VALUE CREATION AND SOCIAL CONTEXT IN SERVICE ENCOUNTERS: A PRACTICE APPROACH

By

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Submitted for the degree of PhD in Management

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June 2015

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To God,

I want to thank you Heavenly Father for being always by my side considering me as your beloved son. All the glory belongs to you.

To Mateo,

This is gratefully dedicated to you. In these last three and a half years you have taught me the real meanings of learning and magical. I am now enjoying my present with you learning magical things every day.

To Marisabella,

You have made a big difference in my life during this project. Thank you.
ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the understanding the contextual nature of consumer value creation within service encounters in high customer participation services. The study of service encounters is shown to have traditionally adopted individualistic or highly rational perspectives that ignore or overlook the significance of social context in shaping the material and cognitive resources that participants bring to the encounter and that they use to shape its outcomes and effectiveness. It is shown that by focusing on encounters as forms of social practice, involving a complex set of activities and skills, all of which need to be located within a context that reflects a wide range of factors (from individual biography to macro-structures) it is possible to develop a more complete understanding of how encounters are structured and how value is defined within them. This perspective provides a framework of concepts within which a detailed qualitative study of service encounters is conducted, remaining open to new possibilities that may be identified inductively. The study uses observation and interviews with participants in two case sites in Colombia, a higher education institution and a fitness club, to develop a framework that identifies issues that carry contextual relevance, summarizing these in a model of factors that need to be taken into account when investigating service encounters. Although the model is provisional, being derived from only two cases in a single country, it offers a depth of analysis that helps to identify the complex processes involved. It is suggested that further research will be needed to test this model for applicability in a broader context. In summary, the research contributes to a better understanding of service encounters by showing the importance of social context in shaping value-creation issues: participants of service encounters are not only decision makers but active human beings embedded in a cultural, socio-historical context, who construct value through service consumption practices that are dynamic, contextual and practical.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank everyone who helped me complete this life project, without your support, I would have not been able to bring this project to a successful completion. To my supervisors David Goss and Sue Halliday who provided enlightening expertise, feedback and support during the process.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to my employer Universidad del Norte and the Colombian Institute for Science and Technology (COLCIENCIAS) for funding this project. I would also like to thank LASPAU, and especially my advisor Lisa Tapiero, for being supportive and always concerned about my everyday life as a research student. To Miguel, Monica and Henry for giving me access to the cases studied and being open to the methodologies used in this research. I would especially like to thank all the participants in the study as informants, all your valuables insights and actions contributed genuinely to developing my thinking and acting. To Claire, for her useful comments in the final revision of the document.

To my mother for setting an example of hard work; my father for sharing his wise words and funny anecdotes that always make me think deeper; my brother Rodrigo for setting an example of courage, dedication and unconditional love for his family. To Marisabella and her family who have been supportive about this life project. Also, to my son Mateo, the best gift I could have received during this PhD journey.

Finally, to my friends, my students, my siblings, the “Rushmore’s” and my brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, who have made these last few months in the UK an unforgettable and life changing experience. This is also gratefully dedicated to you.

Guildford, November 3, 2014
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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

With the advent of the Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic), service management and marketing researchers have focused their interest on understanding the impact of service consumption on value co-creation amongst stakeholders and organisations in service ecosystems (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004a; Payne et al 2008; Merz et al 2009; Spohrer et al 2008; McColl Kennedy et al 2009; Andreu et al 2010). In addition to this, they also focus on understanding customers’ service consumption practices living in the context of their everyday lives (Korkman 2006; Ravald 2010; Gummerus 2011).

This has challenged the traditional view of service encounters as dyadic exchange interactions between service providers and service users and the consumer as a passive receiver and selector of value produced by firms (Firat et al 1995; Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2006, 2008). On one level it has been argued that service encounters are tied to service usage which is essentially practical. Consequently, in acknowledging the practical nature of service encounters, it is important to understand not only the rational cognitive nature of value but also the pragmatic nature of decisions and actions in ordinary service consumption situations. On a second level it has been noted that service encounters are embedded within a wider context than the exchange encounter itself (Fisk 2008; Anderson et al 2011). Services in modern economies can be regarded as core components of the social world in which consumers live (Anderson et al 2011). Thus, service situations take place in contexts which are both social and material where active consumers develop practices that make these situations components of their lives (Shove and Araujo 2010). As a result, how a service is used and valued will fluctuate with the life challenges of the consumer, which may vary from routine to unpredictable and will be embedded within the wider patterns of social and societal
relationships through which individuals live their lives (Korkman 2006; Edvardsson et al 2011).

Understanding value creation at service encounters in socio-cultural systems (with embedded actions) supports the perspective of seeing consumers not only as a judges or co-producers of a service in relationships between service users and service providers, but as a human beings and practitioners of their life, with all the complexity that this entails. Predominantly, marketing and service research positions the mind as in a superior place, whereas action is seen as an organ for the implementation of ideas (Korkman 2006). Certainly, it is important for the development of services to make use of opportunities to understand the consumer in a practical way consuming at service encounters (i.e. studying, working-out, drinking, eating or gossiping) rather than mainly relying on their abstract opinions through the voice of the consumer (i.e. Griffin and Hauser 1983; Johne 1994). Consequently, it makes sense to the development of services to understand ordinary practices carried on at service encounters in a service context since it appears that many innovations are more less adaptations and minor modifications to already existing everyday life practices which are, due to their the extent to which they are embedded in consumers’ life, difficult to question and reinvent (Korkman 2006).

The present thesis aims to contribute to the development of this perspective, both by clarifying some of its theoretical implications and adding novel empirical data of an in-depth kind. As will be explained in the next chapter, it will elaborate a dynamic, contextual and practical understanding of the service encounter with a focus on practice as a framework for capturing a holistic understanding of the service encounter that goes beyond the cognitivist approach by locating thought and action within cultural, institutional and historical contexts (Vygotsky 1978; Wertsch 1998; Engeström 2001).
Underpinning service encounters with theories of practice is relevant for the field of service marketing and pertinent because of its strong focus on what participants do as well as what they think. It also locates their experience of services in relation to their other life-concerns and constraints. This focus on the pragmatic and contextual nature of actual encounters will not only elaborate on a developing conceptual area but also make it possible to draw practical lessons for use in service development, service enhancement and service design. In summary, introducing theories of practice for understanding value creation during service encounters allows the formation of four research objectives.

- First, to demonstrate a gap in the traditional service marketing literature relating to the neglect of social and contextual factors within service encounters and to identify their potential role in structuring the ways in which value is created for participants. By pointing to the neglect of such contextual factors, it is also shown that there has been a tendency for over-reliance on the role of individual decisions taken in isolation which may limit the full understanding of service encounters, especially in non-standard settings.

- Second, having shown the neglect of social and contextual factors, the research will collect data from two case study service encounters to demonstrate the role played by such factors in creating value within these encounters. In particular it will seek to demonstrate that such factors are integral to service encounters and are necessary to a complete understanding of their accomplishment. To contribute to this field it will also be necessary to provide a systematic conceptualisation of these factors, as covered in the following objective.

- Third, the study will seek to demonstrate that an understanding of ‘practice’ – what participants actually do within an encounter and the material, social and psychological
resources they deploy within it – provides one means of understanding service encounters. Following from this will be an attempt to explicitly conceptualise the ways in which practices within the encounter reflect social and contextual setting within which the encounter is performed.

- Finally, to construct a model of value creation within the service encounter which incorporates contextual factors as an integral component, thereby addressing the gap identified in the literature, contributing to knowledge in this emerging area, and providing a tentative model that can be used to develop further research. In this way the study will contribute to an emerging but under-researched conception of service encounters and value creation which goes beyond merely recognising the active and creative role played by participants to include an understanding of how such activity can be located within wider structures of society through which material and intellectual resources and opportunities are enabled or constrained.

To achieve these objectives, the research will focus empirically on high customer participation services. In this kind of service, consumer activeness is an essential element of the service and unless consumers participate actively in the service experience, they are unlikely to receive the full potential value of the service (Bitner et al 1997). This is mainly noticeable for services such as personal fitness and education businesses where the core offering can be described as a transformation (Khalifa 2009). In these situations the significance of practice – as something engaged in by the consumer and provider – is critical to the encounter and therefore provides a critical case for the examination of this approach on the grounds that if practice cannot be shown to be vital to these encounters, it is unlikely to be significant for less participatory services. The empirical research of these contexts will be carried out in Barranquilla, Colombia. Contexts will be outlined briefly below.
Colombia has been the subject of a reformist programme aiming to improve fundamental rights in its social policy over the past two decades. These programmes intend to improve standards of education and health provision (Carbonari and Vargas 2009). However, in order to understand the Colombian context, it is essential to take into consideration the country’s severe historical, institutional problems created by the internal conflict and the country’s traditional fragmentation of power (Ocampo 2005; Yunis 2006). Accordingly, the country faces an institutional crisis characterised by extremely low levels of social capital and trust where society imposes very few behavioural constraints on its citizens and there is a low law breaking threshold (Thoumi 2002). This brings with it an abundance of antisocial conduct and the dominance of individual over collective rationality (Gómez-Buendía 1999; Yunis 2006). Not surprisingly, Colombia is a country where success is individual not collective and which is characterised by “individual creativity and social indiscipline” (Gómez-Buendía 1999: 20). These characteristics of Colombian social structures bring challenges and opportunities to the study of consumer participation in service encounters through service consumption practices.

The Higher Education (HE) context in Colombia (as in other countries) is under considerable economic and political pressure to become a system of mass higher education. This pressure has spawned new forms of managerial control to university life with a consequential shift of values (Barry et al 2001; Sosteric et al 1998). The omnipresent conviction of economic value as the foremost objective of higher education has brought disengagement and student consumerism into universities (Delucchi 2000; Delucchi and Korgen 2002). As a result, on the one hand, faculty members worry about ineffective student participation (Flacks and Thomas 1998) and are uncomfortable with the need to consider students as customers under

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1 Colombia’s recent history can only be understood if it is viewed as the conjunction of two dynamic systems that have existed side by side for many years. On the one hand, there is a relatively successful ‘formal’ economic, social and political system which is, nonetheless, subject to weaknesses and periodic crises much like those experienced by other Latin American or developing countries. On the other, there is a violent, even gang-controlled ‘informal’ system which has at times risen to a position of dominance in different segments of Colombia’s complex geography and social structure. (Ocampo 2005:116)
the premise that the “customer is always right” (Scott 1999). On the other hand, students expect high grades in return for paying for tuition and going to lectures (Delucchi and Korgen 2002). They seem to expect light entertainment and an easily accessible and serene learning experience (Edmundson 1997). In addition, the HE context in Colombia suffers from a scarce research tradition which distances it from recognised international educational standards (Jaramillo-Roldan 2013). These issues are likely to influence the ways value is created through routine service consumption practices during service encounters in higher education. This would need to reflect contextual influences from the policy-focused and demographic through to the relationships and identities of consumers and suppliers.

Fitness clubs or exercising practices, such as taerobics, have been traditionally considered as body projects for the construction of self-identity (Giddens 1991). More recently, Crossley (2006) stated that fitness practices go along with a fitness career, which includes fitness-practice friends, learning experiences and a transformed sense of self of individuals who regularly exercise. Furthermore, a taerobics studio can also be considered as a ‘third place’, a place to socialise other than the workplace or home (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982). These places are claimed to provide customers with group cohesion and enhanced well-being and to display customers’ voluntary performance behaviour patterns (Rossenbaum 2006), which are key to effective service consumption practice and value creation. Here again, it seems key to take into consideration the complex social context and the way in which this influences and is influenced by the life-practices of consumers and suppliers in order to explain the nature of service encounters.

Consequently, this thesis aims to contribute to service marketing literature in in the following ways. First of all, it will elaborate on how value creation during service encounters can be conceptualised through a practice perspective, thereby adding to an area of the discipline that
is attracting attention but is currently still in a process of development. Second, it will apply this perspective to areas of growing social and economic interest: high customer participation services that entail a transformational consumer effort. This will provide useful empirical data on an under-researched area and allow the practice perspective to be evaluated as a conceptual tool. Finally, it will throw light on how the practice perspective can yield research results with practical implications for the conduct of service encounters.

This thesis is structured and organised into six chapters. With the exception of this introductory chapter and the concluding chapter, each chapter begins with an introduction and concludes with a chapter summary. The introductory section of each chapter outlines the purpose of the chapter, the areas it addresses and what the chapter aims to achieve. The chapter summary highlights key issues covered and sets the scene for the following chapter.

Chapter one introduces the research project. It focuses on highlighting the research gap and the objectives, the context and contribution of the study. Chapter two reflects on academic contributions that are considered to be the most significant in the study of service encounters and value creation in the literature of service marketing and management. The chapter also introduces the theories of practice as a perspective to explore service consumption during service encounters.

Chapter two focuses firstly on service consumption during service encounters and reviews the current frameworks of analysis of service encounters used in service marketing and management. Different perspectives to value creation found in marketing research literature are then discussed introducing five different perspectives: the trade-off cognitive perspective, the experiential perspective, the resource-based perspective, the practice-theoretical perspective and the customer-dominant logic perspective. The chapter then goes on to focus on theories of practice underpinning service consumption while acknowledging five key
components for an effective theory of practice: practices are contextual, practices are performances, practices are purposeful, practices are dependent on collective practical understanding and practices are dynamic arrangements. The chapter concludes by developing the theories of practice perspective to the study of value creation at service encounters (the service encounter as a practical system) introducing the elements and a set of themes based on the overall discussions of the literature in the chapter.

Chapter three outlines the empirical research process. The chapter develops a research design to investigate value creation practices during service encounters through service consumption according to what is suggested in the literature review. The study adopts a qualitative methodology via a market-oriented ethnography (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994) for exploring service consumption practices during service encounters. Within this ethnographic framework it was considered appropriate to adopt a case study design. This approach used participant observation, non-participant observation, ethnographical interviews and field notes as data collection techniques. Subsequently, the chapter considers research quality issues such as data triangulation, validity and reliability. Finally the chapter examines data analysis strategies.

Chapters four and five present the empirical result of the research project. The main empirical research material is organised around two case studies in services that are considered high customer participation services. These case studies are a fitness studio (taerobics practice) and a private university (postgraduate programme in business). The chapters highlight current practices, contextual relevance and context factors within service encounters and which affect the creation of value in both cases. Each case is given its own separate chapter.
Finally, Chapter six concludes key findings of the thesis responding to the research objectives, proposes the theoretical and managerial contributions of the thesis, outlines directions for further research and highlights the limitations of the study.
CHAPTER 2 – VALUE CREATION DURING SERVICE ENCOUNTERS: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Recent developments in marketing indicate the need for a more holistic understanding of service encounters and the value created by consumers on these encounters. This has not yet been empirically fleshed out extensively in research studies to date. To address this, the chapter begins by outlining the dominant approaches to the study of service encounters and value creation exposing the grounds on which this holistic critique is based. Subsequently, the chapter identifies and establishes the most suitable of these value creation approaches in terms of the ability to recognise established principles but also treat service encounters in a more comprehensive and holistic manner. Finally, the chapter confirms that the theories of practice perspective provide a viable framework with which to holistically explore service encounters in an empirical setting. The focus of this chapter will be on establishing the key principles that drive the thesis research. Detailed underpinning assumptions will be covered in footnotes so as not to disrupt the flow of the core argument.

Traditionally, in service marketing and management literature value creation during service encounters has been studied through two contrasting perspectives of consumer behaviour. On the one hand, several studies acknowledge consumers as rational decision-makers and passive receivers of value through dyadic exchanges of services (Solomon et al 1985; Carlzon 1987; Zeithaml 1988); on the other hand, critics of the latter view underestimate the rationality of consumers’ individual decision-making processes elaborating rather on the experiential aspects of consumption during these encounters (Arnould and Price 1993; Price et al 1995b). These contrasting perspectives have been theoretically framed by theatrical metaphors (Grove
and Fisk 1983); or service-production frameworks (Langeard et al 1981) and underpinned by symbolic interactionism\(^1\) (Charon 1995) and role theory\(^2\) (Solomon et al. 1985). It will be suggested that a major weakness of these traditional standpoints is placing too much emphasis on consumers engaged in a process of abstract thinking rather practical action (Korkman 2006).

Recent developments in services marketing suggest the active role of consumers in value creation in service contexts (Vargo and Lusch 2008; Vargo et al 2008, Edvardsson et al 2011). Consequently, further understanding of service encounters as dynamic and evolutionary ecosystems (Chesbrough and Spohrer 2006; Spohrer et al 2008) coupled with an understanding of consumption practices by consumers living their everyday lives (Korkman 2006; Gummerus 2011) would both comprise a valuable addition to a field that is still developing its empirical base. Literature in service marketing and management has given relatively little attention to the service encounter as a process of value creation in everyday life within social contexts, often ignoring the range of processes involved (from dyads to complex contexts and from interactions to routine practices).

Consequently, it is possible to enrich the discussion of value creation during service encounters through the understanding of ordinary service consumption practices within these encounters and their wider social context. This chapter is structured as follows: it firstly provides an overview of the service encounter identifying the gap for a more holistic/contextual focus to its study; secondly, two service encounter theoretical frameworks, the servuction model and the service theatre model, are outlined and critiqued; thirdly, five leading perspectives to value creation in marketing are reviewed, also highlighting the need for a more embracing understanding of this complex social process; fourthly, the chapter introduces theories of practices as a useful framework for analysing value creation within the
encounter and finally, the chapter concludes with the development of a theories of practice approach to the contextual analysis of value creation within service encounters.

**The Service Encounter**

The term service encounter has been widely used in service marketing research and has been traditionally defined as the length of time throughout which a consumer directly interacts with a service (Bitner and Hubbert 1994; Carlzon 1987; Czepiel et al 1985; Grönroos 1990; Grove et al 1998; Gummesson 2002; Normann 2002; Shostack 1985; Surprenant and Solomon 1987). This interaction is often portrayed as happening in a marketer-controlled environment (Fisk et al 2008). The “moment of truth”, as it is traditionally called, (Carlzon 1987; Normann 2002) encompasses all the different aspects of the service, such as service employees, physical facilities and other tangible elements, with which the customer interacts (Bitner 1990; Czepiel et al 1985) but which are usually controlled by the service provider.

Interpersonal interaction between consumers and service firms during service encounters has been the focus of service marketing research because most services involve at least one human being interacting with another (Czepiel 1990; Shostack 1985). As a result, service encounters have been considered as people-intensive (Normann 2002) and social occasions where participants (consumer and service provider) can negotiate and cultivate the transformation of their encounters into an exchange relationship (Czepiel 1990, Suprenant and Solomon 1987). Consequently in these episodes (Ravald and Grönroos 1996) consumers get an impression of the service delivered by an organisation through first-hand experience, validating and judging the services provided to them. However, this has been a view of the service provider delivering a service with embedded value without taking into consideration the active role of consumers in value creation (Vargo and Lusch 2004; 2006; 2008). Indeed, some service scholars (Czepiel, 1990; Gabbott and Hogg 1998; Lovelock and Writz, 2007)
have taken an even narrower view, proposing that the service encounter is merely a dyadic interaction between a service provider and a service user. This approach therefore ignores situations where other stakeholders, (e.g. competition, trade unions, labour unions, participants’ families) participate in value creation (Gummesson 2006b; Gummesson 2008; Gummesson et al 2010) and the fact that service encounters often occur in the presence of various types of consumers and service providers who share the servicescape (Bitner 1992) and its elements (i.e. physical materials) with each other.

In summary, to distinguish the service encounter from any other type of human exchange, Czepiel et al (1982) introduced a set of assumptions concerning the distinctive character of service encounters. These assumptions are: (1) service encounters are purposeful and are work; (2) prior acquaintance is not required; (3) service encounters are limited in scope; (4) task-related information exchange dominates; (5) client and provider roles are well defined and (6) a temporary status differentiation occurs. However, this view of service encounters fails to acknowledge the complex practical nature of service usage and the contextual nature of service encounters embedded in consumers’ everyday life (Korkman 2006). The study of service encounters have been traditionally focused on human interaction without taking into consideration the socio-cultural contexts in which these human interactions are embedded (Vygotsky 1978; Engeström 2000; Korkman 2006; Shove et al 2012). For example, Czepiel et al (1985: x) posited that “to study the service encounter is to study the behaviour of human beings interacting”. As a result, the study of service encounters has focused on the evaluation of role performances of service interactions and exchanges where service users and service providers are assumed to have a pre-determined role to play (Grove and Fisk 1983; Solomon et al 1985). Service encounters are just related to discrete choices, time and evaluations rather than to ongoing consumption practices involving physical materials, skills, subject positions
and competencies developed through a previous understanding of using service encounters and other life experiences and constraints.

This narrow focus is also apparent in discussions of the attributes or characteristics that make a good service encounter. Research on service marketing has frequently addressed specific characteristics of the encounter such as the purpose of the encounter (Bitner et al 1994; Gutek et al 2000), the service environment (Price et al 1995b; Bitner et al 2000; Meuter et al 2000), consumer participation in value creation (Zeithaml et al 2006) and interactive quality (Lehtinen and Lehtinen 1991; Gummesson 1991; Chandon et al 1997). However, these studies have been more concerned about evaluating consumer satisfaction and its impact on overall service quality at a managerial level (Berry et al 1990; Bitner et al 1990; Bitner and Hubbert 1994; Iacobucci and Ostrom 1993; Meuter et al 2000; Parasuraman et al 1988) rather than understanding the social processes involved in the construction of value in these spaces (Engeström 1994; Warmington and Leadbetter 2010; Edvardsson et al. 2010; Skålén and Hackley 2011; Edvardsson et al. 2012). Furthermore, shifting the focus in service encounter research from satisfaction and/or service quality to well-being and/or quality of life has been considered a promising research avenue (Giraldo 2014; Bitner and Wang 2014).

Thus, the evaluations of the service encounter appear to be mainly influenced by economic premises where the maximisation of benefit is the central component of an exchange practice in which participants generally hunt to make the most of the returns and diminish the costs of transactions (Homans 1961). However, it can be suggested that service encounters, apart from being social occasions for economic exchange that allow strangers to interact in the short run, are also social occasions to negotiate relationships (Czepiel 1990) and commitments among different, partially conflicting, parties (customer, server and service firm). For instance, Czepiel et al (1985) proposed that the service encounter can be assessed
from the perspective of the consumer, the perspective of the service provider and the perspective of the organisation who desire “good” service interactions, suggesting service encounters can be seen as transversal spaces for learning where “consumer’s expectations, past experiences and previous information about the service product are validated by first-hand experience” (Gabbott and Hogg 1998:61). This suggests that a more holistic approach to service encounters would enable researchers to capture the evolving nature of mental activities, bodily activities, materials, psychological and social constraints and actions within service consumption practices (Korkman 2006).

