamics and recruiting individual interviewees. Data analysis will be performed by applying thematic analysis to bring out any prominent themes that represent what artists think is meant by value co-creation, how it exists at present and what they believe to be benefits of value co-creation or any other forms of working together.

Relevance of research

The proposed research is allied to research about value co-creation as a potential strategy for entrepreneurial artists in Zimbabwe to use in creating international markets for their artistic products. The paper will contribute insight into existing knowledge and understanding of value co-creation in the target population. This is particularly important for future research because there is a risk of assuming that the lack of substantial research on value co-creation represents the non-existence of value co-creation in the cultural and creative sector in Zimbabwe and more specifically amongst entrepreneurial artists there. This research will benefit entrepreneurial artist by raising awareness of the benefits of co-creation as business strategy. Incorporating Co-creation into their work can help them to create new markets, improve product quality and have access to competences they may not already.

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