

## Employing Pedagogy in the Experience Economy to Extend Product Lifetimes

Rebecca Steiner <sup>(a,b)</sup>

a) Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, UK

b) Birmingham City University, Birmingham, UK

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### Introduction

Within the experience economy, personalisation & customisation are primarily seen as methods to increase the rate and quantity of consumption (Kuksa et al 2022). This research takes an alternative view; exploring opportunities to reduce the environmental impact of consumption and to extend product lifetimes by viewing the customisation space as a site of learning. Drawing upon pedagogic theory, in particular Meyer & Land (2003)'s idea of 'transformational knowledge', this research will explore how embodied customisation experiences can provide individuals with the skills and confidence to fix, repair and maintain objects they own. It will aim to analyse the collateral impacts of a co-created product, beyond a Product Life-Cycle Analysis and towards a more holistic view of shifts and changes that may occur in wider patterns of consumption, care and maintenance for an individual empowered by a learning experience.

### Context: Pedagogy and co-creation

As a goldsmith and workshop facilitator with experience in education, this research draws upon my knowledge of practical education and the impact it has on students. Accomplishment of a skill brings with it a sense of empowerment and agency in the world – that what we are able to say and think and do matters. Engaging with products in relation to their materiality and how they are made can increase wellbeing (Yair 2011) and can foster an appreciation of the value of maintenance and repair (Madon 2021; Durrani 2018). This 'sustain-ability' (Fry 2008) leads to a change in the way the students approach the material world; with more respect for the material things around us, we cannot

help but develop a more considered and ethical approach to our consumption.

### Definition of Terms

#### *Making and co-creation*

'Make-your-own' workshops (e.g. for couples making their own wedding rings, or a day of throwing pots with a ceramicist for example) are a space where consumers are able to become a part of the production process, revealing the often hidden/unknown methods of manufacture (e.g. soldering precious metals). The phrase 'co-creation' is used here to highlight the collaborative nature of these spaces where the customer can impact the design of their object with support from a skilled workshop facilitator. Co-creation can happen both online (e.g. where the customer selects design options for their product) or in person. In-person co-creation may provide more potential to impact product lifetimes due to the embodied nature of these experiences. Embodied learning involves participation by engaging the body, which has been shown to enhance learning (Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991).

#### *Threshold concepts and transformational knowledge*

A threshold concept is knowledge which transforms the learners' perception of a subject or experience, allowing *things normally not perceived to come into view* (Meyer & Land 2003). This perspective may be helpful in understanding the potential broader impacts of co-creation experiences in terms of empowerment to fix, mend and repair. Many of the objects we own are manufactured at a distance from us and the processes used are seen as mysterious and out-of-reach (Perzanowski 2021). Yet through a co-creation

experience material knowledge is gained pertaining to the product we are purchasing. It allows space for consumers to play a design role, to understand how to fix/repair and to discuss the objects directly with the manufacturers. Co-creation therefore creates an experience which sees customers move from passive recipients of goods and services to *connected, informed, and powerfully active collaborators in the creation of value* (Pralhad & Ramaswamy 2004).

## Research Context

Online co-creation experiences have been shown to increase feelings of self efficacy after customising products through an interface (Turner et al 2020) and effective design of this interface can support the customer to make ethical purchasing decisions (Grosso et al 2024). At an in-person co-creation experience the workshop facilitator becomes this interface. The success of the workshop therefore is in part reliant on the insight and empathy of the facilitator – and the subsequent endurance of the product becomes about pedagogy as much as consumer choice. This research will show how workshop providers in the experience economy can enhance both the lifecycle of the product and the environmental ethics of the consumer. A comparison between online co-design and in-person, embodied co-creation will identify the point at which a co-creation experience can become more deeply transformational in nature.

The questions being explored are:

- To what extent can involvement in the making process lead to a sense of agency/empowerment to repair and maintain other products beyond the initial workshop?
- How can co-creation experiences be best designed to support material empathy and increase product lifetimes?

## Methodology

Initial data will be gathered through workshop participation & observation (field notes), interviews and case studies. Data collection will seek to explore participants' perspectives on the acquisition of skills and the transferability of these skills. It will also explore how the facilitating businesses adapt their processes to accommodate public access.

New co-making workshops will then be designed, developed and facilitated with

collaborating businesses as a cycle of action research towards the end of the project. The aim will be to holistically assess impact from both sides of the workshop – for the participants and for the facilitating business.

This expands upon existing research which highlights the self-efficacy, agency and enjoyment which current online co-creation experiences offer (Turner et al 2020; Trentin et al 2014).

## Next steps

Co-creation experiences provide a unique opportunity to both support environmentally ethical consumer behaviour and to highlight opportunities for producers to enhance their green credentials.

This research is in its early stages, and participation in the PLATE conference will be an opportunity to test ideas and to build strategic partnerships to support and enhance the project development. As the project develops, companies will be invited to experience a co-making workshop and to explore opportunities to offer a co-making experience to their customers. By doing so, other environmental benefits can be achieved: the making process will necessarily become more localised, material and energy consumption can be reduced (Steiner 2021 and 2024) and companies will be able to gain valuable customer input in the appropriate design and development of their products. The experience economy continues to grow, and if we can harness this to support environmentally ethical practices then everyone benefits.

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