This would overcome the tendency of much research to place the creation of consumer value in the context of the consumer’s thought processes instead of the consumer’s actions, thereby avoiding a reductionist (dyadic instead of contextual), fragmented and non-proactive picture of value creation. One of the main intentions of this thesis is to present a novel approach to understanding service encounters by studying them as culturally, socio-historically situated and dynamic spaces for value creation through practice, moving away from the traditional economic assessment of dyadic exchanges.

A more contextual and practical perspective to understanding the dynamics of value creation during service encounters would mean service encounters are living dynamic activities (Shostack 1982; Shostack and Kingman-Brundage 1991) in their own right. As such they should be treated holistically (Normann and Ramirez 1993; Normann 2002; Gummesson 2010), which in turn gives a more realistic view of the consumer (Normann and Ramirez 1993; Normann and Ramirez 1994). It has been suggested that value creation during service encounters overlooks the naturally occurring behaviour of consumers going about their everyday lives which are largely influenced by the wider nature of the context (Vygotsky 1978; Reckwitz 2002a; Korkman 2006; Shove et al 2012). The following section will
establish the basis of this view by outlining and scrutinising two of the most popular frameworks of analysis for service encounters: the servuction framework (Langeard et al 1981) and the service theatre framework (Grove and Fisk 1983). Although both frameworks provide a relatively holistic picture of service consumption during the service encounter, they fail to show how service encounters are embedded in a certain social context (Tronvoll et al. 2011; Edvardsson et al 2012) that affects and is affected by service consumption activities. A more detailed overview of these frameworks can highlight this point to suggest why a broader framework would be of value.

**Frameworks of the Service Encounter: The Servuction and Theatrical Models**

The servuction system is a mainly structural framework which focuses on the various types of resources required for value creation within the consumer’s service consumption experience during service encounters. The servuction framework (Langeard et al 1981) is a system approach in which the service is delivered in real time to the consumer through his interaction with the firm’s personnel, the service environment and other consumers and which differentiates two service attributes: the outcome and the process (see figure 2.1 for a diagrammatic demonstration of the model). From a value creation standpoint, the servuction model classifies the resources needed for value co-creation and value co-production during direct interactions between the service user and the service provider (Grönroos 2012). These value creating resources are organised between what is visible and invisible to the consumer. The visible part of the model consists of the inanimate environment, the contact personnel and the different consumers, while the invisible part of the model consists of the invisible organisation and systems (Hoffmann and Bateson 2001). This framework describes explicitly the consumer’s role in the service process (Langeard et al 1981) and emphasises the need to
recognise the role of fellow consumers and their influence on the service experience of the main consumer (Grönroos 2012).

The key characteristic of the model is the introduction of the consumer as an integral entity in the interaction process, exploring consumer participation in service production and delivery, the provider’s ability to adjust to the customer’s needs and other customers’ influence on the performance. (Langeard et al 1981). Factors affecting the consumer’s willingness to participate in the process are time, control, effort, dependency, efficiency, human contact and risk - risk and effort being the most prominent attributes affecting customer participation (Langeard et al 1981). However, although the servuction framework regards consumer participation in value creation as co-production, it limits its focus exclusively to the encounter itself rather than considering it as an integral part of the consumer’s wider everyday lifeworlds (Heinonen et al, 2010). This leads to a tendency to assess consumers-service provider interactions normatively and in a restricted manner that ignores many of the
practical and contextual dynamics of value creation that ‘informally’ contribute to the maintenance of the process. In particular, it takes limited account of the experiences that the consumers bring to the encounter and the resource constraints (material, psychological and social) within which they have to operate and which can only be understood by introducing an awareness of the wider context of the encounter.

Some researchers attempt to recognise this more encompassing view of social interaction within service encounters via the theatrical perspective (Grove et al 1992; Grove et al 2000; Fisk et al 2014). Framing service as theatre (see figure 2.2) is a logical extension of human behaviour as drama found in “dramaturgy” (Grove et al 2000). Dramaturgy has its origins in the symbolic interactionism school of thought and covers social interaction in a theatrical context making the most of expressions and conceptions usually associated with dramatic productions (Grove and Fisk 1983). It recognises that organisations providing services offer a theatrical production framed and staged using various stage elements that can evoke cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses from consumers during service encounters (Fisk et al 2014).

Figure 2.2 The Service Theatre Framework. Source: Fisk et al (2008:26)
A major strength of the service theatre framework (Grove and Fisk 1983; Grove and Fisk 1992; Grove et al 2000 Fisk et al 2008; Fisk et al 2014) is that it describes service encounters using the familiar terms of a stage production: actors, audience, setting, front stage, backstage and a performance (Fisk et al 2008). The actors (service employees) work together to create the service for the audience (consumers), the setting (service environment) is where action or service performance unfolds. Front stage actions performed by service employees for the consumers generally depend on substantial support from backstage. Backstage is away from the audience’s assessment and it is the place where planning and execution of the service experience within service encounters occurs. The performance is the dynamic result of the interaction of the actors, audience and setting. Consequently, the framework has been used to show how consumers, employees, scripts and aspects of staging might be managed or improvised to develop the interpersonal elements of the service encounter (Tsiotsou and Writz 2011). The total performance is the dynamic result of the interaction of the actors, audience and setting, an outcome that is often permeated with emotional character (Fisk et al 2008) and can be unpredictable in its development. However, as with the servuction framework, the focus remains on the ‘performance’ which also restricts the context of the encounter to a specific situation, albeit one that has greater scope for actors to interpret their roles and engage with their audience and vice versa. There is, however, little explicit consideration of how scripts and roles are developed which, as with the servuction approach, demands consideration of wider contextual factors that participants bring with them to the encounter along with their respective resources.

Both approaches therefore largely ignore the wider and macro-level nature of service encounters within the context of consumers’ broader social relationships and settings, such as their history, community structures, power imbalances and changing dynamics. Also, despite emphasising the role of the consumer, researchers using these frameworks have been more
interested in understanding interactive service exchanges during service encounters from a provider-centric logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2006, 2008), rather than understanding them from a pragmatic and contextual logic acknowledging the role of society in value creation (Cova 1999; Giraldo et al 2010; Edvardsson et al 2012).

In summary, there is a recurrent weakness found in this literature which is a restricted understanding of the integration of elements at service encounters by service users and service providers which sees them effectively as closed systems. Relatively little attention has been given to the service encounter as complete social process of value creation that extends further than a consumer-supplier encounter into a context of problem-solvers meeting together and actively involved in dynamic, complex and adaptive networks shaped by resources that are determined largely outside the encounter itself. This has minimised the contextual and developmental nature of the service encounter (Giraldo et al 2010) that acknowledges the pervasiveness of service in human life (Fisk 2008; Anderson et al 2011) and its repercussions on consumer well-being (Rossenbaum et al 2012; Anderson et al 2013) in society.

**Perspectives of Value Creation in Marketing Research**

This gap can also be noted in approaches to the idea of value creation itself (within such encounters) although a movement to a more holistic approach is also emerging here. It is possible to identify five perspectives to value creation in the field of marketing: the trade-off perspective (Zeithaml 1988; Ravald and Grönroos 1996; Woodruff 1997; Sheth et al 1991b), the experiential perspective (Holbrook and Hirschmann 1982; Holbrook 1998), the resource-based perspective (Ramirez 1999; Normann 2001, Vargo and Lusch 2004), the practice-theoretical perspective (Korkman 2006, Skålen 2010) and the consumer logic perspective (Heinonen et al 2010; Gummerus, 2011).
First, the trade-off perspective to consumer value sees the consumer as a rational information-processing human being and is the approach that dominates the marketing field. This approach to consumer value attempts to show values as something that appears inside the consumer’s heads (Thaler 1985) and which tends to use the concept of perception (Zeithaml 1988) as an explanation of how value manifests itself for the consumer. The idea of the consumer as a rational choice maker who is capable of assessing the value of a product just by these principles is problematic since consumers experiences are also loaded with hedonistic (Holbrook and Hirschmann 1982) and symbolic features (Belk et al 1989). Thus the trade-off perspective for value is useful if researchers are looking for what consumers think about a certain product, service, or relationship. The analysis being focused on the consumer as a judge means little attention is given to how and why consumers engage by integrating their resources in value creation processes and ordinary service consumption practices.

Second, the experiential perspective to consumer value can be seen as a reaction to the traditional trade-off view of value creation discussed above. This perspective to value creation views consumers as both rational and emotional human beings who are also pleasure-seeking (Caru and Cova 2003): emotional and rational human beings that seem to be searching for hedonistic and non-functional features in consumption experiences, in particular if they are connected to symbolic and hedonistic products (Belk et al 1988; Addis and Holbrook 2001). Although the experiential perspective offers a more vivid and first-hand view of what the consumer values compared to the trade-off perspective, it still retains an individualistic and subjectivist focus and does not take into consideration the social, historical and cultural context consumers are immersed in (Holt 1995; Engeström 2001; Korkman 2006). As such it is concerned with how consumers may express their subjective conceptions.
of value rather than recognising how these may be shaped by cultural socio-historical contexts (Pantzar 1997, 2000; Engeström 2001; Edvardsson et al 2011; Shove et al 2012).

Even though the experiential perspective to value assumes the active role of the consumer in value creation, more current perspectives provide a more elaborated understanding of consumer participation in value creation. Consequently, the resource-based perspective of consumer value proposes a “market with” rather than a “market to” approach to value creation (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2006, 2008) focusing on consumer production as being at the heart of value creation (Normann and Ramirez 1993; Constantin and Lusch 1994; Ramirez 1999; Vargo and Lusch 2004). This perspective gives the consumer a productive and active role during service consumption that matches with present-day reality. Nevertheless, this approach has been criticised for being mechanistic (Payne and Holt 2001) and service provider dominant (Heinonen et al 2010).

For example, some authors have noticed that in order to understand consumer production in service consumption, it is necessary to take a look into consumers’ value creation chains (Ravald and Grönroos 1996, 2009; Storbacka and Lehtinen 2009). However, the idea of value being created by actions in a linear process as a chain of inputs-outputs (Porter 1985) has been challenged by authors in the service management and marketing field (Normann and Ramirez 1993, 1994; Korkman 2006; Maglio et al 2009; Storbacka et al 2009) for not explaining the complexity and dynamism of multiple players co-producing value in a value creation system (Normann and Ramirez 1993, 1994). The resource-based perspective to consumer value creation is heavily influenced by the Service-Dominant Logic for Marketing (SD-L) that suggest that value co-creation is the consequence of a network of social and economic actors working together (Lusch and Vargo, 2006, 2011). Edvardsson et al, (2011) suggest that S-D logic outperforms traditional logics for value creation that suggest value as
embedded in products and subjectively assessed. However S-D logic’s has been challenged by different authors for its legitimacy (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 2009; Campbell et al 2013) and lack of empirical studies. Finally, the resource-based perspective for value creation has the limitation of assuming that that every single work-like task that consumers perform is valuable for them and that value creation processes are always active and that value creation is procedural and formal without relating to informal consumption practices (Dourish 2001; Korkman 2006; Schau et al 2009).viii

In contrast, the consumer logic perspective to value creation focuses on studying and understanding the life of consumers at a very deep level (Heinonen et al, 2010). The consumer logic attempts to position the consumer as the locus of study attempting to find and investigate both the invisible and intangible processes and practices that create value for them (Heinonen et al 2010; Voima et al 2010). The main objective of this approach is to move away from the consumer’s interaction with the service to the bigger picture of consumers integrating services to support their independently arranged practices within their own lifeworlds (Gummerus, 2011). This calls for research beyond the visible interactions between consumers and companies to explore other related and unrelated activities to the service which are difficult for the provider to observe but are important for consumer value formation processes (Holtinnen 2010; Mickelsson 2013). This extends the temporal scope even further, from exchange and use to accumulated experiences in the customer’s life and ecosystem. This comes closer to recognising the significance of the wider social context within this process.ix

This can be seen to be complimented by a practice perspective to value creation (Korkman 2006; Holttinen, 2010). This perspective sees consumer value as embedded in the practices of the consumer, placing emphasis in the practice as the unit of analysis (Warde 2005; Korkman
 Consequently, value emerges in the whole system of practice as a dynamic and an ever-changing constellation of different elements (Engerström 2000; Warde 2005; Randles and Warde 2006; Korkman, 2006; Echeverri and Skålen 2011). This has been seen as a way to expand our understanding of the social characteristics of consumption and their repercussions in how and why consumers create value through consumption (Holt 1995; Kjellberg 2008; Røpke, 2009). The practice perspective to consumer value creation fleshes out the study of the dynamics of how value emerges in consumers’ everyday life practices. This perspective’s analysis of value creation views consumer value as embedded in consumers’ everyday life activities (Korkman 2006; Korkman et al 2010; Heinnonen 2010; Shove et al 2012).

Thus, although there is no universal agreement on or understanding of the concept of value in the field of service management and marketing, recent developments support the need (established earlier) for a more embracing and comprehensive understanding of the service encounter and the value it creates. The service encounter could be considered as a series of complex social processes that consumers’ carry out while consuming in their everyday lifeworlds which are key to consumer value formation (Heinonen et al 2010, 2013; Voima et al 2010). In particular, the recognition that value is “formed in a dynamic way in the practices of the consumer” (Korkman 2006:3) can be observed in consumers’ ordinary service consumption practices as part of their everyday lifeworld. This suggests that theories of practice may be one way to usefully frame the empirical investigation of this area and provide a more in-depth approach that has so far been largely conceptual. Having outlined the potential conceptual relevance of theories of practice to this project, the next section will discuss this in more detail.
Theories of Practice

According to theories of practice, value creation at service encounters through service consumption, presents a different process from the way it has been studied previously in service management and marketing. This approach could be distinguished as a non-individualistic, non-subjectivist, contextual posture for value creation. It proposes that not only what consumers feel, think and decide to do but also the roles they play and take on are not decided by consumers or contexts themselves, but more specifically by an interconnected system of interaction which consists of both human (consumer-communities) and non-human (mediators, materials) elements. If this is to serve as a framework for empirical investigation it is first necessary to outline the basic principles of practice theory and to locate these within the cultural theory context from which they arise.

In this thesis reference will be made to the idea of ‘theories of practice’. This term requires some clarification as it refers to both a complex, and sometimes contradictory, body of work, and to a use of the term ‘theory’ that is different from that usually encountered in positivistic social research. The first issue will be dealt with at length below, identifying the main strands of thinking in this area, the differences between them, and the approach preferred by this researcher. The second point will be discussed here. The normal positivist use of the term ‘theory’ is to represent a body of abstract knowledge within a specific domain that has been (originally) generated inductively and then tested deductively to establish its status as scientific ‘truth’. Progress in science is made by taking these ‘laws’ and proposing hypothetical extension of them that can be tested to confirm or refute their validity. As such ‘theory’ is taken to be a robust abstract description of a (complex) reality and the starting point for further inquiry. However, within the context of ‘theories of practice’ the meaning is subtly different. Although elements of practice are subject to theorising by researchers
(usually inductively rather than deductively), the real sense of the term is as part of the practice itself. Thus, all individuals engage in practices (activities) and all also ‘theorise’ about these, i.e., they use their cognitive powers and symbolic resources to make sense of the practices in which they engage. As such ‘theories of practice’ are not simply something that is created (abstractly) by an objective detached researcher but are part of the ways in which people conduct their social lives. In fact, without individuals having the ability to ‘theorise’ their practices, social life as we know it would be inconceivable. Therefore when the term is used in this these it will carry this dual meaning (where appropriate it will be made clear if one particular usage is preferred) of being both a conceptual model used by the researcher and an aspect of the way in which respondents make sense of their activities. In the latter respect, it is probably more appropriate to regard this usage as representing what is conventionally understood as a ‘framework’ rather than a theory: it represents a set of concepts that allow an empirical phenomenon (i.e., practice) to be described and understood in a systematic manner but does not form part of an integrated body of scientific laws that inform the development of research to test hypothetical relationships derived deductively from them.

Theories of practice originate from the work of 1980’s social theory scholars such as Giddens, Bourdieu, De Certeau and Schatzki. They share the common central issue of challenging the tendency of other traditions to describe the world in terms of dualisms between agency/structure, body/mind and social/material (Engeström 1999, 2000; Reckwitz 2002a; Nicolini 2012; Shove et al 2012). This approach can be distinguished from other forms of cultural/social theory that take a narrower perspective – and are outlined in the accompanying end note”. This can be seen as a relevant response to the literature on service encounters outlined above which also presents this dualistic approach, tending to adopt either
a structural orientation (e.g. based on roles and rules) or an approach which sees the encounter as determined by individual agency of a rational and calculative kind.

Theories of practice focus on the practical construction of life in a world of consumers and their contexts (Holttinen 2010; Shove et al 2012) where human (subjects, communities) and non-humans (mediators, tools) exist as separate elements (Korkman 2006). For that reason, the practice per se, not the consumer, comes first and becomes the unit of analysis, because “it is only once we appreciate the set of practices involved in a scene of action that we can ask what sort of agency and “actor-ship” is made under these specific conditions” (Nicolini 2012:7). Thus, theories of practice posit practices as ways of doing things which are essentially affected by contextual aspects of reality. Furthermore, theories of practice basically give a status to the different elements engaged in the practice, challenging the conception of reality as only perceptions or experiences (Holbrook and Hirschmann 1986; Holbrook 1998a). Reality in theories of practice consists of the interconnection of numerous aspects such as mental activities, bodily activities, materials and actions (Reckwitz 2002a; Shove and Pantzar 2005; Korkman 2006; Shove et al 2012). Consequently, practice approaches steer away from seeing consumers as either rational decision makers (homo economicus) or norm-following, role-performing individuals (homo sociologicus) preoccupied with the presentation of self (homo aestheticus) (Randles and Warde, 2006: 228). Instead they see the consumer as a practitioner, a body/mind that carries out social practices (homo practicus) (Reckwitz 2002a).Indeed, Nicolini (2012:9) asserts “The great promise of the practice lens is that of explaining social phenomena in a processual way without losing touch with the mundane activities of everyday life and the concrete and material nature of the activities with which human beings are involved”.

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Theories of practice can be considered as a family of projects that strive to provide a deeper description of everyday life through focusing on a practice as the main unit of analysis. Consequently, despite the fact that practice theories share main foundational assumptions there is no a unified practice approach (Schatzky 2001:2). Indeed, while some authors give a very dominant role to material aspects of the practice (Vygotsky 1978; Engeström 2000; Reckwitz 2002; Korkman 2006; Shove and Araujo 2010; Shove et al 2012), some others lean more toward the social rather than the material (De Certeau 1984; Bordieu 1984; Giddens 1984). Other authors give more weight to the use of language in discursive practices (Foucault 1980; Gubrium and Holstein 2000), while still others pay more attention to tradition and learning in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991 in Nicolini 2012). Although some authors consider this fragmentation as problematic with many apparent formulations (Schatzky 2001; Holtinnen 2010), there is an opportunity to use these approaches in combination because all theories of practice are connected by similar assumptions (Nicolini 2012). Thus, the concept of practice can be seen to refer to contexts of both subjective and objective connected elements (Korkman 2006): practices are contexts where actions take place (Schatzki 1996; Schatzki 2001). They are practical, contextual, based on shared understanding and considered as dynamic constellations (Korkman 2006). A theories of practice approach would encourage a move away from traditional dominant modes of service marketing research since it proposes to combine the consumer, the context and the interactions among consumers as a single unit of analysis. It also avoids limited understanding of value creation as dominated by subjective judgments (Zeithaml 1998). In summary, it can be seen that there are five key components for an effective theory of practice: (1) Practices are contextual; (2) Practices are performances; (3) Practices are purposeful; (4) Practices are dependent on collective practical understandings; (5) Practices are dynamic arrangements. Each will be briefly discussed.
According to practice theories, context is pervasive: life is created in connection with a human being’s social, material and historical background. Latour (1991) asserts that social practices in their historical variability consist not only of human beings and their intersubjective relationships, but also simultaneously of non-human “actants”, (i.e., materials) that are needed and are considered as equal elements of a social practice. This view is supported by Nicolini (2012), which consider that practices with no things and no bodies involved are just inconceivable\(^\text{xii}\).

Practices as performances recognise that family, organisations and institutions are all kept alive through the recurring performance of material activities and to a large extent they only exist as long as they are performed (Nicolini 2012). A practice refers to a recurrent performance of actions using something (i.e. materials, competences, spaces) in a particular way.\(^\text{xiii}\)

Theories of practice focus on the significance of human interests in everything we do in our social life and that participation in this social life is often motive-oriented towards a “problem space” which is transformed or shaped into an outcome (Vygotsky 1978; Werscht 1998; Engeström 1987, 1999; Kaptelinin and Nardi 2006). Furthermore, it is important to note that practices may involve many interests (Kaptelinin and Nardi 2006) in which subjects and communities may address different and potentially conflicting goals and motives, recognising the importance of power, conflict and politics as constitutive elements of social reality (Nicolini 2012).\(^\text{xiv}\)

Practice theories recognise the dependency of the practice on collective and historical understanding (knowledge): a way of knowing shared with others, acquired through practical learning inscribed in materials, embodied interaction with the world and only partially articulated through discourse (Nicolini 2012). Consequently, practices are social spaces in
which materials and practitioners are integrated through a culturally and historically shared way of doing (Schatzky 2012).\textsuperscript{xv}

Finally, practices are dynamic arrangements of elements that are actively reproduced and reconfigured through the acts of everyday life. Furthermore, new practices involve novel integrations of new or existing elements which are not only interdependent but also shape each over time (Shove et al 2012).\textsuperscript{xvi}

It can thus be seen that these components overlap with the issues identified by traditional theories of service encounters (purposefulness, situatedness, theatricality) but also extend and integrate these into a single perspective rather than treating them as a single defining principle of the encounter. Hence, this perspective extends and adds new depth to this area.

The theories of practice standpoint allows us to understand service consumption during service encounters as practical, dynamic and contextual, proposing value creation as inherent in the practices of everyday life (Korkman 2006). With this view, subjects become practitioners in their different contexts of everyday life activities. Consequently the analysis centres in the practice where practitioners are just one element embedded and sometimes (re)invented in the context of a social practice he is engaged in. This requires an understanding of the practical knowledge agents bring to their consumption practices at service encounters –which will be most clearly manifested in high customer participation settings. In brief, the position taken in this research focuses on the practical construction of encounters where both human beings and non-human entities exist as separate elements. The practice is composed by subjects and their contexts with embedded meanings which are symbolised in practical terms (Holt 1995) and which give direction to the practice and are shaped by it (Holtinnen 2010; Shove et al 2012). These collective practices, in which individuals and communities engage, are significantly dependent on the historical evolution
of the elements within, the historical evolution of the practice per se and the contextual patterns where actions are carried out. Having established the potential relevance of this theoretical orientation, it is now possible to conclude by summarising the implications of this position for the research.

**Conclusion: The Service Encounter as a Practical System**

This section develops the theories of practice approach to the study of value creation at service encounters based on the discussions above. First the different elements involved in service encounters and a definition of the service encounter from the theories of practice perspective are presented. Second, a set of themes for the service encounter according to the theories of practice perspective are discussed. This frame of the service encounter as a practical system is used in Chapter four and five to show the description of the findings in a set of three different service encounters dimensions (facilitating, performing, virtual) in the context of high customer participation services in Colombia.

**Elements of the Service Encounter as a Practical System**

As it was discussed previously, practice theories are a fragmented body of theories that include both similarities and dissimilarities as to the main elements that are part of it and the different roles these elements. This thesis uses a view of practice theories that emphasise the integration of physical materials (Vygotsky, 1978; Engeström 2000; Reckwitz 2002; Schatzky 2002; Shove and Pantzar 2005; Shove et al 2012) over discourses (Foucault 1980; Gubrium and Holstein 2000), utilising activity theory (Vygotsky 1978; Engeström 2000) and treating practices as situated and embodied forms of doing (Engeström 2000). The elements of the service encounter which guide the description of service encounters and the analysis of value creation in this thesis are introduced subsequently. These elements are:
- **Practitioner**: usually the individual who carries on the practice. In other words, the one who performs the action, the doer. Usually the subject is an individual, but sometimes could be a group, where, for example, it acts in concert towards a common goal (Marken 2006). An activity analysis would also identify whether there are differing standpoints in relation to different individual or collective practitioners.

- **Physical Materials**: Physical Materials (tools) here refer to different elements which are integrated by the subjects in the process of value creation during service encounters. Material tools can be anything employed in the reproduction of the practice and they could be very concrete material things such as a computer, a pair of dumbbells, etc., to less material mediators such as a rule book, discourses, routines, procedures, or models. Physical tools are utilised to handle or manage objects, while conceptual tools are utilised to influence behaviours in different ways (Marken 2006). Material tools play a central role in the reproduction of the practice, since they may facilitate or restrain activity shaping the way human beings act and think (Mwanza 2001).

- **Cultural Competences and Understandings**: Subjects use their know-how, background knowledge and skills, or practical consciousness (Giddens 1984) to reproduce the practices they are taken part in (e.g., exercising, studying). Cultural competences and understandings refers to multiple forms of shared understandings and practical knowledgeability to perform actions. While cultural competences can be described as more explicit and formally acquired knowledge (i.e. formal training, formal education, concepts), cultural understandings mean more symbolic, tacit and less concrete knowledge, that influences the way subjects carry on the practice in a pragmatic sense (i.e. rules of thumb, myths, stories, mental activities, beliefs, tastes,
values). They also refer to the meanings associated with the practice which can be embedded in the practice or act as an independent element.

- **Social Communities:** These are networks or groups in which subjects take part; in short, the stakeholders in the encounter. Social communities pertain to the actors and multiple individuals or subgroups, who share the motive and a set of social meanings. These social communities also have a division of labour as the activity is progressing: roles are usually divided and distributed horizontally while status is divided and distributed vertically. However, it must be recognised that communities will almost always spread beyond the boundaries of a specific service encounter (in time and space) and will influence the ways in which multiple resources are deployed within it.

- **Physical Servicescape:** Even though the physical space might be considered as a tool for the subjects, in the case of service encounters it is treated as a separate element since it empowers or constraints subject actions. In a sense this can refer to the ‘props’ that are involved in the performance of the encounter as well as the physical environment which may constrain or enable how specific activities are performed. This may be a deliberate structuring of the servicescape to achieve a given outcome or may be the result of accidental or non-controllable conditions which have to be taken as given (e.g., when using a hired room where the lease does not allow alterations).

- **Power:** Power mediates as a positive and negative (productive and destructive) force residing in practices, situated among practitioners and other elements of the service encounter as a regulator of service relationships (Skålen 2010). Power relationships influence the way subjects make sense of their roles and use asymmetrical distributed resources in service co-production activities at service encounters. Some service encounters are either exploitative or unethical, where any of the subjects (service user, service provider) seek to benefit by taking advantage of the other who seems more
vulnerable (Sheth and Sisodia 2006). Power divides labour and allocates responsibilities, changing the labour roles of the subjects as they perform, also restraining and reasserting action (Blackler 1993). Here power will be considered as it is manifested in encounters in terms of the advantages and constraints that appear to influence the understandings of what can be achieved by different parties.

- **Motives (Ends-Solution):** Motive individually generates the practice and determines the goals which generate actions. Motives can be seen as individual properties that are brought to an encounter and drive conduct, or can be treated as an emergent property that is redefined or shaped in the process of an encounter and influenced by collective experiences or expectations of outcomes.

- **Doings:** Actions and doings are necessary to integrate the different elements of the practice. The service encounter is a mere potential unless the elements are put into action by subjects having an effect upon one another. Practices “come alive” as subjects exercise their power (Warmington and Leadbetter 2010) and get integrated with the other elements mentioned before. Doings are subject to improvement as the practice reconfigures over time and are driven by meanings and motives that evolve, as they are not static but constantly moving.

Consequently, the researcher has defined service encounters in this research as:

> “Actions of offering, negotiating and using which are influenced by physical materials, cultural competences and understandings, motives and social communities in a physical servicescape. Physical materials and other resources are integrated by practitioners doing something with the intention of benefitting someone (provider, or user, or both), in a specific socio-historical context”.
More specifically this translates into an approach to the service encounters that can be summarised as follows: (1) Service encounters are resource integrator activities; (2) Service encounters are multi-practice; (3) Service encounters are mediated and solution-oriented; (4) Service encounters are multi-voiced negotiations; and (5) Service encounters are transformational. This approach will be developed subsequently.

**Service Encounters are Resource Integrator Activities**

Service encounters can be studied as practical constellations of resources that are integrated through subjects’ actions. Consequently, value creation at service encounters from the theories of practice point of view is embedded in the whole system of the activity (Dourish, 2001) as a dynamic, ever-changing constellation of different elements which are not subordinated to each other but are rather arranged into a totality. As a result, action in service encounters emerges as an amalgamation of subjects (i.e. service employees – service users), physical materials (i.e. equipment, procedures, know-how), cultural images and competences (i.e. routines, myths, beliefs), motives (e.g. doing something for the benefit of others), power (i.e. position, status), physical servicescapes (i.e. classrooms, dojos, internet web pages) and social communities (i.e. stakeholders) embedded in a socio-historical context. With this approach it is only possible to understand service encounters as a totality in which elements are interdependent and mutually shaping each through everyday life activities.

**Service Encounters are Multi-Practice**

The concept of practice refers to “ways of doing” rather than just “ways of thinking”. Indeed, service encounters are more than disembodied cognitive acts (i.e. decision making) or emotional acts (i.e. reminiscences) but they are multiple doings (i.e. mental activities, bodily activities) defined by the situation in changing constellations (Dourish, 2001). Therefore, by
seeing service encounters as activities, there is an emphasis in the interlinking between objects, skills and tools, defining reality as emerging from “doings” in which these elements are orchestrated into specific forms of practices (Shove and Pantzar 2005). These performances for value creation in service encounters, which emerged from the interaction between the subject and the context, cannot be understood solely through individual behaviour decision making, or structural collective action.

Therefore, service encounters may range from subjective to objective practices. Some practices are highly objective and are the results of imitation without questioning and are widely shared, whereas others can be highly subjective where subjects can be creative and innovative and express their subjectivity from a practical point of view. Thus, new variations of practices can start when subjects start doing things and integrating resources in new subjective ways. However, other actors may or may not imitate these actions. Therefore not only are service encounters contextual, but participants having the power to make subjective decisions about changing the way of doings. However, this power is mediated and dependent on the social position of the participants during service encounters.

**Service Encounters are Mediated and Solution-Oriented**

Practice theorists argue that human action appears in collective tool-mediated and motive-oriented activity systems which actualise and replicate themselves by producing operations and actions (Engeström 2001). As a result, it could be argued that subject participation at service encounters is mediated by physical tools and communities (e.g. scripts, organisational norms, political behaviour, power and position) and is solution-oriented (e.g. a solution to a problem, doing something for the benefit of another party). Service encounters are therefore social spaces for collective activities with embedded interactions which can range from personal, intimate actions to public and institutional activities (Tuli et al 2007).
Finally, agent participation in value creation at service encounters is solution-oriented and characterised at all times, either implicitly or explicitly, by interpretation and sense making. The specific direction of the practice which is oriented and motivated can be seen as a hierarchy of longer-term formations that cannot be transformed into outcomes at once but through subdivided short-term processes. Thus, although action is initiated towards some solution (which may or may not be shared by all parties) the achievement of the initially desired solution cannot be guaranteed as the encounter unfolds. Value creation activities during service encounters are collectively shaped by a social community, where individuals may or may not share a common motive and which can be converted into different outcomes.

**Service Encounters are Multi-Voiced Negotiations**

Thus, the practitioners for service encounters are acting as problem-solvers, meeting together, with heterogeneous supplies and demands, actively looking to society in terms of dynamic, complex and adaptive networks such as the community, the media, friends and relatives, competitors and co-workers and so on (Alderson 1958; Gummesson 2006; Wooliscroft 2008). They offer, use and negotiate things to benefit someone (or themselves) and are legitimatised and constrained by either explicit or implicit social rules and their social position in social communities (Giraldo 2012).

Marketing and service literature have already established a discussion about the power distribution between the customer and the provider (Zaltman 2003). Therefore, service encounters can be considered as sites of negotiation and conflict for power and control where social identities are anchored and collective meanings are constituted and reproduced, and in which power play affects collaboration in interactions and boosts knowledge renewal (Giraldo et al 2010).
Service Encounters are Transformational

Service encounters are by no means static, but are reproduced and reconfigured in the acts of everyday life. Theories of practice researchers claim that activities are remodelled through contradictions presented among the elements within the activity and also between different activities in a historical perspective. Contradictions come from “tension” between elements or neighbour activities. Activity systems take form and change over extended periods of time and their dilemmas and potentials to enhance value creation may only be interpreted alongside their own history. History itself should be considered as localised in the service encounter and its motives, as well as the history of the notional cultural, social communities and physical tools that have helped to mould the practice over time (Engeström 2001).

Accordingly, these contradictions and disruptions act as the heart and the driver for the system to change (Marken 2006). Since activity systems progress through relatively extended cycles of qualitative changes, contradictions within the activity systems get worse and a number of individual partakers in the activity start to call into question the operations and actions and move away from its recognised routines. Through skills, creativity and determination people overcome these different “accidents” that routinely appear during an activity. In some instances, these changes grow into shared visualisation and a purposeful co-operative transformational effort. When the object and the motive of the activities are reconceived to adopt a much larger scope of possible actions than the preceding method of the activity, an expansive transformation takes place (Engeström 2001).

In summary, the idea of value creation and its different approaches was discussed in the literature review and this thesis adopts the idea of value created in the practical terms of everyday activities. Service encounters are best seen from the theories of practice lens in order to spotlight customers’ skills, tendencies, competences and providers, supporting them
with resources which enhance their value formation practices. This standpoint unifies the customer, context and the mind and the body. Therefore, value is created in the contextual system instead of in the customer’s unified mind inside their heads, as is the general opinion in service marketing and management. This approach will allow the researcher theoretically to address the research objectives (i) to address the traditional service marketing theoretical subordination of social and contextual analysis to individual processes; ii) to show how a range of contextual factors are involved in the accomplishment (practice) of service encounters; iii) to introduce a focus on actual practice that allows lessons to be drawn for the conduct of service encounters. The next chapter discusses how this will be addressed through empirical investigation.

**Synthetic Summary**

Although the term service encounter has been widely used in service marketing it has been traditionally defined in terms of direct interaction between a service-provider and a consumer in a marketer-controlled environment. This has led to three strands of thinking in the literature: first, a focus on purely dyadic exchanges based on economic value; second, there has been a recognition of encounters as more complex areas of ‘performance’, potentially between multiple parties, but located within the discrete social setting of the ‘encounter’; third, there is an emerging but relatively undeveloped interest in encounters as part of wider social processes that unfold over time and are ‘created’ by participants, sometimes in unplanned or unexpected ways. It was argued above that the first two positions were limited in their potential to provide a full contextual understanding of the service encounter and therefore encouraged a level of abstraction that although giving clarity to specific issues (such as rational choice and consumer focus) did this at the expense of extracting the encounter from its naturalistic setting as one part of a stream of ongoing activity of
individuals and groups. Therefore it was suggested that the third approach, although being less developed, offers greater potential in terms of capturing the full nature of the service encounter and, in this respect, the complex and dynamic ways in which individuals create value within such encounters, this being something that reflects individual experiences within specific contexts rather than a simple determination of exchange value. This approach offers the possibility of understanding service encounters as forms of practice embedded in consumers’ everyday lives involving physical materials, social communities, skills, subject positions, and competencies developed through previous understandings of using service encounters and other life-experiences and constraints. As will be explained later in this chapter, so-called ‘theories of practice’ provide one way in which this approach to service encounters value creation can be taken forward. However before moving to the development of this framework it is necessary to recap on how this can build on the second perspective indicated above as this can be regarded as a foundation for a contextual practice-focused perspective although accepting that the latter moves beyond this.

Within this second position two conceptions of the service encounter have been influential: the servuction model and the theatrical framework. The servuction framework is a systems approach which views the consumer as an active player in the interaction process who can respond to the provider’s attempts to meet their needs, and to the influence of other customers. This makes this approach considerably more flexible than the simple model based on instrumental economic exchange driven by narrow self-interest, by accepting the encounter as a potential negotiation and as a setting where non-economic social influences may play a part. However, although the servuction framework broadens the conception of consumer participation it remains limited by its tendency to focus on the encounter effectively as a self-contained system rather than as an integral part of wider social processes through which the conditions of participation (i.e. access to opportunities, resources, etc.)
may be shaped. This results in an approach that can be seen to isolate the encounter from its context rather than exploring its relationship with it, such as for example, the fact that participants enter the encounter with different resources (of all kinds) and that the same encounter ‘system’ may have different outcomes depending on its contextual location in time and space (e.g., UK and Colombia). As such the servuction framework’s introduction of active participants is welcome but it arguably places too many restrictions upon the scope of this activity by failing to give full recognition to the way in which contexts shape available activity resources.

This limitation is also shared by the theatrical framework which, whilst opening the possibilities of action and improvisation within the encounter, retains the notion that the encounter can be treated as a differentiated ‘performance’ that operates within an enclosed social space (as does a real theatrical performance). Thus as with the servuction framework, the focus remains on the ‘performance’ as a specific situation, but the greater scope for actors to interpret their roles and engage with their audience and vice versa, still fails to consider how scripts and roles are developed which depends on a consideration of wider contextual factors that participants bring with them to the encounter along with their respective resources.

Therefore it seems that the dominant approaches to service encounters largely underplay the wider and macro-level nature of such encounters within the context of consumers’ broader social relationships and settings, such as their history, community structures, power imbalances and changing cultural dynamics. Thus, despite giving some role to the consumer, the neglect of the wider external contextual influences has meant that researchers have tended to focus on service encounters from a provider-centric logic, this being the rationale for an encounter when viewed in isolation. By opening the analysis to a consideration to a more
contextual logic this could be balanced by bringing in the wider factors that enable providers to engage with consumers and to make clearer the terms on which this is undertaken.

In many ways the different approaches to service encounters which have moved progressively away from a notion of a dyadic relationship governed by instrumental self-interest towards a view of the actors as co-creating the processes and outcomes of the encounter, is mirrored in approaches to value creation within such encounters. But here also, although progress has been towards greater openness, there still remains an underdeveloped conception of how value within an encounter is contextually embedded.

The five approaches to value creation that were discussed can be seen as representing a hierarchy of recognising greater flexibility in the meaning of value and the methods by which it can be created. This the most basic position treats value as something that can be determined objectively by means of rational choice on the part of self-interested individuals. As such context is irrelevant as it is assumed that rational individuals will assess value according to the same criteria, other things being equal. The latter assumption makes this approach suitable as the basis for formal calculations of value but necessarily excludes the intervening effect of contextual factors (which are required to be held constant). The artificial nature of this position is challenged by experiential approaches that widen the recognition of the processes by which individuals make decisions and therefore perceive value. Here emotional hedonism as well as rational calculation can come into play so that value becomes something that has subjective as well as or instead of objective meaning. Although this adds a more ‘realistic’ conception of how individuals perceive value it remains an individualistic conception that seeks to understand value creation ‘from the inside’ of the consumer. This focus has come under criticism from approaches that have adopted a more social constructionist position and argued that value creation needs also to be seen as shaped by
factors external to the individual that give notions such as value a cultural and historical meaning as well as a purely individual one. Thus resource-based views regard the consumer as situated within an environment that provides resources that individuals can individually or collectively deploy. These resources include symbolic goods such as definitions of value (which will change historically in relation to the resources available and the rules for their possession and use, e.g., the ‘value’ of celebrity endorsement is different (for both the celebrity and the consumer) in a society where a global mass media is dominated by celebrity culture to one in which celebrity remains a local phenomenon because of limited communications). However, although opening up the conception of value creation to historical and cultural social processes, resource-based views have tended to focus analytically on settings within which such social resources are treated as relatively fixed, work-like, and given (similarly to the servuction and theatrical approaches) and have therefore tended to adopt a somewhat mechanistic and overly systemic perspective. As with that later approaches to service encounters, this approach to value creation points in a broader direction but fails to fully develop this. It can be argued that the consumer logic perspective addresses this limitation by deliberately focusing on the need locate a consumer’s interactions with a service provider within a bigger picture of their own life-world. Here value reflects not just needs or understandings within a specific encounter (or even chain of encounters) but is understood as linked to accumulated experiences in the customer’s life and ecosystem. However here too there are limitations: often the focus becomes the complex networks of meaning (across time and space) that consumers use to create value within their lives. This means that it is subject to the criticism that has been given to many ‘strong’ social constructionist perspectives, that their focus on the individual ‘construction’ of meaning (e.g. of value) leads to a neglect of contextual and structural constraints that limit the individual’s capacity (whether they are aware of this or not) to construct meaning in an open-ended
manner as if it were a matter of free choice. One attempt to overcome this solipsistic tendency has been to focus on the notion of practice. Here consumer value emerges in the whole structure of practices that make up the operations of societies: “value is embedded in the practices of the customer” (Korkman 2006:49). But unlike the consumer-logic approach, practices are not simply processes of creation but systemic contexts in which value is formed by interlinking multiple resources (i.e. subjects, tools, communities, images) through action, an approach that has similar to the resource-based view but considerably extends its scope. In this respect, this approach resists separating ‘value’ as something distinct within an encounter but as something that cannot be comprehended separately from the practices of the encounter: “consumer value is not perceived, experienced, co-created, or created, but formed in a dynamic way in the practices of the consumer” (Korkman 2006:3).

In summary, the nature of service encounters and value creation have revealed the need for the further development of approaches that have pointed to the value of incorporating a contextual understanding to conventional approaches that have focused mainly on seeing encounters and value as something that is driven ‘from the inside out’ (i.e., based in consumer cognition and emotion). Accordingly it has been suggested that service encounters are best seen through a practice lens in order to spotlight customers’ skills, tendencies, competences and providers, supporting them with resources which enhance their value formation practices. This standpoint unifies the customer and context, and the mind and the body within the wider frameworks and rules and resources that constitute the nature of specific societies. Therefore, value is created in the contextual system instead of in the customer’s unified mind (inside their heads), as is the general opinion in service marketing and management. Thus although the literature has identified a number of approaches that move in this direction (resource-based, consumer logic, theories of practice), these have been shown to be relatively underdeveloped and to have dealt mainly in theoretical arguments of
an abstract nature. Therefore in order to build on these promising developments, this research will seek to provide an empirical study of service encounters and the value-creation process that incorporates a strong contextual understanding and can specify more precisely the way in which contextual factors can be conceptualised and made explicit within the study of such encounters. The next chapter discusses how this will be addressed through empirical investigation.
CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

This chapter explains the research design adopted by this study to investigate the practical, contextual and dynamic approach to service encounters introduced in chapter two. After selecting the methodological framework to guide the study, the chapter addresses the strategic and methodological issues concerned with the development of the methodology. Independent sections concerned with research methodology, data collection and data analysis are presented. These sections explain the strategies and research techniques used to undertake the research. The chapter concludes by examining methods used to ensure the quality of this research such as triangulation, reliability and validity as well as the limitations of the study.

The overall aim of the research is to investigate how value is created in service encounters through service consumption practices in high customer participation services. Therefore, this aim inspired the following research questions and objectives established via the literature review. These objectives are:

- First, to demonstrate a gap in the traditional service marketing literature relating to the neglect of social and contextual factors within service encounters and to identify their potential role in structuring the ways in which value is created for participants. By pointing to the neglect of such contextual factors, it is also shown that there has been a tendency for over-reliance on the role of individual decisions taken in isolation which may limit the full understanding of service encounters, especially in non-standard settings.
Second, having shown the neglect of social and contextual factors, the research will collect data from two case study service encounters to demonstrate the role played by such factors in creating value within these encounters. In particular it will seek to demonstrate that such factors are integral to service encounters and are necessary to a complete understanding of their accomplishment. To contribute to this field it will also be necessary to provide a systematic conceptualisation of these factors, as covered in the following objective.

Third, the study will seek to demonstrate that an understanding of ‘practice’ – what participants actually do within an encounter and the material, social and psychological resources they deploy within it – provides one means of understanding service encounters. Following from this will be an attempt to explicitly conceptualise the ways in which practices within the encounter reflect social and contextual setting within which the encounter is performed.

Finally, to construct a model of value creation within the service encounter which incorporates contextual factors as an integral component, thereby addressing the gap identified in the literature, contributing to knowledge in this emerging area, and providing a tentative model that can be used to develop further research. In this way the study will contribute to an emerging but under-researched conception of service encounters and value creation which goes beyond merely recognising the active and creative role played by participants to include an understanding of how such activity can be located within wider structures of society through which material and intellectual resources and opportunities are enabled or constrained.

These objectives are translated into the following research questions, informed by the literature review above.
How do service encounters in high customer participation services demonstrate their status as sites of practice?

How can the contextual factors involved in the accomplishment of service encounters be specified and related to value creation practices?

The selection of a methodological framework plays a central role in any research study. It provides the fundamental principal and bases which guide the selection of the research approach. This choice has been influenced by objectives and questions established above. These questions point towards the need for a broad interpretivist approach and the justification for this will be discussed below.

**Research Approach**

The interpretivist approach looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world (Crotty 1998). In marketing, this approach is characterised by putting emphasis on the actual experience of consumers engaging with social practices of consumption (Hackley 2003:50). The use of interpretivism in this thesis aims to build understanding of the enactment of particular actions by practitioners (i.e. service users, service providers) integrating resources at service encounters through service practices but also exposing the contextual factors which shape their actions and understandings.

Gill et al (2010) identify a continuum of research methods (see table 3.1) considering approaches to research design according to the form of explanation they create, the degree of structure, their relative emphasis on deduction or induction and the kind of data they generate. These approaches are often referred to as nomothetic and ideographic perspectives (Burrel and Morgan, 1979; Crotty, 1998; Hackley 2003). Marketing interpretivists tend to focus their research designs on the qualitative and the ideographic, seeking to understand
socially constructed contexts, in contrast to the quantitative and nomothetic that seeks truth in
universalities through statistical testing of hypotheses (Hackley 2003).

### NOMOTHETIC AND IDEOGRAPHIC METHODS

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<th>NOMOTHETIC METHODS EMPHASISE</th>
<th>IDEOGRAPHIC METHODS EMPHASISE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Explanation via analysis of causal data</td>
<td>VS 1. Explanation of subjects meaning systems. Explanation by understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Generation and use of quantitative data</td>
<td>VS 2. Generation and use of qualitative data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Use of various controls, physical or statistical, so as to allow a test of hypothesis</td>
<td>VS 3. Commitment to research in everyday settings, to allow access to and minimize reactivity among subject of research</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Deductive</td>
<td>VS 4. Inductive</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Highly structured research methodology to ensure reliability of 1,2,3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>VS Minimum structure to ensure 2,3, and 4 (as a result of 1)</td>
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Table 3.1 Nomothetic and Ideographic Methods (Gill et al 2010:65)

The remainder of this chapter is focussed upon contextualising, identifying, justifying and evaluating the methodological selections.

**Research Methodology**

It can be suggested that the research questions and objectives established above, point towards a qualitative approach, focusing on the ways in which social action is located within specific situations (service encounters) and the meanings that are attached to these, especially in terms of how they relate to the wider context within which they are embedded. Malhotra (1997) stated that qualitative research offers a comprehension and broad panorama of the state of the problem while quantitative research looks for a quantification of the data obtained which is usually interpreted by statistical analysis. The assumption of quantitative research is that there is a single, static, out-there reality; while, qualitative research sees a multiple, fluid,
constructed reality. A comparison of qualitative and quantitative research is presented in table 3.2

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<th>Qualitative Research</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td>To obtain a qualitative comprehension of reasons and motives</td>
<td>To quantify data and generalise the sample results to a population of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample</strong></td>
<td>Small number of non-representative cases</td>
<td>Big number of representative cases</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data Collection</strong></td>
<td>Unstructured</td>
<td>Structured</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Non-statistical</td>
<td>Statistical</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Develops an initial comprehension</td>
<td>Recommends a final action</td>
</tr>
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Table 3.2 A Comparison Between Qualitative and Quantitative Research (Malhotra 1997:164)

Quantitative and qualitative approaches follow different methods of inquiry depending on the purpose of the research. While quantitative research usually follows a deductive logic, qualitative approaches tend to be inductive (Gill et al 2010). This places the focus of quantitative research on theory confirmation, verification and justification while qualitative research is more concerned with building concepts, abstractions and theory from data (Gummesson 1991; Silverman 2000; Cresswell 2009; Flick 2009). Compared with the quantitative paradigm, qualitative research allows for a deeper understanding and much richer analysis of everyday life situations since it focuses on processes and meaning.

The purpose of the research questions established above is to investigate the ways in which value is created through service consumption practices within service encounters in high customer participation services. This implies the need for a methodological approach which fosters a better understanding of this phenomenon through thorough exploration. Quantitative research is not suitable in this case since the phenomenon at hand is not yet fully understood. The investigation formulated by this study is much better suited to a qualitative approach based on analysis and explanation building. Indeed, a qualitative approach gives the
researcher greater opportunity to choose from different options for data collection and analysis of content.

The research approach adopted for this study is developed from the viewpoint that in order to develop theory, it is first necessary to achieve a better understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Service marketing has traditionally focused the analysis of value creation during service encounters on individual processes rather than social practices. Consequently, the character of research questions introduced at the beginning of the chapter denotes the exploratory nature of this study which scrutinises the subject area in a focused manner, but without limiting the inquiry (Creswell, 2007). Thus, to comprehend value creation through service consumption practices in high customer participation services and the contextual factors involved in the accomplishment of these practices, it is necessary to recognise the influence that real life situations have on actions and vice versa. In this way, the aim of qualitative research is to do justice to the complexity of the phenomena under scrutiny, by adopting a holistic approach taking into account the everyday life context instead of breaking it down into single variables (Flick, 2009).

Qualitative research therefore includes a close consideration to the interpretive nature of analysis, grounding research projects within the social, political and cultural context of the researchers, participants and users of the study (Creswell 2007). This means qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

The idea of value creation within contextually shaped encounters would seem to require observation of naturally occurring behaviour rather than the use of surveys and questionnaires with predetermined dimensions. This may be best achieved when the researcher participates in the lives of practitioners, listens to what is said, watches what happens, asks questions and
collects accessible data in order to understand the concerns in which he is interested (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Spradley and McCurdy 1972), i.e., participant or non-participant observation. The central idea is to observe what practitioners do, not only what they say they do; to explore and analyse practitioners as contextually situated people engaged in constructing their realities through their everyday life actions. Subsequently, the concern of this thesis is not to measure quantitatively how much value is produced within service encounters, but to understand the contextual dynamics within which value, as something both subjectively and objectively appreciated by participants, is shaped through the integration of the different elements of the practice.

Qualitative data can thus be grounded in the context in which a phenomenon of interest takes place and discussion with participants can be used to provide a rich source of information. First, the opportunity to collect data grounded within its context is highly relevant for this thesis. By examining matters in a real life context and producing vivid and complex descriptions of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Gummesson (1991), Miles and Hubberman (1994), Silverman (2000) and Flick (2009) posit that by using a variety of methods closely linked to the context where the phenomenon under scrutiny is occurring, it is easier to obtain context-bound insight that helps explain the phenomenon being studied. By taking context into consideration, qualitative paradigms seek to provide a holistic view of the situation recognising the influence that the context has on subjects’ everyday life actions (Schatzky 2002; Korkman 2006; Shove et al 2012; Nicolini 2012), often by the use of a variety of methods and sources (Gummesson 1991; Silverman 2000; Cresswell 2009). For example, this thesis uses multiple sources of data (i.e. observation, field notes and ethnographic interviews), to achieve a coherent interpretation of the enactment of service consumption practices during service encounters in high customer participation services.
For the scope of this study, context is the environment in which the phenomenon under research exists. The sites and people being studied have historical, structural, material and strategic reasons behind their enacted rules and routines during service encounters. These service consumption practices within service encounters are sometimes conducted by consumers themselves, sometimes by service providers and sometimes mutually in interaction (Grönroos, 2011). Subjects sometimes lack both thorough knowledge and competence to control the whole value creating system of the service consumption practice (Korkman, 2006) where people’s actions, relationships and emotions are habitually interconnected with these of others (Schatzki, 2012). Hence, the context is shaped by subjects’ prior experiences of certain practices, but simultaneously by future actions carried out by them and confined to the context itself. In other words, the context and the contextuality of resource integration within service encounters, converges.

It can thus be said that service consumption practices are carriers of contextual meaning (Holt 1995). These practices, from the theories of practice perspective, are more than a way of doing things, but they also answer the question “why”. So before we can understand what on the surface seems like a routine behaviour pattern during service encounters, it is necessary to study the integration of physical and mental activities, materials, history and understandings embedded within these encounters and manifested through action. Only by seeing the interconnection of these elements can the whole practice be understood (Reckwitz, 2002a, Korkman 2006, Schatzky 2012, Nicolini 2012, Shove et al 2012). Indeed, in service encounters, practices, not the subjects who execute them, are the primary carriers of the rules and understandings of the context in which they are enacted. The social context is reproduced in service practices rather than being a set of external forces influencing action (Edvardsson et al, 2012). Furthermore, physical materials are used in the accomplishment of practices
(Reckwitz, 2002; Shove and Pantzar 2005; Korkman, 2006; Shove et al 2012) becoming an increasingly important part of the contextual understanding of reality.

There are a number of limitations that are usually attached to using qualitative research. Qualitative studies have been perceived by some to be more difficult to generalise than quantitative research because of the vulnerability and uncertainty as to how findings will be interpreted and evaluated depending on the researcher (Silverman 2000). It is also due to small, limited samples and non-replicability (Gill et al 2010). As the most appropriate method to better understand value creation in service encounters within a contextual setting (in this case high consumer participation services), this study addresses this limitation by adopting multiple-case sampling, offering more generalisation in findings (Miles and Huberman 1994).

Flick (2009) continues to explain that in qualitative research the validity of a qualitative study is assessed with reference to the object under scrutiny. Consequently, validity is defined by the extent to which findings are grounded in empirical material and whether multiples sources of data provides the opportunity to the researcher to learn from the field (Arnould and Wallendorf 2004). The relevance of data sources as well as the selection of research methods and their use in the field is therefore a critical factor for this research study. Consequently these are developed fully in in section in the subsequent section. A detailed explanation of how issues of validity and reliability have been addressed is provided in the section related to the quality of the research study.

**Qualitative Research Approaches**

Ethnography is a method originally used in anthropology and sociology which has been mostly applied by scholars with the purpose of understanding the cultures of others (Spradley and McCurdy 1972; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Wolcott 2008; Fetterman 2010). This method is therefore a written means of documenting people or cultures and their related areas
such as “mundane aspects of social life, meanings and doings” (Denscombe 2008:62). Wolcott (2008) proposes that ethnography is concerned both with a way of looking (i.e. all the ways the researcher may direct attention while in the field) and a way of seeing (i.e. the way the field is appreciated by the researcher) peoples’ lifeworlds. Indeed, ethnography involves gathering data from participants through being, living and participating in their culture. Basically, ethnographers seek to understand the participants whose lives they observe (Spradley and McCurdy 1972). This can be viewed as a process aiming to inductively explain “life”, from the point of view of the participants studied rather than those doing the studying, after a period of immersion in a determined culture or micro-culture.

Furthermore, ethnography promotes the use of multiple methods to gain insights into the cultural understanding of phenomena (Spradley and McCurdy 1972; Spradley 1979, 1980; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Fetterman 2010; Emerson et al 2011). According to Wolcott (2008:48) the more frequently techniques used for looking at people’s lifeworlds include “participant observation, interviewing and archival records”. With the advent of new technologies, the use of video/photographic records is increasingly growing among researchers (Korkman 2006; Holtinnen 2010; Emerson et al 2011). Some of these methods form key components of the methodology designed in this thesis.

Nonetheless, ethnography is not just a form of data collection but it focuses on seeking understanding about the dynamic process by which people simultaneously create and recreate meanings in their everyday situations and life (Korkman 2006). Moreover, “ethnography aims to explicate patterns of action that are cultural and/or social rather than cognitive” (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994:485). These patterns of action can be seen through the ethnographer’s way of looking (Wolcott 2008) at people's behaviour and experiences.
including repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and acting in context (Holt 1995; Korkman 2006; Holtinnen 2010; Shove et al 2012).

Ethnography has the potential for documenting a diverse range of topics. In view of that, ethnography stands as a prominent qualitative approach to empirically studying the contextual and practical nature of service encounters. Moreover, linking the ethnographical approach to service consumption practices during service encounters can provide detailed data and a holistic explanation (Denscombe 2008) about how the elements embedded in service encounters are interconnected through consumers’ ordinary acts in their everyday life. Consequently, the reason for using the ethnographical approach to study service consumption practices during service encounters, resides on understanding the behaviour of participants in context, not only what they say they do (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Despite the fact that other research traditions have already ethnographically examined the consumer in practical terms (Dourish 2001; Kaptelinin and Nardi 2006), this method has not been fully used to provide suggestions for service development and enhancement in service marketing literature since researchers are traditionally more concerned about the opinions (voice) of consumers (Johne 1998).

Hackley (2003) posits that social constructionist research in marketing calls for ethnographical understanding to articulate the phenomenon of consumption and its implications for marketing strategy. Service and consumption researchers have used the ethnographical approach to study consumption behaviour practices related to extraordinary service encounters (Arnould and Price 1993); baseball consumption practices (Holt 1995); Nordic walking practices (Shove and Pantzar 2005); cruise consumption practices (Korkman 2006); consumption in brand communities (Muniz et al 2009) and ordinary dining practices (Holtinnen 2010). In addition, the ethnographic approach has also been a source of
inspiration for service design (Stickdorn and Schneider 2011). Ethnography in marketing and service research is often recognised as being part of the “interpretive turn” which is no less concerned with practical issues than more conventionally scientific traditions that take their ideas from natural sciences (Hackley 2003; Araujo et al 2010).

Denscombe (2008) has identified a number of limitations of ethnographical studies. First, the tension between the adoption of a realist or relativist position about the phenomenon of study; second, the difficulty of gaining access to settings; third, facing ethical problems such as intrusion to privacy; fourth, the knowledge of researchers as insiders which may “blind” them to the whole picture (Cresswell 2007) and finally, the story-telling and stand-alone descriptions may leave the research product as non-analytical and atheoretical. The limitations of ethnographical methods compared to their advantages is compared in table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnography Advantages</th>
<th>Ethnography Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Ecological validity because researchers have little impact on the setting and the research is located within the context. (the latter overcomes the limitations of customer voice research)</td>
<td>▪ Findings cannot be generalizable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Deep insight into specific contexts of study</td>
<td>▪ Time consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Holistic and Empirically grounded (inductive work)</td>
<td>▪ Access is limited. Facing ethical problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Intensive and extensive exposure to people’s lived experiences (i.e. participant observation)</td>
<td>▪ Tensions between realist and relativist positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Interprets and explains by relating to existing theories and frameworks of analysis (if guided)</td>
<td>▪ Story-telling and stand-alone descriptions might be atheoretical (if not guided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Meanings is socially constructed since it may come from the field</td>
<td>▪ Research subjectivity may affect the research study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 Advantages and Limitations of Ethnography (Adapted from Denscombe 2008)

After considering the limitations and advantages of ethnography in the table above, it does appear that this methodology arises as a suitable means of providing the required data to achieve the main aim and the objectives of this research. It is important to highlight that the type of ethnography used in this study can be distinguished as a market-oriented ethnography
This approach links with the learning process the researcher went through during the empirical research, constantly comparing the literature with the findings in the field through abductive reasoning (Dubois and Gadde 2002; Kovács and Spens 2005; Wuisman 2005; Patokorpi 2007; O'Shaughnessy 2009). As suggested, ethnographic research cannot be defined before entering the field (Spradley and McCurdy 1972; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Wolcott 2008; Fetterman 2010). The urge to explore the dynamics of value creation through the theories of practice lens and to learn from how customers participate in value creation in their everyday activities was more important than a predefined research design. However, the market-oriented ethnography had some restrictions due to the fact that it was important for the researcher to focus on the whole practice as a unit of analysis. As a matter of fact, the researcher entered the field and started gathering data mediated by his prototype which was made during the literature review process and was influenced by Activity Theory (Engeström, 2000).

Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) stated that market-oriented ethnographies are guided by four distinctive features: (1) systematic data collection and recording of human action in natural settings; (2) extended experiential participation by the researcher in a specific cultural context; (3) credible interpretations of behaviour for the persons studied and the intended audience and (4) multiple sources of data and a research strategy that provides the opportunity for the researcher to learn from the field. Consequently, in the study of high customer participation services in Colombia the researcher: (1) not only recorded stories and opinions of the participants but also captured their behaviour when carrying out their activities in context; (2) the sampling plan evolved during data collection as the researcher was participating in the activities (going to classes at the university and taerobics studio) and learning from them; (3) the researcher used his own ability to view the settings as “peculiar and interesting” with the idea of understanding them and writing about them and (4) used
different sources of information in order to find discrepancies in understanding the practices carried out in the settings. On a couple of occasions the researcher experienced that informants’ actions were contradicting what they stated as their usual behaviour.

The main focus of this ethnographical study relies on seeking understanding about value creation during service encounters through service consumption practices. These practices are material and social rather than just cognitive. Ethnography see human beings as historically and socially situated people engaged in constructing their realities socially through interaction within the context they live (Korkman 2006). This method not only establishes the context and subjective significance (emic) of practices for particular groups of people, but also seeks to express the comparative and interpreted (etic) cultural significance of this practice (Arnould and Wallendorf 2004). Other qualitative research approaches that would have been suitable for the study, such as phenomenology according to Cresswell (2007) and also action research according to Gummesson (1991) and Engeström (1994) were considered but rejected. All of these approaches present potentialities and challenges, as well as similarities and differences, so researchers would decide the approach that best suits their needs for a particular study. For example although phenomenology is an approach that focuses on how life is experienced, it just focuses on subjective human experiences that are pure, raw and basic in the sense they have not been subject to the process of analysis and theorising (Denscombe 2008). This means that the researcher needs to focus on the individual as the main unit of analysis (Cresswell, 2007). In a similar way, in action research, researchers are actively involved and the aim is not only to understand the phenomenon but also to alter events (Gummesson 1991; Engeström 1994). The main disadvantage for action research is that it requires intervention so the nature of the research is constrained by what is permissible within the research study setting (Denscombe 2008).
Within this ethnographic framework it was considered appropriate to adopt a case study design. Case study research (Yin, 2003) is consistent with interpretive ethnography (Walsham, 1995) by giving insight into individual, group and organisational practices and their context (Yin, 2003), in particular to give accounts of process as they actually operate (Hakim, 1987; Hartley, 1994). Yin (2009) states that the case study is able to encompass a wide variety of evidence from documents, artefacts, interviews and observations.

Yin (2009) notes that case studies can either be single or multiple cases and can have one or more levels or layers of analysis (embeddedness). Combining these notions produces four types of case study: (1) Type 1: one case study with a single unit of analysis; (2) Type 2: one case with multiple units of analysis; (3) Type 3: studying multiple-cases with a single unit of analysis; and (4) Type 4: multiple-cases with multiple units of analysis.

Multiple case designs can be limited to only two settings or as many as dozens of cases, allowing findings to be replicated or for different settings to be compared and contrasted. For this research the design can be seen as a Type 4 case study using multiple cases (two: taerobics and HE) and having multiple units of analysis (the service practices within the encounter itself including its material artefacts, the actions of participants and the factors associated with the encounter’s context).

This design allows for the comparison between cases, both being chosen because of a similar structure (high consumer participation services) but with different forms of practice in order to allow the various factors identified as potentially significant for the service encounter cases to be compared and contrasted. Here there is also the possibility of identifying factors common to both cases and therefore can be identified as a basis specifying contextual and other factors that could be significant for this structural type of encounter. It is clear that if identified, such possible underpinning factors would need to be tested within the context of a
statistically reliable sample (beyond the scope of the present study). Subsequently, the researcher will describe the ethnographic approach by selecting the case, collecting data of cultural practices, analysing data on cultural practices and discussing the quality of the research study.

**Selecting the cases**

Value creation literature now recognises the consumer’s key role in value creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). In high consumer participation services such as personal fitness and education, which imply a transformational consumer intent influenced by multiple motives, service stakeholders are essential components of the service and unless they actively participate in service co-production they should not expect to get the full value of the service (Bitner et al 1997). As a result, these services were desirable cases to study value creation during service encounters through service consumption adopting a practice perspective.

This research project took place in Barranquilla, Colombia and the high consumer participation services sites that were explored were a postgraduate university in business administration and personal fitness studio (Taerobics). These sites were explored through ethnographical methods with the idea of seeking understanding of the practical creation of value during service encounters through service consumption, rather than producing a cognitive evaluation of the sites. Therefore, the data that was collected in different settings (cases) was cultural data of practices which were mapped under the framework presented in Chapter two. The sites are instrumental ethnographic accounts which help the researcher seek understanding about the way practices can be documented, interpreted, described, analysed and written about (Wolcott 1994).
The rationale behind selecting the two research sites is based on three main reasons. Firstly, the researcher purposefully selected two different types of high consumer participation services, both involving transformation (higher education and fitness). The idea here is to explore how and why different sites and contexts support service practices in service encounters, focusing on how and why the integration of the various elements of the practice influence stakeholders’ (un) desirable behaviour in value creation at service encounters.

The second main reason for selecting the sites was guaranteed access. Ethnographic research can present particular challenges in gaining access to settings (Denscombe 2008). Regarding higher education, the researcher works at the HE institution and was a leader of two postgraduate programmes. This means that there is a good pre-understanding of the HE context. Regarding the fitness site (Taerobics Centre), the researcher was involved in the development of a case study for a competition about the studio in 2008 and was also a former lecturer of one the centre’s directors. This studio sponsored the researcher with a free membership during the time he was in the field and facilitated his access to potential participants at the studio.

The main idea for selecting ethnographic methods is therefore to provide a deeper understanding of value creation in service encounters from a practice perspective as a cultural socio-historical activity rather than just a cognitive evaluation as is traditionally viewed in service marketing and management. The use of ethnographical methods gave the researcher the opportunity to see individuals in value creation practices as culturally, socially and historically situated human beings constructing their own realities and meanings through interactions with the context in which they live. The idea was to observe customers as active human beings in a cultural, socio-historical context, not only as decision makers.
Data Collection on Practices

Ethnography is a process of learning for the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983) which cannot be completely defined in the pre-field stage but remains open throughout the whole research process for new data to emerge in various forms and from different techniques. This process can be described as a dynamic dialogue between the emic perspective, subject’s representation of reasons for their practices and the etic perspective, which is the external ethnographer’s interpretation of them (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). In practice, ethnographic data collection is concerned with both the looking at events in the external world and the seeing of these events through the analysis of the internal frames of the ethnographer and the transformation of the researcher’s own way of grasping the world (Wolcott 2008). Both activities (i.e. looking and seeing) need to be considered throughout the whole research process.

Consequently, the objective of the data collection through the ethnographic approach is to produce a “thick” description of a phenomenon being studied (Geertz, 1973 in Wolcott 2008). Producing a thick description mergers action and its meaning into a believable interpretation. Through in-depth understanding of both micro-cultures it became noticeable that actions could be grouped into meaningful practices and into different types of service encounters. Both practices and types of encounters explained the contextual nature of actions and the systemic whole of the consumers integrating physical materials, cultural understanding and images, motives, power, physical spaces into their value creation process.

Before entering the field for his final stage of the study, the researcher carried out two preliminary projects for his thesis to determine the best way of collecting value creation data during service encounters through service consumption. The first analysed nine structured interviews which were carried out by a different researcher in the context of HE in Colombia.
These interviews were intended to provide narratives of consumption but in the end they just provided simple, short answers that gave a rather staged and superficial understanding of the phenomenon. For the second study, the researcher travelled to Barranquilla and stayed for two months, carrying out interviews with different stakeholders involved in the undergraduate HE context. The researcher used unstructured ethnographical interviews which provided longer narratives sometimes losing focus. The resulting subjectivity of the findings and a purely emic perspective of the phenomenon proved to be a source of concern to the researcher. It became clear that relying on (structured or unstructured) interviews demonstrated to be an insufficient means in providing a complete understanding of value creation during service encounters through service consumption.

This limitation influenced the researcher to take a more participatory role, encouraging him to adopt a deeper interest by observing participants’ actual practices of consumption. This gave the research its ethnographical stance coupled with interviews, this time exploring in greater depth but with more focus on the reflections and meanings held by participants. As a result, the methods combine three different techniques: Non-participant observation and participant observation, field notes and ethnographic interviews. These techniques will subsequently be reviewed and a more detailed description of the data collection process will be presented in the next section.

**Non-Participant and Participant Observation**

Direct observations may range from less formal (visit to field) to formal data collection activities (observation of meetings, classrooms) where observational evidence can be so valuable that the researcher may consider taking photographs and videos at the study site (Fetterman 2010). By the use of observation, researchers aim to build a perspective of the everyday situations they are studying (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Denscombe (2007)
posits that the advantages of participant observation are related to the preservation of the naturalness of the research context, the provision of a more holistic picture of the phenomenon under study and the deepness of insights gathered compared to other alternative methods.

Furthermore, Spradley (1980) posited that doing participant observation has a lot of similarities to what human agents do in newly encountered social situations. A participant observer comes to a social situation with two fundamental purposes: To engage in activities appropriate to the situation and to observe the activities, people and physical aspects of the situation. Gummesson (1991) states what constitutes the core of ethnography and participation with active intervention is known as action science. Therefore, direct and participant observation was used by the researcher to engage in first hand practices of value creation activities within service encounters, to observe the role of different agents and engage with them in these activities.

Spradley (1980) proposes that ethnographers can assume different roles, ranging from complete participation to non-participation depending on the degree of their involvement, while Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) posited these degrees of participation assumed that the researcher could go from complete participant to complete observer. During the period of field work that started on October 2010 and finished in March 2011, the researcher participated in both settings (HE postgraduate diplomas and taerobics studio) largely in a passive form.

In the case of the taerobics studio the researcher assumed the role of a passive participant (non-participant observation) in the first two weeks of the field work while he was getting accustomed to the embedded rules, times, rituals and artefacts used in the taerobics classes, since the researcher was only familiar with the setting through a previous interview
conducted with the owner of the studio and some other comments made by a former student who works at the studio. After that, the researcher went to different one-hour classes at different times at least four times a week for a period of five months, monitored their Facebook group and became a follower of their Twitter account. Much of the researcher’s observational work was conducted in the morning (5:15 am to 8:30 am) and at least once a week in the evening (7:30 am).

In the Postgraduate HE setting the researcher mostly assumed a passive role of non-participant during his observation of postgraduate classes, interactions between lecturers and administrative staff, administrative staff and students, administrative staff and administrative staff, lecturers and lecturers, students and students and students and lecturers. Since postgraduate classes take place at the weekends, the researcher went to the university almost every weekend from October 2010 to March 2011. He was present at various classes in different programmes with a previous authorisation from the programme leaders and attended the informal meetings that lecturers had every Friday before classes and during break times on Saturdays. Most of the observational work in classes was conducted during the first hour of class on Friday (6:00 pm) or Saturday (8:00 am).

To capture this data the researcher took notes during the observations, taking pictures and videos when permitted. A more complete description and analysis of the findings will be presented in further chapters. Observation provided vital contributions to the research project: it was the most naturalistic and closest technique for data gathering in the research process, giving very informative data about customers’ actions at service encounters, even though the sample for the participant observation was limited.

Finally, Gill et al (2010) highlight that a particular problem related to observation is the risk of “going native”. To overcome this danger, some authors (Denscombe 2007; Wolcott 2008;
Fetterman (2010) suggest that field workers should maintain a polite distance from these studied. Denscombe (2007) also acknowledges that concerns of doing participant observation relate to the difficulties of (1) gaining access to the contextual setting; (2) the reliability of the findings and (3) ethical and possible physical risks in some contexts. These concerns were overcome by the researcher through (1) agreeing the access needed for the study prior to data collection; (2) through triangulation and assessment of reliability of ethnographical studies which are further explained in section the section related to the quality of the research study and (3) through signing confidentiality agreements with the subjects and places under study.

**Field Notes**

Spradley (1979; 1972) recommends that even though interviews are recorded, the use of field notes is still necessary in a field work project. There are different kinds of field notes that the researcher will develop and organise in a unique way (See Appendix 4-5). The author recommends condensed accounts, or a condensed version of what actually occurred; expanded accounts, or details that the researcher should recall immediately after each session and which the researcher could not record in the situation; a field work journal, which is a diary that records experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs and problems that arise during the field work and finally, analysis and interpretation, which provide a link between the ethnographic record and the final written document.

Furthermore, for observations, Emerson et al (2011) posit that in writing field notes it is important to consider that: (1) what is observed is inseparable from the observational process; (2) the researcher should give special attention to the cultural meanings and concerns of the people studied; (3) field notes are an essential grounding and resource for writing a more coherent account of other’s lives and concerns and (4) field notes should detail the social and interactional process that make up subjects’ everyday activities in the context of study.
Field notes were taken throughout the process of data collection at stages of participant and non-participant observation. In order to take these notes, the researcher decided to attend classes (both at the university and the studio), remaining anonymous and not asking direct questions. The researcher instead rather looked for suitable places to listen to and watch what people’s activities and conversations. Strategic places in the case of postgraduate HE were the entrance to the building, the corridors and aisles where classrooms were located, the lecturers’ common room, the back row of chairs in the classrooms and the cafeterias. For the taerobics studio, suitable places were the reception desk, the chairs for parents to observe their children through a glass window, the last row of participants inside the studio and the spot by the stereo and computer where instructors played music for the classes.

The results of these field observations where documented into field notes which did not focus on particular participants but rather aimed at describing the practice as a social activity. A notebook, a camera and a smartphone were used to record notes. Pictures and cameras are most useful for documenting field observations (Fetterman 2010) and for some researchers can be replacements for field notes (Kanstrup 2002). The researcher used the camera cautiously to record visual material. However, from his experience during data collection, he concluded that pictures and videos can be useful for recording actions and encounters and used as a form of documentation, but extensive analysis is better carried out from field notes and some other techniques, such as ethnographic interviews.

**Ethnographic Interviews**

An ethnographic interview relates to a particular type of speech event, which is a social occasion primarily identified for the kind of conversation that takes place (Spradley 1979). Spradley (1979) affirms that three most important ethnographic elements for an interview are: explicit purposes or where the interview is to go; ethnographic explanations, or explanations
that the researcher gives the informant to establish rapport and facilitate the process (They could be about the project, the recording, the native language, the interview and the questions) and finally the ethnographic questions. Ethnographic questions may be classified as descriptive which allow the researcher to collect a sample of the informant’s language; structural, which enable the researcher, discover information about the basic cultural knowledge of the informant and finally, contrast questions, which the researcher uses to find out what the informant means by the terms used in his cultural language. Gummesson (1991) states that some important material in interviews is related to their non-verbal content, which includes symbolic language and body language.

When doing a research study using ethnographical techniques for data collection, the researcher does not go to the field with a well-defined list of questions, but rather a list of topics that require further exploration and study, without restricting himself to use a particular model of questioning. There were times during the interviews when the researcher used non-directive questions, while in some other times he used directive questions depending on the intention he had at the time of interviewing. Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) make a differentiation between unstructured assembled interviews started by the researcher and unstructured spontaneous conversations carried out by the researcher with participants during observations. In this particular case, the researcher clearly initiated the interviews, which were loosely structured, with the aim of exploring themes related to mediators and elements of the service encounter as a practical system.

Conducting interviews during the empirical research process brought the advantage of assessing the subjects’ standpoint and exploring the dispositions they had towards the context they live in (Kvale and Birkmann 2009). Interviews were carried out in places where both the researcher and the informant felt comfortable, such as pubs, restaurants, coffee shops, offices.
and homes of the informants. Interviews typically started with non-directive questions in which informants described “life stories” and “daily routines” with the idea of exploring consumption routines of the informants (Elliott and Jankel-Elliott 2003). Interviews lasted from thirty (30) to ninety (90) minutes and were aimed at explaining and describing the practices and activities carried out by informants in service encounters either in postgraduate HE or taerobics, rather than exploring feelings and attitudes of these informants.

Denscombe (2007) suggests that there are disadvantages to interviewing. First data analysis and preparation is much more time consuming compared to questionnaires that are pre-coded and where data is ready for analysis after collection. Second, interviews can be considered as a process of conversation which is socially constructed (Kvale and Brinkman 2009) which create problems such as the impact of the interviewer and the inhibition from some interviewees. Third, since interviews are non-naturalistic spaces which bring people together (Gummesson 1991) the identity of the interviewer and the nature of the context can affect interviewee statements, since researchers dominate the structure of the interview (Kvale and Brinkman 2009). Finally, the process of data transcription, translation (if needed) and data analysis may misrepresent the emic perspective communicated by the subject under scrutiny.

**Sampling Strategy**

Sampling within the case studies is as important as the election of the case studies themselves (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). In this study the approach adopted for the interview study was purposive sampling (Charmaz, 2014). This pertains to the conceptual and theoretical purpose of the study rather than an attempt to represent a population or increase statistical generalizability of the results obtained (Charmaz 2014).

Purposive sampling uses small samples embedded in the context of the study that are studied in-depth and selected from a set of predetermined criteria (Patton 1990; Coyne 1997). The
number of participants selected is determined conceptually and not based on statistical analysis, as is the case in quantitative research. According to Patton (1990) the power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth.

As outlined in the account of the case-study design (type 4) required multiple units of analysis, amongst which was the need to collect data from different groups of participants within the encounter (e.g. not just consumers). Therefore the first stage of the purposive sampling was to identify respondents from the two groups of service consumers and providers. However, initial investigation of the selected cases suggested the need to further differentiate these categories in order to fully capture the extent of actions and contexts that comprised the service encounters.

Consequently, the case of HE included four groups of informants: Auxiliary administrative auxiliary staff, lecturers, students and alumni related to postgraduate programmes in business (see table 3.4). The taerobics case included three groups of informants: Administrative staff, instructors and participants (see table 3.5). It should be confirmed that these groups were identified not to be representative of the whole population of those involved in higher education programmes in business nor doing fitness activities but to provide a full understanding of the operations of the service encounter practices within the two case studies. As such, there will be no claims that these results can be generalised beyond these cases (although readers will be able to use their experience to determine whether the relationships developed here could plausibly apply elsewhere) as their aim is to provide depth of understanding rather than breadth. However there will be no reasons why the patterns produced inductively from the case studies could not be tested on statistically representative samples in further studies in the future.
Once the necessary groups of respondents had been identified, the researcher used snowball (chain) sampling (Noy 2008) to select the actual participants of the study. Snowball sampling has been successfully employed in obtaining information from respondents who may be difficult to access (Giraldo and Alvarado 2006; Noy 2008). For both case settings, administrative staff and instructors (the smaller groups), were approached through informal face-to-face chats in which participants received a deeper explanation about the main objective of the project, the nature of the interviews they were about to participate, and the confidentiality agreement. They were afterwards recruited on the basis or expressing their good will and cooperative intention to collaborate as participants of the study. Administrative staff in both cases was then interviewed by settled appointments either on their work offices or restaurants/coffee shops convenient to them.

For approaching the larger group of participants (i.e. taerobics’ participants, university students and alumni) potential interviewees were asked for participation through group messages in facebook (i.e. taerobics) and e-mail (i.e. higher education) with an extremely low response rate. Aware of this limitation, while in taerobics, the researcher asked instructors to get introduced face-to-face to potential participants at the studio after classes, in higher education, the researcher approached former students of him and their friends before classes at the corridors of the university. This approach in both case sites was made with the idea of getting potential informants details to schedule a potential informal chat to explain the nature of the study as it was previously done with administrative staff and lecturers. After that, for recruiting and interviewing participants, the researcher followed a similar procedure to the one used for recruiting administrative staff and lecturers.

There are no firm rules to determine the appropriate size for a purposive sample. Indeed, it is suggested by Mason (2010) that an experienced interviewer who conducts ten interviews may
produce a more analytical account that a novice researcher who conducts fifty interviews. Consequently, a purposive sample is usually determined by the nature of the study being undertaken and the resources available to the researcher (Charmaz 2014). The former issue relates to a judgement of how many respondents will be needed to give the level of insight into the specific topic of interest. This will usually be a reflection of the scale of the activity/unit concerned and the variability of the practices involved.

As outlined above, the focus for this study was on two discrete cases and a specific type of service encounter. Therefore it was judged that the interview samples could be relatively small to reflect the nature of the cases, but would need to be sufficient to provide the depth of insight to gain solid understanding of the relevant practices. As the two case study organizations were treated as distinct cases (see above) there was seen to be no necessity for the samples of respondents within them to be matched for direct comparisons. Rather the intention was to select samples that would enable the essence of each organization’s practices to be captured. This will allow for comparisons that may in fact be more insightful into the implications of contextual factors as similarities between the cases would be more likely to be related to the latter factors than to the nature of the sampled respondents (which would be difficult to determine if perfectly matched samples were used).

The number of interviews carried out for the whole study (Thirty one, 31) provided the opportunity to flexibly and systematically scrutinize service practices at service encounters and to provide a credible account of them. Accordingly, data collection from interviews stopped the moment when fresh gathered data no longer sparked new theoretical insights (Charmaz 2014) to the main objectives of the study. Although the number of interviews to be conducted was not predetermined before data collection started, for the main objective of the sampling strategy previously explained, it is also worth to mention that the sample used in the study not only follows Creswell (1998) and Morse (1994) guidelines for actual sample sizes
for grounded theory interviewing but also matches the average sample size for qualitative doctoral studies using interviews (Mason, 2010).

From the total of thirty one (31) interviews carried out, twenty (20) interviews were collected for the case in postgraduate HE, including one which was done with two participants at the same time. This number of interviews was considered adequate within the context of the case since the different groups of respondents (i.e. students, lecturers, alumni, administrative staff) interviewed gave the spread and depth of data needed to respond to the research objectives providing a credible account of the way service encounters as sites of service practice work in HE. Moreover, in the postgraduate HE case, the totality of main auxiliary administrative staff (four, 4 people) was interviewed, while lecturers, students and alumni were interviewed until the moment of reaching theoretical saturation considering the resources (i.e. time, money) of the researcher.

In Taerobics, eleven interviews (11) were considered adequate within the context of the case since the different groups of respondents (i.e. administrative staff, instructors and participants) interviewed gave the spread and depth of data needed providing a credible account of the way service encounters as sites of service practice work in fitness (i.e. group classes). Interviews collected included the totality of administrative staff and instructors (two, 2 people since it is a small family business) and 9 participants following a similar logic used in the Higher Education case.

Thirty (30) Interviews were conducted in Spanish (the mother tongue of the researcher and informants) and one (1) was conducted in English (the mother tongue of the informant). Thirty (30) interviews were recorded and one (1) was reconstructed immediately after it took place. Interviews were translated into English for further analysis through N-Vivo. Participants’ names were changed to ensure their confidentiality, for names of characters in
Quentin Tarantino’s movies\(^2\) and a confidentiality agreement between the researcher and participants was signed (see appendix 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butch Coolidge</td>
<td>Auxiliary Administrative Staff</td>
<td>MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billy Wings</td>
<td>Auxiliary Administrative Staff</td>
<td>PGDIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecil Evans</td>
<td>Auxiliary Administrative Staff</td>
<td>PGDIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry Darling</td>
<td>Auxiliary Administrative Staff</td>
<td>PGDIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester Rush</td>
<td>Visiting Lecturer</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaumont Livingston</td>
<td>Visiting Lecturer</td>
<td>PGDIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifford Worley</td>
<td>Visiting Lecturer</td>
<td>MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Ritchie</td>
<td>Visiting Lecturer</td>
<td>MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Dimmick</td>
<td>Visiting Lecturer</td>
<td>PGDIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drex Spivey</td>
<td>Visiting Lecturer</td>
<td>MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar McGraw</td>
<td>University Lecturer</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
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<td>Butch Coolidge</td>
<td>Auxiliary Administrative Staff</td>
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<td>MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar McGraw</td>
<td>University Lecturer</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4 Informants in the higher education case study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vincent Vega</td>
<td>Owner and Instructor</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mia Wallace</td>
<td>Marketing Director and Instructor</td>
<td>Marketing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Kim</td>
<td>Taerobics Participant</td>
<td>Store Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Fuller</td>
<td>Taerobics Participant</td>
<td>Housewife/Own Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanna Frank</td>
<td>Taerobics Participant</td>
<td>Pub Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallory Knox</td>
<td>Taerobics Participant</td>
<td>Production Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernita Green</td>
<td>Taerobics Participant</td>
<td>Housewife/Own Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shosanna Dreyfus</td>
<td>Taerobics Participant</td>
<td>Regional Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofie Fatale</td>
<td>Taerobics Participant</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce Exc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence Worley</td>
<td>Taerobics Participant</td>
<td>Manager Own company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hattori Hanzo</td>
<td>Taerobics Participant</td>
<td>Manager Family Business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5 Informants in the taerobics (fitness) case study

With respect to the context, it is important to note that higher education practices and fitness practices go further than the classroom (i.e. higher education) or dojo (i.e. fitness). The researcher identified the context acknowledging that the practices under study are social constructions not just physical spaces (Hackley 2003). Both education and fitness are contexts that engage practitioners in consumption practices related to education and fitness.

These practices go further the core consumption experience (i.e. doing the class) and include the pre-consumption experience (i.e. searching, planning, preparing), the purchase experience (i.e. paying, choosing) and the remembered experience (i.e. reminiscing, story-telling) (Arnould et al 2002).

Even though the context of education and fitness go further than a physical space, observations focused on the public practices carried on the university and the fitness studio which were possible to observe. This limitation was partly due to limited access to practices related to the pre-consumption and remembered experience stages (Arnould et al 2002). Even though, the ethnographic account made in this research gives a rather positive picture of fitness and education practices, occasionally interviewees discusses “negative practices” carried out by different practitioners. This could be subject of further intervention for service enhancement. The summary of the different techniques (description, sample, contribution to the understanding of value creation in services encounters through service consumption) used in the research project is presented in Appendix 3.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis may be conducted in dozen of ways, many with long traditions behind them (Miles et al 2014). For example, Saunders et al (2009) discussed a number of inductively based analytical procedures to analyse qualitative data such as data display and analysis, template analysis, analytic induction, grounded theory, discourse analysis and narrative analysis. Furthermore, Saldana (2011) describe more than twenty different qualitative genres for analysing qualitative data that range from well-established ethnography, case study, phenomenology and grounded theory to more progressive trends such as auto ethnography, poetic inquiry, ethno-drama and duo-ethnography. However, in spite of these observations, Denscombe (2007:287) posited that qualitative analysis is just an
attempt to explain what issues are underpinning the data collected, introducing a set four basic principles: (1) the analysis and conclusions drawn should be firmly rooted in the data; (2) the researcher explanation of data should involve a process of interpretation in which the researcher produces meaning out of “raw” data; (3) the researcher should avoid personal prejudices and biases which have previously arisen, and (4) the analysis of data should involve and iterative process.

Consequently, consistent with the chosen methodological approach, the data presented in the analysis illustrates the researcher’s closest to naturalistic understanding of the contextual factors that shape the manner in which value is created at service encounters. Ethnographical approaches tend toward the descriptive (Miles et al 2014) being explanation and description the key ethnographic purposes (Wolcott 1994; Pole and Morrison 2003; McCurdy et al 2005), as a result, the analysis task is to reach across multiple data sources and condense them (Miles et al 2014). The researcher’s aim therefore was to make sense of the relevant data obtained by the interviews, observations, and the field notes (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008) and interpret it through a credible and methodical account (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Finally, the researcher recognises that his views may not inevitably represent a uniquely objective account of the dynamics of service encounters but by incorporating different sources of data and theoretical concepts, what is presented is a set of representations that seems to fit complex data collected in the study.

Denscombe (2007:252) proposes a five stage process to the analysis of qualitative data. The process is (1) preparation of the data; (2) initial exploration of the data; (3) analysis of the data (developing codes, categories and concepts); (4) representing and displaying the data and (5) validation of the data. Other authors follow similar schemas to the analysis of qualitative data (Cresswell 2009; Wolcott 1994; Miles et al 2014).
**Data Preparation and Initial Exploration of the Data**

Data generated from qualitative approaches tend to be high in quantity, which makes the task of analysis particularly challenging (Silverman 2010). Therefore, the use of qualitative software gives the chance to develop codes that allow a more organized analysis of data (Easterby-Smith et al 2008) and provides a record which may be re-visited, allowing reflexivity and transparency depending on how new insights and information become available. Back-up copies of the original materials, the organisation of all materials to a compatible format and identification of pieces of raw data were made following Denscombe’s (2007) process for preparing qualitative data.

In regard to observations, nonverbal catalogues (Ekman and Friesen 1969; Argyle 1973 in Bonoma and Felder 1977) were used to initially organize nonverbal acts for further coding and analysis. For example, affect displays (Ekman and Friesen 1969) and emotional and interpersonal attitudes (Argyle 1973 in Bonoma and Felder 1977), portraying emotional states through actions using the face and other non-verbal behaviours, initially captured in jottings, pictures and drawings (Emerson et al 2011) were fully transcribed into field notes which (see Appendix 4) mirrored and described what was observed in both cultural scenes.

Subsequently, recordings of the interviews were subject of transcription and translation from Spanish into English. Transcripts provided an accessible form of coding qualitative data from interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009) to start the initial exploration and subsequent analysis. This stage helped the researcher familiarise himself with the data through re-reading text data both in Spanish and English and re-examining data from observations (Denscombe, 2007).

The software package N-Vivo 9 was used initially to structure the data but this was found to be a time-consuming process that the researcher did not find helpful in grasping the full scope
of the data collected. As such, it was decided to use a process of coding and categorization based on spreadsheets (with which the researcher was more familiar) which allowed the researcher to list and then sort different codes and their associated segments of text (imported from Word documents of the transcripts). This allowed the researcher to interrogate their data in a more ‘immersed’ way and allowed him to feel closer to the data than had been the case using N-Vivo. Thus, the researcher accepts that with greater training, electronic software could be a useful tool, but as a novice investigator, he found the process of dealing with the analysis in a more ‘manual’ way helpful clarifying his own understanding of the emerging issues. Next, the researcher started to cross-reference the data from interviews and the field notes from observations so it was possible for him to familiarise himself with the data in context before identifying appropriate codes that could be applied to the data from the study (Denscombe 2007).

Transcriptions have some disadvantages. In practice, the process of doing transcriptions can be quite challenging and time consuming especially for the problems with the recorded talks, the intonation of the speakers and the way people speak and build sentences (Denscombe 2007). Furthermore, transcripts are the researcher’s written representations of what is communicated by the interviewee; as a result a gap can form between the researcher’s interpretation and the interviewee’s expressed meaning (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). To overcome these difficulties the researcher constructed literal transcriptions, preserving everything that was said and using average Spanish orthography (Grundy et al 2003). After that the researcher made cultural translations of these transcriptions into English language preserving coherency of the data gathered in both languages.
Analysis of the Data

In this thesis data was analysed according to four distinct stages. These stages are: (1) coding the data, (2) grouping codes into categories, (3) comparing categories and their relationships and (4) developing more abstract theoretical themes that encapsulate the categories (Denscombe, 2007: 252). This method was considered by the researcher appropriate to obtain the information required to attain the main aim of the research.

Researcher bias and subjectivity are limitations ordinarily understood as inevitable by most qualitative researchers (Mehra 2002); however, qualitative researchers are responsible to science to examine thoroughly their relationship with their research (Berg and Smith 1988). Consequently, the main risk experienced through the data analysis process was relying only on subjective judgement to ‘cherry pick’ fragments of data that support the researcher’s pre-conceived ideas to make a credible account. To overcome that limitation, the researcher adopted a systematic process of coding (see coding, categorisation and theme identification section below), and in particular, a particular generation of rules (see table 3.6) to determine and check categorisation was designed to reduce this process.

Furthermore, the process of cross-checking against observations and field notes (further discussed in the triangulation section) also helped the researcher to tackle bias and subjectivity. Finally, it is important to mention that the process described above can never totally eliminate bias; consequently, it would have been good to have had the codes/categories independently verified by an uninvolved researcher, however, time and economic resources did not allow the researcher to embrace this process, although this limitation would be overcome for future work.

The initial analysis of the interview data was based around the use of ‘theoretical categories’ (as described in Chapter 2 pp 29) derived from the elements of the activity system in the
literature on activity theory. These categories are: doings, practitioners, physical materials, cultural competences and understandings, social communities, physical servicescape, power and motives.

These categories were used to enable an initial structure to be given to the large body of data. As outlined in the previous chapter, these categories are broad descriptors of types of activity rather than narrow prescriptions of specific actions and, as such, their use does not undermine the broadly inductive stance of the research as the ‘content’ of these categories and the subsequent interpretations (described below) remain firmly grounded in the experiences of the respondents. For example, the categories more obviously and less obviously physical materials emerged from the data coding process. These codes relate to the element physical materials in the service encounter as a practical system, and are also related to the theoretical code of the material level of the service encounter presented in the concluding chapter.

Moreover, the additional use of observation to record the performance of practices also ensured that the interview interpretations, even when guided by an open framework, remained close to the actual recorded conduct of the situations observed (this is discussed further in relation to triangulation).

Therefore the starting point for analysis was to develop some consistent rules to allow the coding of the interview data into the structuring framework. These rules helped the researcher to ensure that a consistent approach was being adopted to all the interviews whilst remaining sufficiently flexible to capture the complexities of responses. Initially it was allowed for units of text to be included in more than one category, this being noted explicitly, and a further decision being made later as to whether this overlap could be dealt with through the use of more abstract categories (that could encompass more than one of the initial categories – as
explained more fully below). The rules for assigning interview excerpts (text units) to categories are outlined below in table 3.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Structuring Rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doings</td>
<td>Description of something being done or some action undertaken either by self (i.e. main practitioner) or other practitioners (i.e. other individual and collective practitioners). Identify status/position of practitioners and, where possible, duration of act and other participants, location of act, and resources deployed as part of this. Doing integrate other elements of the practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Description of those directly interviewed or mentioned by interviewees. Noting status, context, activities they are involved in, actions they carry on, and resources (un)used/available to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Materials</td>
<td>Identify description of objects and materials used and their context, including surroundings and settings – be sensitive to apparently mundane and taken for granted items. They include concrete more obvious material resources (i.e. smartphones, computer, dumbbells, clothing) and conceptual less obvious material resources (i.e. procedures, models, PowerPoint presentations, rule books)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Competences and Understandings</td>
<td>Words or phrases that indicate a sense of “how things should be done” and “how things are being done”, such as technical terms, references to shared standards/expectations, in-house jargon/terminology, know-how, background knowledge, myths, rules of thumb, stories, beliefs. Also include accounts of how things are learned and how knowledge (explicit and tacit), information and/or resources are shared and used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Communities</td>
<td>Words or phrases that relate to membership of specific groups, either explicitly (naming the group) or implicitly through references to similar others or shared practices; can include formal groups (e.g., membership of clubs or families) or informal. If possible identify indicators of membership position (status) and level of involvement/commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Servicescape</td>
<td>References to how space is used or understood, including references to factors such as crowding but also aesthetic appearance, décor, other physical artefacts present or used. Also references to length of time spent in specific places and effect on mood. It refers to a physical context (i.e. classroom, dojo, webpage, chat room) which may enable or constrain performing certain actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Words or phrases that indicate either controlling resources or being controlled by others. Include explanations of how this control (positive or negative) is believed to come about and whether any consequences follow from it. References to individuals, groups or organizations who are believed to exercise control and how this is understood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motives</td>
<td>Words or phrases that explain what someone wants to do and why they do this. Also explanations of motives attributed to others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6 Structuring rules for assigning interviews excerpts

The process of coding, categorisation and theme identification will be subsequently explained.

**Coding, Categorisation and Theme Identification**

In this research study data was coded and categorised to identify theoretical themes. This included the field notes of the researcher, observations, transcripts from the interviews and analytic field notes written throughout the empirical research study. This process aims to lead
to the creation of a theoretical framework (Strauss and Corbin, 2002) for service encounters from a practice perspective. A code is a concept, a word that signifies what is happening with a piece of data. Moreover, coding is the analytic process of examining data line by line or paragraph by paragraph depending on the style of the researcher, (Saldaña 2009) looking for significant events, experiences, feelings and so on, that are then after further categorised into categories or themes (Strauss and Corbin, 2002).

First of all, open (initial) coding, is a category produced empirically and is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies (Saldaña 2009). For this thesis codes are considered as names that identify extracts from data collected. Following first cycle coding techniques (Saldaña 2009) 163 initial descriptive codes were produced from the HE case and 159 codes were produced from the study in taerobics. These codes were spread across the categories of the service encounter as a practical system following the rules introduced in table 3.6. This process was supported by the creation and interpretation of analytic memos (see Appendix 5).

On the basis of this initial coding, each coded group was examined to identify commonalities and differences across the interview excerpts within the category. Open-coding was used to capture the different aspects of the category, i.e., giving a descriptive label to words or phrases that potentially might hold significance for understanding the activity. For example, within the category doings in taerobics, 35 open codes were produced, including labels such as ‘counting and shouting’, “signing attendance”, “using dumbells”, “asking for support”, “dealing with complaints”, ‘complaining’, “asking for rule bending”. Etc. These codes were also given memos written by the researcher which linked them to observations, to possible links to codes in other categories, and to issues and theories discussed in the literature. Once all the categories had been open-coded and memoed, an initial attempt was made to produce higher level categories that would bring together the initial categories in a way that simplified
the data pool and, simultaneously, pointed to potential themes and patterns that might be emerging. These initial codes were further categorised into more abstract categories by carrying out focused and theoretical coding (See appendix 6).

Subsequently, focused coding (Charmaz 1983:2014), as a second cycle analytic process, was adopted. In focused coding, the researcher builds categories that may be taken from the language of participants or from the researcher’s analytic interest. As a result, the researcher may use knowledge in the literature to expand clarify the codes to prepare for exploration of the emerging analysis (Charmaz 1983:2014; O’Shaughnessy 2009).

Furthermore, focused coding enabled the researcher to compare newly constructed codes during this cycle across cases to assess comparability and transferability (Saldaña 2009). Indeed, as well as open coding, focused coding was supported through memo writing using Charmaz (1983) steps to writing memos in the following way: (1) initial analytic memos were written to identify categories that explicate major patterns; (2) analytic memos were sorted for content (3) and analytic memos were integrated to reveal relationships between categories.

Consequently, by working across each of the initial open-coded categories, it was concluded that most of the labelled codes could be grouped into three categories that described the focus and purpose of the activity labelled (See Appendix 7 a-b-c). These three categories were labelled descriptively by the researcher as ‘Lifeworld practices (LWP)’, ‘Organizing practices (OP)’, and ‘Relational practices (RP)’ to reflect what they appeared to describe at an abstract level. These three categories had been arrived at through a process of data reduction whereby an initially high number of categories were refined by moving to increasingly more abstract levels until it appeared impossible to become any simpler without losing the meaning of the category and its inherent connection to the data. For example,
interim categories that were subsequently subsumed into the final categories included: ‘personal problems’; ‘body image’; ‘preparing classes’; ‘working’; ‘managing money’; etc. These subsequently became part of the Lifeworld practice category.

The Lifeworld category was developed out of codes and categories that related directly to the personal circumstances of the interviewees. This grouping emerged from the initial codes allocated by the researcher but was subsequently checked by examining each constituent interview extract in terms of the following criteria: first, was it clear that the focus was primarily on an issue that was pertinent to the individual’s personal life (i.e., not merely a ‘turn of phrase’ or allusion to a non-specific idea); second, was this confirmed when the interview extract was considered in the light of those parts of the interview that had not been selected (i.e., was there anything in the whole interview that appeared to contradict or challenge this interpretation). If this process raised doubts about interpretation, the extract was either excluded or a memo was added to indicate why caution should be used in this case. In practice, relatively few extracts failed on these tests. Examples of initial codes included: ‘studying’; ‘taking classes’; ‘managing classes’; ‘personal history’; ‘keeping discipline’; etc.

The Organizing category was developed in the same way. Here the focus was on codes and labels that indicated a focus on the way in which the interviewee interacted or engaged with the case study organization (or with another relevant organization beyond this, e.g., in the case of Taerobics, another competitor gym). For this grouping, the researcher was subsequently checking and examining each constituent interview extract in terms of the following criteria: first, was it clear that the focus was primarily on an issue that was pertinent to the form of practices and elements of the practice (i.e. physical materials, power) that enable/hinder value creation during service encounters; second, the interview extract was
confirmed following the same rationale used for the lifeworld practice category. Then, the same checks for interpretation used in the lifeworld practice category were undertaken for the relational practice category. Examples of initial codes included: ‘recruiting; ‘challenging rules’; ‘updating materials’; ‘complaining’; ‘training’; etc.

The Relational category was developed in the same way out of codes and labels that indicated a focus on direct relationships, either between participants in the encounter or between customers and suppliers. For this grouping, the researcher was subsequently checking and examining each constituent interview extract in terms of the following criteria: first, was it clear that the focus was primarily on an issue that was pertinent to the interactions and relationships happening at service encounters (i.e. within and beyond main encounters) among social communities and practitioners (i.e., students and students; students and lecturers; lecturers and lecturers; lecturers and administrative staff; etc.); second, the interview extract was confirmed following the same rationale used for the lifeworld and organizing practice categories. Then, the same checks for interpretation used in the lifeworld and organizing practice categories were undertaken for the relational category. Example of initial codes included: ‘communicating internally’; ‘spill over’; ‘networking’; ‘role model’; etc.

However, whereas these three categories concerned the focus of the activity, the data also suggested that activities could be categorised according to their time and function. This categorisation first emerged out of the researcher’s realisation of the obvious need to distinguish between encounters that took place in a face-to-face context and those that were enabled by the growing use of ICT. Thus initially it was possible to separate out accounts of service encounters that related to the use of ICT and, as it emerged, primarily social media, labelled as ‘Virtual encounters’. As would be expected this categorisation cut across the three
groupings already identified and was therefore used as a category itself but also as a way of dividing the earlier categories within themselves.

However, on inspection of the material that remained outside the ‘Virtual’ category, it became apparent that this might also need to be sub-divided. The researcher identified a potential distinction between encounters that appeared to be as necessary preliminaries to the delivery/receipt of the service (e.g., enrolment; payment; rule-learning; interviews, etc.) and those that involved the actual delivery and receipt of the service (e.g., exercises; class attendance; participation; etc.). Therefore it was decided to categorise the accounts of face-to-face activities as either ‘facilitating’ or ‘Performing’ respectively. As with the Virtual category it was possible to treat these as independent categories but also as ways of partitioning the three earlier categories (lifeworld, organizational and relational).

These six categories provide a useful way of reducing the complexity of the data generated through the interviews and also as a structure to present the results in a descriptive form to give the reader an understanding of how respondents understood their participation in the service encounters under study. As such they will be used in the following chapters to give this sense of narrative description, in a structured form, of the service encounters as experienced.

Finally, theoretical (selective) coding functions like an umbrella to cover codes and categories formulated through the analysis of empirically gathered qualitative data (Saldaña 2009). For this thesis, theoretical coding seeks to link categories and subcategories to explain what the research is all about (Strauss and Corbin 2002).

Here again the starting point was the initial coding of the data within the theoretical categories derived from the activity framework. However, the examination of these extracts now focused on the idea of ‘contextual relevance’. Here it was necessary for the researcher to
adopt a more ‘interpretive’ stance in order to try to identify connections that were not necessarily readily apparent in the direct coded extract. The approach taken was to pose a series of analytic questions to each extract and to generate potential answers as memos. The questions were as follows: i) does the topic of this extract depend upon meanings, actions or physical resources outside of the direct encounter? ii) Is this dependence implicit or explicit? iii) How closely linked are these ‘external’ factors (i.e., do they operate as taken-for-granted background assumptions or are they an acknowledged ‘framework’ for the encounter)? In the resulting memos the researcher provided explicit reasons for his answers and the assumptions upon which these were based.

This process produced a large number of statements relating to the ‘contextual relevance’ of the data segments within each of the activity categories. For example, within the doings category, the customers’ practice of ‘asking for information’ was suggested by the researcher to be likely to imply the existence of alternative activities elsewhere such that a choice could be made based on the information provided (a point that was made explicitly in some extracts). This, in turn, was suggested to depend upon a wider set of commercial and cultural practices that constitute the market for, say, fitness provision at a particular place and time. Similarly, the label of ‘professional studio’, under the category of Physical Servicescape, was argued by the researcher to depend upon meeting specific standards associated with good practice (in the case of taerobics, specified by the sport’s controlling body), but also on more widely held assumptions of what constitutes an acceptable working environment (for staff and practitioners), shaped by societal standards of living, media images of ‘attractive’ environments, and associated notions of value-for-money.

As a second stage in this process, it was decided to determine whether these instances of contextual relevance could be reduced to a series of more abstract categories that would enable the efficient specification of more general issues that could be considered as potential
elements in an explanation of the nature of service encounters. This was achieved by the researcher giving a descriptive name or short phrase to each instance of ‘contextual relevance’. These were then examined for similarities and focus on common or closely related issues, following which a more general name was developed. This went through four stages before arriving at what were considered to be the most general categories that would retain meaningfulness: naming; grouping based on descriptive similarity; identification and naming of common features; developing summary label. In the following empirical chapters, tables will be used to show the identification of contextual relevance items and their grouping (as ‘contextual factors’) from the second level above. In the Concluding chapter the third and fourth levels of abstraction are provided in terms of a model of contextual variables potential implicated in service encounters. At the most general level this are given as Individual, relational, Material, and Social (with the more specific, third level, labels also given in Table 6.1).

A similar process was adopted in relation to field notes with these being broken down into broad categories. Because of the nature of these notes it was not deemed effective to engage in the process of extensive open coding (both due to the potential bias inevitable in data produced by a single individual but also because the nature of the record did not allow this to be done effectively). Rather the notes and memos were used in collaboration with the coding process of the interview data to check the validity of the inferences and categories being constructed and their potential relationships to each other.

It can be argued that the latter process of moving towards categories of ‘contextual relevance’ and ‘contextual factors’ relies heavily on the judgement and inferences of the researcher (See Appendix 8 a-b). Whilst this is accepted, this is regarded as an essential part of moving from directly grounded data towards higher level explanations. By making clear the systematic nature of these processes and the arguments used to underpin it, it is hoped that a judgement
of validity can be made by the reader. It is admitted that these explanations must remain provisional and tentative until they are subject to more rigorous testing using samples that enable more representative judgements to be made. Finally, it is also hoped that the explicit nature of what was done goes some way to mitigating the risk of unacknowledged bias or lack of consistency.

**Quality of the Research Study**

Quality of research studies can be measured according to certain logical tests. However, there is no consensus amongst authors of research methods literature about determining the best procedures for evaluation the quality of qualitative studies. The problem is that traditional methods for assuring research quality (e.g. validity and reliability) are habitually connected with quantitative research. This mainly happens for quantitative researchers that develop instruments that are hailed for being standardised, unbiased and impartial (Denscombe, 2007, Gill et al 2010). Qualitative researchers have been critiqued for failing to adhere to notions of reliability and validity in the traditional sense. Indeed, the terms validity and reliability do not carry the same connotations in qualitative research as they do in quantitative research (Cresswell 2009).

This research agrees with Cresswell’s (2009) position that methods to evaluate the quality of qualitative research studies should be different due to their fundamental differences in methodological procedures and research practice. However, this thesis follows the standpoint of Miles and Huberman, (1994) and uses the traditional terminology of quantitative studies. This decision was taken for reasons of clarity and familiarity. It goes without saying that, more important than the terminology used for assuring the quality of a research study, is the need to demonstrate that data analysis was undertaken in a systematic and transparent way,
following a rigorous methodology and assuring that research design and implementation were practical and justifiable.

There are two indicators that were used during the development of this research to ensure the high quality of this study – (1) triangulation and (2) validity and reliability. The remainder of this section explains these methods for assuring the quality of this research study.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation involves the practice of viewing phenomena from more than one perspective. Miles and Huberman (1994:226) explain that triangulation supports “a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with it or, at least do not contradict it”. Several authors (Patton 1987; Gummesson 1991; Blaikie 2000; Denscombe 2007) explain triangulation as the usage of multiple research tools, aiming to extensively develop the quality of the research data, results and the complete research study, also highlighting the advantage of using in when carrying out case studies.

Patton (1987) proposed four types of triangulation which are by data source, by method, by researcher and by theory. This research project triangulates information by data source through the use of multiple-case studies and by data method through the use of several data collection activities.

First, data source triangulation looks for the validity of the findings by checking different sources of information (Denscombe 2007). Consequently, triangulation of data combines data from different sources and at different moments, in different places and from different people (Flick 2011). Since research design for this study can be seen as a Type 4 case study (Yin 2003), the researcher explored multiple sites (i.e. two: taerobics and HE) having multiple units of analysis (the service practices within the encounter itself including its material
artefacts, the actions of participants and the factors associated with the encounter’s context) which needed data collection from different groups of participants within the encounter (i.e. administrative staff, lecturers, students, instructors). Consequently, the researcher explored the sites focusing on the practical actions taken by participants (i.e. service users, service providers) using resources (i.e. materials, physical and virtual spaces) during various service encounters which were later classified into three different types of service encounters and three different main types of practices (See Chapters four and five).

Second, methodology triangulation is the most common form of triangulation adopted and it is related to the use of different methods allowing one method to compare to the others (Denscombe 2007). A variety of research methods were used throughout different phases of the researcher study. For example, in the pilot study structured and unstructured interviews were shown to be unsufficient to generate a holistic understanding of the problem. Consequently, the researcher used ethnographic interviews, participant and non-participant observation and field notes. With the use of participant, non-participant observation and field notes, the researcher was able to add depth to the interpretation of the focused and theoretical categories that emerged and the potential relationships between them in terms of contextual relevance. Given the number of different levels of analysis necessary to encompass the notion of a contextually embedded service encounter, the use of these different sources of perspective was vital to a grasp of this complex phenomenon.

This study used interviews as the main data collection method. However, observation (participant and non-participant) and field notes were important supporting methods to create a credible account of service practices within service encounters. Since interviews were the core research method of the study, observations and field notes were analysed following the rules (structuring framework) explained in the analysis of data section, and the categories and
codes from interviews explained previously in the coding, categorisation and theme identification section, interrogating the data to support confirmation and/or contradiction in the findings. This process helped the researcher check and verify the interpretation of data. Although some inconsistencies were found between what was observed through observations and what was said through interviews, those differences were not related to the rules, categories or codes per se but to the degree of participation of respondents carrying out practices.

Finally, the advantages of triangulation rely on collecting better knowledge of phenomena by seeing it through different standpoints. Denscombe (2007:138) acknowledges that triangulation contributes to provide a “fuller picture” of the findings as well as to “improve accuracy” through confirmation and corroboration of the findings. Appendix 9 schematically shows the triangulation process adopted for the Taerobics case study as an example.

**Validity and Reliability**

Cresswell (2009) suggests that qualitative validity means that researchers check for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across a variety of researchers and different projects. Furthermore, a limitation which is often raised with regard to ethnographical studies is that the small number of cases selected and analysed, casts doubt on the representativeness and generalisation of the findings (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983).

Richardson (2000) suggests five conditions for evaluating the validity and reliability of ethnographical studies: substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impact and expression of reality. These criteria are used in this study in order to determine if the explanations presented in the ethnography are credible or not.
First of all, for a “substantive contribution” Richardson (2000) suggests the researcher and writer of the ethnography need to demonstrate a deeply grounded human-world understanding and perspective. As a result, the researcher should reflect on whether the piece of research actually contributes to the understanding of the phenomena at hand, in this case, value co-creation at extended service encounters in high customer participation contexts. Therefore, the substantive contribution of the empirical research is the very specific case of understanding value co-creation at service encounters in two settings which offer customer participation services driven by aspirations (HE and fitness) which basically require active participation from subjects in the value creation process in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia. Studies of service encounters seen through the lens of practice theory at this specific context (HE and fitness in Barranquilla) do not exist and basically offer valuable findings for the companies that helped the researcher by giving him access to the context.

Secondly, by “aesthetic merit” Richardson (2000) refers to how the text is written: whether it invites interpretive responses and discussion and is satisfying, complex and not boring. In this case, it would have been very helpful for the researcher to write the accounts in his mother tongue (Spanish) instead of English. However, the researcher made his best effort to make the descriptions as vivid as possible, seeking to make them easy to follow. The intention of the researcher has been to make the accounts understandable, interesting and perhaps engaging, while avoiding jargon where possible.

Thirdly, by “reflexivity” Richardson (2000) refers to how the information was gathered, ethical issues, how the author’s subjectivity being both a producer and a product of the text, how he presented his subjectivity in the text. The accounts in this thesis can be considered as subjective but also make for a strong description of human behaviour, in context, such that the behaviour becomes meaningful to an outsider (Geertz 1973). Finally, ethical
considerations, such as agreeing participation in observations and interviews and confidentiality, were always taken into consideration throughout the whole research project.

Fourthly, with “impact” Richardson (2000) refers to how the research affects the researcher and the readers emotionally and intellectually; how the accounts generated new questions and move the researcher and the readers to action. One of the objectives of using this applied ethnography was to be relevant to the ideas and the goals of the companies which gave the researcher permission to do the research project, according to Chamber’s (2000) definition of applied ethnography. The owner of the fitness centre commented that the result of this detailed description about service encounters at his fitness centre has given him the motivation to make some structural changes, which would be explained in more detail as practical implication. In HE, the response has been more conservative since decision making is much more complex and requires further thinking and analysis. Personally, because of this research, the researcher has reflected on his own practices within the university making profound changes in his approaches to lecturing and assessing and managing academic service encounters.

Finally, Richardson (2000) points out that the fifth criterion to evaluate an ethnographical study is to assess whether it expresses reality. This means that it seems a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the “real”. This criterion has been confirmed by informants engaged in the study, both in the context of fitness and HE. For example, in taerobics, some of the participants even laughed when shown the presentation since they felt they were represented in the accounts carrying out some actions they had never realised but which they were agreed they were doing. They also participated in clarifying some observations of the researcher. In HE, some people involved in the context but in
different institutions also felt represented and actually offered their institutions to keep carrying out the research.

In summary, the researcher can conclude that the empirical research offers some reasonably good quality in the specific contexts in which it was carried out and specifically to the companies that offered their help to the researcher by giving him access to do the study.

**Limitations of the Study**

Research studies using ethnographical methods are traditionally connected with the limitation that the small number of cases brings doubts as to their representativeness. In the case of this thesis, the study is circumscribed to the sites of postgraduate higher education and fitness explored in Barranquilla, Colombia. It is also important to mention that the view of service encounter as activity systems is contextual; therefore, value creation at service encounters is highly related to the resources and elements that are part of a service encounter under scrutiny and how these are integrated through service practice in a specific cultural socio-historical context.

As was mentioned before, the accounts presented in the following chapters are subjectively shaped and another researcher would likely find, say, three, or seven, or ten theoretical themes as well as four, six, or ten different elements of the service encounter as well as two or five different dimensions of service encounters to describe the sites explored. However, the author also suggests that a different researcher using the same research methodology could have certainly found similar findings according to the themes and insights produced here.
Summary

The idea of exploring value creation of service encounters through theories of practice calls for a research design that allows the researcher to enter a continuous dialogue with the phenomenon studied. This chapter has described the research design used by this study to address the research questions formulated in the beginning of the chapter. The chapter commenced by selecting a research approach that guided the development of the research methodology of the study. Due to the exploratory nature of the research questions the study adopted interpretivism as a research approach. The scarcity of research that characterises the subject area requires a research approach that enables the exploration and description of the phenomenon. Therefore a qualitative methodology that focuses on exploring and describing is more appropriate than a quantitative methodology which tests and verifies. The qualitative research approach adopted in this study was a market-oriented ethnography.

Within this ethnographic framework it was considered appropriate to adopt a case study design. A multiple-case study approach was chosen because of the following reasons: (1) The ability of case studies to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of service practices; (2) the ability of case studies for allowing the comparison and contrast between cases, both being chosen because of a similar structure (high consumer participation) but with different forms of practice; (3) the fact that case studies enable an examination of information in breadth without compromising depth. In this case, the possibility of identifying factors common to both cases that can be identified as a basis specifying contextual and other factors that could be significant for this structural type of encounter; (4) the fact that case studies offer the opportunity of using multiple sources of data that enable triangulation to take place.

The different data collection methods used in this study was ethnographic interviews, participant and non-participant observation and field notes. The coding, categorisation and
theme identification mechanisms (open, focused and theoretical coding) used by this study were described in the section named analysis of the data. Issues of triangulation and validity and reliability of ethnographic studies were considered in the quality of research section of this chapter. The chapter finishes considering the limitations of the study. The results of this investigation are now presented, followed by a discussion of their significance.

The methodological perspective adopted was interpretivism using qualitative research. The qualitative approach adopted in this study was a market-oriented ethnography, using ethnographic interviews, participant and non-participant observation and field notes, as research techniques.
CHAPTER 4 - SERVICE PRACTICES DURING SERVICE ENCOUNTERS AT TAEROBICS: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Introduction

The empirical findings of the study of practices at the fitness site in Barranquilla, Colombia, are discussed in this chapter. First of all, a general explanation of Taerobics as a practice is offered considering three main service consumption practices in this context: lifeworld, organising, relational). The chapter subsequently maps these practices according to the proposed elements of the service encounter as a practical system in three different dimensions of service encounters (facilitating, virtual, performing) in the context. This mapping of service encounters highlights current practices, contextual relevance and contextual factors involved in creating value during service encounters. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief discussion of service encounters as practical systems which are constellations of resources potentially integrated through service consumption practices.

Taerobics as Practice

Taerobics represented a very interesting context in which to explore service consumption practices due to the complexity of actions influencing consumer’s active participation in value creation. For, without consumer active participation in integrating resources, it is not possible to construct the actual potential value at service encounters. Ethnographic accounts of these practices provide a way of digging deeper into these practices of value creation during service encounters. These service consumption practices during service encounters can be classified into three main practices:

1. Lifeworld practice: the service encounter within the context of socio-cultural practices of health and fitness (moral, aesthetic, health related, fitness related, wellness related meanings and practices)
2. Organising practice: the service encounter within the context of socio-cultural practices that shape performances to culturally established standards (etiquette, civility, institutionalised quality standards)

3. Relational practice: the service encounter within the context of social bonds and identities beyond the encounter (back-stage spill-over; identity-through-practice community, social bonds, networks)

The practice of taerobics goes further than the encounter or class at the studio. The studio is just a physical servicescape where different actions and practices are carried out. Some of the service encounters (especially administrative) are very similar to other service encounters occurring elsewhere. Some service encounters at the studio are also similar to encounters at other types of health clubs such as gyms, martial arts dojos and dance studios within the fitness practice context. Taerobics can therefore be considered one of a variety of fitness practices available to consumers for exercising or working out. As such the specific service encounter needs to be understood within the context of other offerings available to the consumer (i.e., different forms of work-out) as well as their own motives and experiences. Thus, the practices of providers and consumers can be expected to reflect these contextual factors but also to shape the way in which the encounter is organised and co-produced on an ongoing basis. By outlining the observable practices and identifying their potential contextual features, the research aims to identify a fuller range of factors that need to be taken into account when service encounters are co-produced, contrary to traditional concern with the direct relationship between consumer and provider.

Firstly, with regard to lifeworld practice, it became clear that the motives for entering this type of encounter were far from simple and carried meanings that went well beyond a simple utilitarian exchange. There were instead deeply embedded in the consumer’s own sense of
self, which, in turn, impacted the way they conducted their lives well beyond the encounter itself. For this reason, the encounter could not be completely understood without taking into account the consumer’s life-structure and experiences beyond the actual encounter setting; in short within a wider context encompassing consumers past and present biographical experiences, as can be concluded by the following excerpts from interviews with participants which depict taerobics as a kind of “Me-time” practice:

“I reflected on that and I decided to stay home and take care of my family, but it’s a critical point, because a woman can dedicate so much to her family that she doesn’t remember who she was before. So, this class is like the confirmation of the moment I am going through right now…making the decision to start with this means that I am taking some time to myself, because before I was busy all the time running errands and doing things for my family. (Kate Fuller, Taerobics Participant)

“At home they know that exercise for me is sacred. On Saturday I take two taerobics classes, from 8 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. and from 8.30 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. My daughter then tells me: “Mom, I have to be at 9 a.m. at a volleyball match”. And I tell her that she can go, but she has to leave with me at 7.45 a.m. She starts grouching and I tell her that I can leave her at a friend’s house and give her other alternatives, but I don’t stop the class” (Shosanna Dreyfus, Taerobics Participant)

The taerobics encounter thus became an important part of everyday life for participants, a part of their daily everyday routines, routines which exerted an influence far beyond the actual encounter in time and space. This can be seen in the following excerpts.

“I wake up in the morning, I go to the studio (taerobics), then I come back home, I take a shower and I start doing cheese sticks and other fried snacks because I sell them…” (Vernita Green, Taerobics Participant)

“I have a biological clock, because I wake up at the same time every day, between 5.30 and 6 a.m. The first thing I do is take the children to school. Then I work out (taerobics) for an hour and I do so three or four times a week, depending on my job commitments. Then I run to work and I am in my office sometimes way past noon. I have time to have lunch at home and I go back to work. At night, normally, I dedicate that time to the children and my husband.” (Shosanna Dreyfus, Taerobics Participant)

“My day starts at 4.30 a.m., I leave at 5 a.m. for the academy (taerobics) and sometimes I stay there for an hour or if I can I stay there for an hour and a half and I take the taerobics classes. Then I come back, I start working at 7.30 a.m. And I finish at 6 p.m.” (Sofie Fatale, Taerobics Participant)

Furthermore, members also emphasise the impact of family on their lifeworld, thus affecting taerobics practice:
“My children, for instance, if I have a special family activity, then I don’t go to taerobics.”
(Shosanna Dreyfus, Taerobic Participant)

The practice of taerobics can be considered as a form of “habitual behaviour” that takes the form of a routine that does not allow too many variations or changes. On the other hand, motives for doing a taerobics class seem more complex and linked to wider contextual aspirations of health and beauty with a “transformational intent”. This can be seen in the following excerpts:

“…so I do it to stay healthy, also because I want to look good and because I mentally need it. It’s good to do taerobics.” (Mallory Knox, Taerobics Participant)

“First, my health. I think that a physically active person and eating healthy food will lead to a better life and also because I want to see me in shape.” (Shosanna Dreyfus, Taerobics Participant)

“The idea is not to be healthy just because I eat fruits and vegetables, but I know that I am healthy inside and out, thanks to the exercise and it’s a moment for me, to disconnect from everything and I don’t think about the everyday stress.” (Sofie Fatale, Taerobics Participant)

“Staying healthy, being healthy, mentally I feel really well and that takes my stress out, I feel happy with that…hmm, I drive away all the diseases, I never get a cold. I feel really well.”(Vernita Green, Taerobics Participant)

“Because of how I feel, I feel well, I feel healthy, I feel good physically speaking, emotionally speaking. I do taerobics and I feel better in all aspects.”(Karen Kim, Taerobics Participant)

Secondly, with regard to organising practices, the practice of taerobics can be considered as a form of community construction more than exercise instruction. Consequently, members in taerobics do not simply exercise but they work out collectively coordinating and organising their exercise routine. In order to do so, they not only have to manage their energy and organise their movements but also regulate the mutual interference which their co-habitation of space provokes.

This need for organisation and regulation in taerobics practices is overlaid with rules of civilized interaction. Consequently, rules of wider society, fitness and sport contexts (both tacit and explicit), or at least some of them, still apply in taerobics actions. Participants in service encounters therefore shape their performances in accordance with these demands.
Here too it can be seen that these practices do not stand alone as isolated features of the 
service encounter but must be understood within this wider context of socially acceptable 
disciplines. Examples of technical performance in classes mediated by principles of 
taekwondo can be seen in the following excerpt:

“We try to transmit the same principles of taekwondo in taerobics...for example, in taerobics, 
when the people count and shout their expressions. What we try to do when they have to count 
is that they forget about their stress in life and they have to get into the class and work 
together. ...the idea is for them to get the confidence, the discipline to the training, the respect 
is more within yourself and the control is to not give up. We do it through a friendly and fun 
environment...I think I didn’t explain it too well, but by you taking the classes you know what 
I’m saying.” (Vincent Vega, Instructor)

Furthermore, examples of tacitly understood responsibilities for technical performance in 
classes can be seen in the following excerpts:

“Hmm, not really like official rules. We are all determined to do exercise and if you go to that 
academy it’s because you want to do the class and you have to show good attitudes in class. 
The most important rule, in my opinion, is to start the class and be able to finish it.” (Hattori 
Hanzo, Taerobics Participant)

“Perseverance, concentration, coordination, sacrifice, so you can do the exercise well.” 
(Sofie Fatale, Taerobics Participant)

“People stand in their spots and they don’t make the other one feel uncomfortable.” (Mallory 
Knox, Taerobics Participant)

Also, the sense of mastery and respect transmitted by the lead instructor is fundamental for an 
organised and regulated taerobics encounter. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

“Mr Vincent Vega transmits a lot of discipline and authority and people follow that. He’s 
very respectful and that also happens in tae kwon-do. He’s not like the ordinary professor 
who says hello in an informal way, he’s respectful...there is a respectful environment in 
class.” (Mallory Knox, Taerobics Participant)

We can see here that the taerobics practice, is a considered as way of “working together”.

This was noticeable during the interviews, where it emerged that one of the most important 
aspects for joining and continuing to attend taerobics classes was that participants go there to 
work out. Even though is also very noticeable that participants have different degrees of
expertise, all of them are focused on doing exercise and giving their best, as is shown in the following excerpt from an interview:

> What I like is that it’s a small group, it’s not full of people and I like it because everyone is working out, it’s not like the gym where people seem to be there but not doing exercise. That’s not the case of taerobics, everyone is doing exercise. You can go to a gym and you’ll see very fit bodies but they are not doing anything...contrary to taerobics, because everyone is working out.” (Lanna Frank, taerobics participant)

> “Everyone says hello, everyone is awake and talking about the class...everyone is concentrated.... It’s a nice environment and you can see that people go to class because they want to be there, but they don’t go to chat with other people, they are all there because they want to exercise, do the movements, raise your leg and work hard for it. I love that. I get there and it’s really enjoyable.” (Mallory Knox, Taerobics participant)

Moreover, a sense of community, co-operation and healthy competition are some of the outcomes of this constant flux between individual and communal motives. While “losing weight” and “getting fit” are more individualistic issues influenced by a hedonist competitive society, the motives of “feeling good” and “getting healthy” create a much more relaxed environment where the various participants and elements of the practice support actions that enable an individual’s active participation in value creation. In some cases, other participants influence active participation in value creation while in other cases, physical tools (e.g. music, dumbbells) do. However, individual participants’ idea of concentration and pursuit of motive (e.g. feeling good, getting healthy, finishing the class) is central to communal participation and active transformation of the practice as well as a superior, differential attribute of the value proposition of taerobics. This can be observed in the following excerpts:

> “But, when I got here I saw the academy every day and I thought that it was very interesting because all the people were concentrated on the exercise, they weren’t there just telling each other the latest gossip.” (Kate Fuller, Taerobics Participant)

> “Oh, yes, I had some partners. One left, she’s Canadian and her husband was working in Barranquilla...she did the exercise perfectly and we were very good friends and we went to the same classes whenever we could. We stood side by side and we tried to do the kicks as high as we could and we competed but we didn’t do it consciously.... Now, when (the instructor) is taking the class I try to stand near her and it’s very tough, but I feel like I have a partner beside me.” (Shosanna Dreyfus, Taerobics Participant)

> “I know that I can’t stop when I am in the front of the room...if I feel lazy or sleepy I simply don’t go to class and if I feel well I go to class and not just that, I need to work out.” (Mallory Knox, Taerobics Participant)
Thirdly, relational practices refer to spill-over encounters which may occur ‘accidentally’ or spontaneously and not under the control of the provider, it can play a positive role in the ongoing encounter. These practices were observed through: (1) socialising on the way from the parking lot to the elevator and studio, (2) greeting other participants at the studio, (3) saying goodbye and leaving, (4) socialising on the way to the elevator and the parking lot and (5) socialising through virtual communities.

Spill-over seems to help the consumer adjust their expectations of the encounter. This is something that can be regarded as characteristic of encounters where there is not only high levels of interaction between suppliers and consumers but between consumers themselves, either during the service encounter or, as in this case, interacting ‘informally’ in close proximity to the encounter. As such, although it would be too “artificial” if spill-over were managed closely, there could be opportunities to build a space for spill-over to develop.

To wrap up, taerobics is one of many practices in the “doing exercise” category. In this category, many participants are influenced by unrealistic expectations built on unethical marketing practices, such as misleading advertising (Sheth and Sisodia 2006), commonly used in this business context. Consequently, a percentage of people who join taerobics do not maintain a pattern of regular attendance beyond a couple of months. However, in some cases participants reflect on their socially constructed and unrealistic expectations of the practice (e.g. fast and easy results) and their initial individualistic and somewhat unrealistic motives (e.g. losing weight, getting fit) start changing to new constructed communal motives (e.g. feeling good about themselves for being part in a community, wellness). Taerobics becomes a part of their life and regular taerobics attendance becomes a ‘moral career’ (Becker and Strauss 1956 in Crossley 2006); indeed, their orientation to the practice is transformed in the value creation process through service consumption at different service encounters.
Consequently, while lifeworld practices can be considered as the main influences for joining taerobics; organisational and relational practices can be considered as the main influences for members in continuing taerobics.

**Service Encounters at Taerobics**

Service encounters at the taerobics practice can be seen to possess three broad dimensions: (1) Facilitating encounters, which refer to practices related to payments for the classes, signing attendance, class enrolment, following community standards etc.; (2) Virtual encounters, which refer to practices on social communities (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) as well as the taerobics web-page and (3) Performing encounters, which refer to practices that occur in the dojo. These types of encounters will be further developed subsequently.

**Facilitating Encounters**

There are different facilitating encounters at taerobics which put participants in the role of service users or potential service users and administrative staff as service supporters and service organisers whose role is to remind service users of their obligations and duties (i.e. making payment, signing attendance, etc.). There are basically four service user obligations: (1) payment of fees, (2) signing the attendance list (3) respecting other participants, administrative staff and membership rules and duties and (4) to come ready for the workout. However, there are a few complications, especially with the activities related to payments, signing of attendance and respecting membership rules.

Membership for taerobics can be paid monthly every three or six months and, participants being allowed to take as many classes as they want during the paid period. Regular attending participants who have adopted taerobics as a “moral career” in their lifeworld practices usually take three-monthly and six-monthly plans. Alternatively, participants can buy a
“tiquetera” (ticket book) that is a non-transferable agreement in which participants are allowed to take 20 classes over a period of two months. This second type of agreement is a common commercial practice in the context of fitness in Barranquilla, which allow “fitness users” to combine a selection of value propositions and fitness activities. Alternatively, it allows participants to use the service offering as often as they can (i.e. example three times a week, vacation) depending to their lifeworld practices.

This kind of membership generates multiple conflicts and misunderstandings, since service users commonly try to take advantage of the service provider by attaching to contextual cultural images and signification and legitimation structures (Giddens 1984) finding excuses to break rules such as “two months’ expiration” or “transferability”. Also, this kind of membership necessitates that participants sign the attendance list which absorbs a great deal of administrative staff time.

Decision-making and problem solving in taerobics is centralised and centres on Master Vincent Vega. This kind of administrative practice also generates the construction of biased dispositions over front-line administrative personnel as well as service-user misbehaviour, complaints and biased word of mouth commonly shared by participants during spill-over encounters. An example of user misbehaviour can be seen in the following interview excerpt:

“The thing is that, if I make a decision, he will ask me why I did that and how I got to solve the problem in that way. So, I prefer to pass complaints on to Henry. For instance, the problem that I have with this woman who always borrows the dumbbells and never buys them and she’s like: “turn down the volume of the stereo…turn off the A/C…move the stereo over there”. Every day she comes up with something different and what I do is I tell her to stop for a minute and then I go and ask Henry if I can turn down the volume of the stereo, if I can turn off the A/C and all that…he’s the centre of everything. (Mia Wallace, Taerobics Instructor)”

It also instils uncertainty and role conflicts in service employees:

“Sometimes I get stressed because I can’t make decisions and there are times when I feel relieved because if there is a problem I don’t have to deal with that. But I think we should
Potential users often come to the studio in order to learn more from administrative staff about the taerobics system and its promises constructed through advertising (controlled and spill-over) practices. Some potential users ask for a free introductory class in order to try the service and compare it to others. Following commercial practices in the fitness context, administrative staff reinforces the promises without fully taking into consideration potential participants’ previous personal history (i.e. sports, diet, family, discipline) and some other conditions which would help participants attain results. This could help to clarify potential participants’ socially constructed expectations which may be somewhat unrealistic. Some other questions are related to misconceptions (i.e. signification) around the “aerobics” ending of the word taerobics, which is associated to difficult choreographies, extreme coordination and exercise for “women”. These are resolved by a short explanation of the system which is relatively simple. Table 4.1 describes “facilitating encounters” according to the standpoint of service encounters as practical systems taking into consideration current practices, their contextual relevance and context factors which influence value creation. The contextual relevance column is based on the researcher’s inferences drawn from the observations of practices and the interview themes with participants. As such they can be seen as summaries of issues that need to be located within a wider context that was not named as such by the participants but that represent an example of ‘focused coding’ (see previous chapter) derived by the researcher’s interpretation. The context factor column represents a further refinement of the previous column (‘theoretical coding’) in which the issues of relevance are given a conceptual label that identifies them as abstract notions able to be specified in a wider setting than the specific situation of the encounter. This applies to the tables used in the rest of this chapter and the following one.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Practice</th>
<th>Contextual relevance</th>
<th>Context factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DOINGS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potential Participants:</strong> Asking for information about the classes</td>
<td>- Verifying formal responses against observed practice and physical resources compared to other service offerings within the wider social context and the competitive context; -Comparing claimed value proposition against competition (e.g., physical beauty, community and fitness). -Drawing on wider consumer-value discourses to negotiate concessions; -Evaluating value co-produced against consistency of administrative practices as encountered in wider consumer contexts. - Engaging in revenue-earning practices to ensure job security in an uncertain market/labour market; establishing routines to ensure orderly conduct of service and underpinning organisation to guard against loss to competitors; -Managing consumer demands within a competitive market for self-development; - Locating the specific service offering as the best option for consumers in this market.</td>
<td>-Individual biography; -Social and economic relationships; -Cultural values of beauty and health; -Cultural values of service consumption; -Market value of competitive services; -Perceived social value of service outcome; -Business practices (marketing, managerial) of competitors and comparators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants:</strong> Signing attendance, merchandising shopping, paying for membership, enrolling for classes, complaining, rule bending (asking for)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative staff:</strong> Selling value offerings, assuring attendance list signing, asking for payments and fees, promoting value offerings, dealing with complaints, dealing with petitions for rule bending</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRACTITIONERS</strong></td>
<td>-Different levels of resources and managerial knowledge. -Different role expectations in relation to the service. -Overlap between these roles: administrators as experts with experience; participants as role models for the service’s success (drawn upon by administrators); -Potential users as indicators of demand hence the utility of the service in the wider self-development market.</td>
<td>-Known role-expectations for customer satisfaction; -Known role-expectations for customer (mis)behaviour;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants, administrative staff, potential users</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHYSICAL MATERIALS</strong></td>
<td>-Money as an indicator of value, comparable to market exchanges in the wider context, requiring service providers to work to maintain service co-production and avoid loss to competitors. - Standardised ‘business materials’ that create the image of professionalism and order and, in turn, value for money against wider competition. - Objects that signify success and effectiveness and locate the service as successful within the wider context of the activity and against modern standards of quality and aesthetic value delivery, i.e. positioning the service within the wider market of self-development offering and the need to keep in line with changes in fashion in these spaces.</td>
<td>-Monetary values linked to wider economic climate (priorities) and to popular discourses of aesthetic/health value. -Material and less material procedures supporting the service linked to wider market standards and to value discourses above. -Professional standards established against wider industry norms and consumer experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants:</strong> Money, clothing, accessories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative staff:</strong> Procedures, rule book, phone, computer, internet, flyers, attendance lists, enrolment sheets, merchandising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Studio:</strong> Pictures, advertising, computer, bathroom, air conditioning, credit card payment machine, taekwondo rules, trophies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULTURAL COMPETENCES AND UNDERSTANDINGS</td>
<td>Participant know-how, administrative know-how, (pre)dispositions, bargaining, negotiating, the customer is “always” right, taking advantage</td>
<td>Discourses of honesty and trust reflecting wider social trends and fashions relating to fitness and health gains. Framing these within the value proposition of the service activity in terms of professionalism and ethics and wider instrumental comparisons of value-for-money against competitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL COMMUNITIES</td>
<td>Participants, administrative staff, instructors, consultants, participants’ friends and families</td>
<td>Interaction space within the formal service coproduction zone but also ad hoc associational spaces as participants go from the gym to the car park etc. represent front stage and back stage opportunities for association, the latter enabling value comparisons with participants’ wider experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL SERVICESCAPE</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>Providers create physical community spaces to foster friendly and respectful interaction amongst participants (service users, providers, potential users) as a way to differentiate the service. Also reflects cultural expectations of a working space in terms of comfort and convenience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTIVE</td>
<td>Participants: To solve an administrative issue (paying, complaining, asking for rule bending). Administrative staff: To run the centre as well as possible satisfying customers and make sales. Keep customers and attract more customers.</td>
<td>Providers create facilitating mechanisms to foster respectful interaction among participants (service users, providers, potential users) and easy problem solving according to consumers lifeworld practices as a way to differentiate the service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POWER</td>
<td>Front line administrative staff is vulnerable. The power balance seem to be in customers’ favour which influences customer misbehaviour.</td>
<td>Providers manage power use to foster consumer satisfaction as a way to differentiate the service.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 The Taerobics “Facilitating Encounter” as a Practical System

**Virtual Encounters**

Virtual encounters mean encounters over the internet (web page), through internet social communities (Facebook group, Twitter account), or using and buying Taerobics DVDs. Virtual encounters on the taerobics web page are similar to encounters within the fitness context web pages (e.g. beachbody.com) or tele-marketers, in which value offerings are always contrasted to other forms of value offerings with the promise of better results. The
taerobics webpage is mainly informational with sections for (1) frequently asked questions, (2) success stories, (3) international sales, (4) programme information and (5) a section about taerobics and Master Vincent Vega.

Virtual encounters take place within the context of the virtual world where organising practices (controlled evangelizing) and relational practices (somewhat unmanageable spill-over) take place. Virtual encounters are very similar to any virtual interaction embedded in consumer lifeworld practices. Indeed, virtual encounters mirror wider socio-historical trends and uses of electronic communications and social media. Consequently, service encounters (i.e. physical encounters) can no longer be treated as a stand-alone phenomenon, isolated in time and space.

Taerobics has around seven hundred and fifty (750) followers on twitter and four hundred and twenty (420) members in the Facebook group and a Facebook page, in the category of health and beauty, with over 15,000 likes. Information shared in virtual encounters is heavily related to nutritional tips, technical performance tips, DVD sales, customer support, class schedules, participant results and participants greetings. The presence of customer-to-customer interaction, or customer to potential customer interaction, is basically related to spreading good word-of-mouth about the taerobics practice. However, this virtual spill-over (evangelizing) is, in principle, easily monitored and controlled by service providers. This is shown in the following retweet from the Taerobics twitter account and the interview excerpt:

“TAEROBICSRT "@LoreCuesta: @Dianisanchez I recommend you #taerobics the video is really good and you see results in 15 days." #That's the truth" “Translation from Spanish Retweet 17-11-11”

“They write to me on Facebook and Twitter and people tell me that they are doing the video and the exercises and they are losing weight and all that. People feel it’s more face to face and informal. (Vincent Vega, Taerobics Instructor)"
The web page and tweets are basically informative practices (service provider to service user) with few opportunities for immediate interaction with the administrative staff. On the other hand, the Facebook group and the Facebook page are dialogical opportunities in which members’ networks interact, discuss, give opinions, give encouragement and recommendations about certain topics in a constructive way. There are a number of Facebook conversations and tweets which display networks of participants and potential participants, actively interacting and evangelizing over topics such as nutrition, consumer results, DVD sales, giving and asking for encouragement, etc.

(http://www.facebook.com/TAEROBICS) (http://www.facebook.com/groups/151181458205/)

(http://twitter.com/#!/TAEROBICS)

Picture 4.1. Taerobics Official Facebook Page and Taerobics Information Posted through Social Media

Table 4.2 describes “virtual encounters” from the standpoint of service encounters as practical systems taking into consideration current practices, their contextual relevance and context factors which influence value creation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOINGS</th>
<th>Current Practice</th>
<th>Contextual Relevance</th>
<th>Context Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Participants:</strong> Giving praise, asking for information, asking for support, sharing results, doing classes</td>
<td>- Comparing claimed value proposition against competition (e.g., physical beauty, community and fitness). - Enabling educational and evangelizing spaces which compare the value proposition against its competition (e.g., physical beauty, community and fitness). - Locating the specific service offering as the best option for consumers in this market</td>
<td>- Individual biography; - Social and virtual relationships; - Cultural values of beauty and health; - Cultural values of online service consumption and online interaction; - Cultural values of time usage; - Business practices (communication, marketing) of competitors and comparators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Administrative Staff:</strong> Giving advice, informing participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Potential Participants:</strong> Asking for information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRACTITIONERS</td>
<td>Participants, Administrative staff, potential participants</td>
<td>- Different levels of resources and knowledge about using virtual spaces.</td>
<td>- Known role-expectations for customer misbehaviour in virtual spaces; - Consumption of latest communication trends and practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL MATERIALS</td>
<td><strong>Participants:</strong> Computer, internet, Facebook account, Twitter account, DVDs, discourses about results</td>
<td>- Web page and social communities that identify the service with wider trends in virtual communications and entrepreneurship - Web page and social communities enable participants to identify themselves, to self and others, in the aerobics community</td>
<td>- Adopted communication tools and materials in the fitness context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Administrative Staff:</strong> Phone, computer, internet, pictures, videos, supporting material, advice, know-how</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULTURAL COMPETENCES AND UNDERSTANDINGS</td>
<td>The image of a traditional chat where agents interact collaboratively and ask for information politely. The image of a traditional web search. Twitting, chatting and Facebooking in the pursuit of a perfect body and wellness</td>
<td>- Providers create virtual community spaces to foster education about fitness and wellness to differentiate the service and, through social media, to promote more widely the valuable nature of their offering for existing and potential customers. - Participants requiring awareness of latest communication trends and practices.</td>
<td>Adopted communication trends and practices in the fitness context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL COMMUNITIES</td>
<td>Facebook followers, Twitter followers, taekwondo students, DVD buyers, master Vincent Vega fans, fitness instructors, physicians, DVD distributors</td>
<td>- Ability of participants to deploy their participation in the service as an exemplary lesson for their connections beyond the encounter – i.e. realising value by being perceived as disciplined and a part of a fitness community.</td>
<td>- Virtual communities enabled by social media. - Local associations formed through informal interactions within the encounter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL SERVICESCAPE</td>
<td>Web Page, Facebook page, Twitter page, DVDs</td>
<td>- Providers create virtual community spaces to foster friendly interaction as a way to differentiate the service and, through social media, to promote more widely the valuable nature of their offering for existing and potential customers.</td>
<td>- Cultural expectations of social media and electronic means attractiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTIVE</td>
<td><strong>Participants:</strong> Solve doubts, express delight, be a part of a community, look for information</td>
<td>- Providers create virtual mechanisms to foster community interaction, grow consumer base and evangelize</td>
<td>- Social structures of signification attached to social media and fitness activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
customer base, support customers

about the practice of Taerobics
- Participants use virtual spaces to learn, collaborate, encourage and evangelize the valuable nature of their offering for existing and potential customers.

POWER

Administrative Staff have more informational resources than customers and also have almost complete control of the physical servicescape

- Providers manage unbalanced informational resources to resolve misunderstandings and over-expectations

Social structures of domination and legitimation attached to social media

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Table 4.2 The Taerobics “Virtual Encounter” as a Practical System

#### Performing Encounters

![Picture 4.2 Taerobics Class (Doing Punches)](image)

Performing encounters are encounters that take place at the dojo. These encounters appear to be very intense and lively. Taerobics classes are predominantly practices for instructors to enable participants’ active participation and use of physical tools. These physical tools facilitate both participants’ and instructors’ action, participants enabling and supporting of other participants’ active participation, or the active construction of the whole taerobics class experience (music, dumbbells, participants, routines, instructors, style of leadership, dispositions, etc.). Taerobics classes are usually divided into five segments: (1) greetings; (2) warming up; (3) the main class itself; (4) cooling down and (5) extra exercises (i.e. abdominals, lunges). Most participants actively participate in the first four components of the
class and some of them take the fifth component (extra exercise) to briefly engage in relacional practices and socialise with other participants.

Taerobics classes can be divided into four types, depending on the function of the class (cardio, tension, intervals, toning), or five types, depending on the timetable (5:15 am, 6:15 am, 7:15 am, 8:15 am and 7:30 am) to suit lifeworld activities of participants. There is also a class on Saturdays, called super class, which is a combination of two classes but may be taken also as two separate classes. Different classes require and use different resources, starting from the routines, music, cultural dispositions and participants among others. However, depending on the level of knowledge and expertise of the participant (especially newcomers), the “central” function of the class is not really differentiated. In fact, class attendance depends more on participant’s lifeworld motives than on technical instruction, as is presented in the following excerpt:

“I go to any class, really. I like the one that is short on Saturdays, from 8 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. And I also like intervals because I sweat a lot in that class and I feel more revitalized and fit. I don’t care about the class, because sometimes the classes to me are the same. Sometimes I see differences, but to me, all of them are a mix of everything and they are all different and interesting. (Kate Fuller, Taerobics Participant)”

Furthermore depending on the timetable and the participants taking the class, members bring lifeworld motives and relational practices to the class. Consequently, participants bring different dispositions and cultural understandings to the encounter which also brings a sense of identification, good feelings and enjoyment for both participants and instructors, as is presented in the following excerpts:

CW: I am able to identify the groups and that’s nice because the class is more pleasant depending on the group you’re taking the classes with. For instance, the people that go to the 5.15 a.m. class are older people that want to stay healthy…well, I don’t know the reasons why they take that class but they are people who work and they are not as fit as the people who go to the 6.15 a.m. class and the 7.15 a.m. classes. They (participants that go at 7:15 a.m.) are people that don’t have a job or they have a flexible schedule and they can attend those classes. I am the only man in taerobics at that hour… So, they (participants that go at 7:15 a.m.) are people who are owners of companies or maybe they study and are younger and you
get that energy... I can identify with them because we have some things in common. (Clarence Worley, Taerobics participant)"

“VV: For me, the groups that are most fun are the last class in the morning. It’s similar to what you experience in the Saturday morning class. I don’t know if it’s the time, or if it’s the people but they are more relaxed...I guess 5 a.m., I have been doing that for 10 years...people tend to always not count, or they don’t count at all, they have little emotion. But I mean, it’s the 5 a.m. class, I don’t blame them...it’s difficult to have them shout and yell. I’m not teaching the 7.30 p.m. class anymore, Mia is doing it, so my favourite group is 8 in the morning. It’s because the people, for some reason, come with a lot of energy...the ladies that come don’t work, so they probably have a different kind of stress and it’s a fun group to teach. (Vincent Vega, Instructor)"

As mentioned earlier, Taerobics classes seem lively and intense. Taerobics is a combination of movements from Taekwondo with music which involves kicking, punching, jumping, shouting and counting. These actions are structured through organising practices (taerobics routines) as in many value propositions in the fitness context. At first, participants seem to concentrate on pursuing lifeworld motives through learning the movements through repetition and doing them properly, as well as building up and managing properly the stamina to finish a class. As participants get more expertise and physical stamina through continuous participation in the classes, participants start to focus more on relational practices, getting community recognition, community attachment and self-confidence. As a result, they start using more advanced physical tools, such as shouting and counting (understanding organising practices from Taekwondo) and start moving towards the front of the room to be closer to the instructors, more advanced participants and the mirror.

“Hmm, at first I didn’t scream because I felt embarrassed and because I was a rookie and I was concentrated on doing the exercises well. So I stood at the back of the room and when I saw that I was doing it right, I started moving forward and I started getting closer to the women that knew the movements well. And when I started getting closer to the front, those women started recognising me and they see that you do it right or that you do it better...then, you start getting more and more involved with the class and that’s when you start screaming. (Shosanna Dreyfus, Taerobics Participant)"

As participants develop adopting taerobics classes in their lifeworld practices, their initial motives of getting fit also evolve to being part of a sports community. Some of them feel the responsibility of doing the classes as best as they can since they become role models to other participants:
“If I know how to do the movements right, I like it for the new person to see the movements that I do and perhaps Vincent can tell that person to look at me because I do the exercise right and I can be a role model for that person. (Sofie Fatale, Taerobics Participant)”

In fact, class encounters are resource integrators that go beyond the dojo. The moment of the interaction in class, when participants actually go to work out and give their best, is influenced by other contextual elements (e.g. social communities, skill acquisition, participants’ history and other contextual fitness practices) which are not visible at the time. Indeed, participants are only one element in the execution of the practice and that puts further effort into resource integration depending on the configuration of the other elements of the practice, as is shown in the following analytic note:

“From coding the experiences of (...) the interaction and integration of the different elements of the service encounter was evident. The constellation of interactions in the taerobics practice show how performance in resource integration and coproduction is dependent not only on subjects’ motives but on other elements as enablers/barriers to doing the practice. Meanings and motives evolve through time and peer support as well as instructors’ support is key to improving the practice. Families and friends act repeatedly as barriers or enablers since subjects are sometimes changing everyday habits. Some participants want a complete body transformation while others are looking for a life transformation, reminiscing about the image they had in the past. Even though a participant postulated that physical appearance was not important, she contradicted herself in later responses. The more effort participants put into the practice the more they enjoy the class, ‘no pain-no gain’. The practice of taerobics is often accompanied by dieting (not extreme) and people considered as results the boost of energy they got from the class. So the initial main motive (to lose weight, and be fit) which is basically promoted in the wider social context (i.e. media, family, friends, social communities, gender cultural expectations) transforms into feeling well and more active (Analytic Note 18-7-2011)”

Further effort is sometimes influenced by some of the physical tools that organise the practice such as the music:

“The people don’t help me at all…what helps me is the music. The hour that I go to class, there are only women, I am sometimes the only man there and the music is what moves me, because the music is jolly and it goes with the movements. It’s with full rhythm. (Hattori Hanzo, Taerobics Participant)”

or the routine:

“The continuation of the exercises with the legs, when we do it with the arms, I do better. When we have long routines, my legs are stronger…I don’t know if this is ironic but I used to play a lot of soccer and the women that go to taerobics don’t practise that sport much. (Clarence Worley, taerobics Participant)”
The subjects of the practice, such as the instructors and other participants, can also be an influence:

“…The encouragement of the instructors or the other participants who are taking the class. Some of them start screaming and they say: ‘Come on, you can do it!!’ that helps me out. (Karen Kim, Taerobics Participant)”

“The counting among many participants also motivates you to make a bigger effort. (Sofie Fatale, Taerobics Participant)”

“That’s not the case of taerobics, everyone is doing exercise. You can go to a gym and you’ll see very fit bodies but they are not doing anything...unlike to taerobics, because everyone is working out and the demand is the same for everyone. (Lanna Frank, Taerobics Participant)”

“Vincent tells you how...he does it more on Saturdays and he tells everyone to count and he shouts: ‘Come on!, everyone counting!, you can do it! Let’s go!’ and he likes to do that. Both him and Mia make the class better and it’s because it’s their job, it’s what they do but it’s very tiring. And sometimes, when I shout, I do it because of him, because he likes it and I’m sure that encourages him. In a class where no one screams, we are all bored and even he ends up all bored. So, I sometimes scream for him. (Shosanna Dreyfus, Taerobics Participant)”

“Participants motivate others in two ways, either by making them do better exercises and supporting them, or by seeing them as not ‘worth it’ because they don’t ‘sacrifice’ as others do, so the idea is not to follow them. She sees herself as an image to other customers who are more inexperienced. She also acquired skills by going to Taekwondo with her husband. Again going to Taerobics is a subdivision of ‘Living a healthy life’ which is accompanied by good nutrition, good hours of sleep, drinking water, reading books, etc. Over eating is a motive to put extra effort in classes. (Analytic Note, 20-7-11)”

Participants themselves can be an influence by recognising in them some physical symbols of hard effort that help them attain their lifeworld motives:

“I want to see my face all red and sweaty, I like to see my clothes which are damp because of the sweat, all those things make me see that I’m making the biggest effort. I see the reflection in the mirror of what I want to see at the end of a class, which is, see myself tired and sweaty. (Sofie Fatale, Taerobics Participant)”

The physical space (dojo) does not leave much opportunity for participants to get distracted from the taerobics class as happens in some other fitness clubs which have multiple opportunities for members to “escape” from the workout to socialise. Relational practices at taerobics can be observed prior to or after class, mostly outside the dojo, where there is a sense of community where participants talk about some personal issues, give each other recommendations and talk about the style of life they are following. In fact, socialisation
among participants and instructors at the dojo is mostly observed through working out since they attend class for a restricted period of time:

“... and you think that it’s a place where you socialise with other people. But, with this type of exercise, you don’t have time to socialise...you do it while you work out, because you encourage each other and you scream to the person beside you to go on. That’s all the socialisation we do...in fact, after class we all seem very shy and we just say hello and goodbye. (Clarence Worley, Taebobics Participant)”

Indeed, the dialogue between instructors and participants starts by a verbal practice of instructors calling the names of the exercises in the routine. This is reflectively (regular participants) or mimetically (newcomers) followed by the immediate action of the participant through doing the movements using their physical resources (i.e. stamina), dispositions (i.e. finishing the class) and knowledge (i.e. degree of expertise). It is common to see participants in the class participants doing the movements differently: more experienced and confident participants stand up front by the instructor and mirror and newcomers stand by the walls or in the last row observing and repeating what other participants do. Experienced participants who take the class up front influence the instructors by the use of more advanced physical tools (i.e. shouting) and influence active participation of the participants in the social construction of the taebobics class:

“At that moment I communicate with Mia with one of those shouts that we have in class, you know? I shout at her and I look at her...today she told me that she was going to include that movement and I told her that I wanted her to include that movement (laughs). That’s exciting to me...I have a close relationship with the instructors and I enjoy the class a lot with them. (Shosanna Dreyfus, Taebobics Participant)”

Furthermore, active participation in resource integration by participants is also supported by the sense of discipline, authority, respect and admiration transmitted by the instructors who apart from having high credentials in Taekwondo (Black Belts with Fourth and Second Dan), lead the practice of taebobics by example, which legitimises the interactions among subjects in these encounters.
“To me, the instructor has to be a person that I admire in order to know that she is doing it right and that I’m learning it correctly. (Kate Fuller, Taerobics Participant)"

“Vincent transmits a lot of discipline and authority and people follow that. He’s very respectful and that also happens in taekwondo. He’s not like the ordinary professor who says hello in an informal way, he’s respectful…there is a respectful environment in class. They are very punctual, always. The class always starts on time with Mia, Vincent or Steve who also teaches the class, but that only happened twice. It’s part of the discipline and they are the leaders and they show those values and everyone follows them. (Mallory Knox, Taerobics Participant)"

Instructors also act as sources of feedback for letting participants know how well they are doing the routines and movements, which help participants improve and gain confidence. Participants recognise the efforts and support from instructors and try to improve their actions. The instructors’ role is to make participants improve in their practice, sometimes adopting new physical tools. Class encounters can therefore be considered as a journey through a “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky 1978), where subjects with more knowledge help other subjects improve their performance. This action can be seen in the following excerpts:

“Hmm…well…when you are at the academy, the instructors are paying attention to you, they get close to you, they see what you do, they explain the movement if they think you are doing it wrong. (Lanna Frank, Taerobics Participant)"

“What I like about taerobics is that I feel that the taerobics instructors tell you what you’re doing wrong and correct it. They see how you perform the exercise. They guide you and tell you how you will get better results. (Karen Kim, Taerobics Participant)"

“I talked to Mia to know more about the dumbbells and she explained things to me and she told me how to use them properly. I started with the blue dumbbells and later on she told me that, whenever I felt that I was not feeling the work out with the blue dumbbells, I should switch to the red ones. (Mallory Knox, Taerobics Participant)"

Finally, table 4.3 describes “performing encounters” according to the standpoint for service encounters as practical systems taking into consideration current practices, their contextual relevance and context factors which influence value creation.
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<th>Context Factors</th>
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<td>biography doing</td>
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<td>doing punches,</td>
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<td><strong>PRACTITIONERS</strong></td>
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<td>and aesthetic value</td>
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<td></td>
<td>these spaces.</td>
<td>standards</td>
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<tr>
<th>CULTURAL COMPETENCES AND UNDERSTANDINGS</th>
<th>Sports expertise, taekwondo expertise dispositions, ATTC motto, To do a good workout which involves sweating, pain and effort No pain, no gain Calories and laziness are the enemy to defeat To be in front of the dojo implies expertise and hard work Aerobics are for women Never stop Coming to class to workout</th>
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<tr>
<td>CULTURAL DISCOURSES OF THE SELF AND IDENTITY. ESTABLISHED STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT IN SPORTS (I.E. DANS)</td>
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<td>SOCIAL COMMUNITIES</td>
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<tr>
<td>INTERACTION SPACE WITHIN THE FORMAL SERVICE DELIVERY ZONE BUT ALSO AD HOC ASSOCIATIONAL SPACES AS PARTICIPANTS MOVE FROM THE GYM TO CAR PARK ETC. REPRESENT FRONT STAGE AND BACK STAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASSOCIATION, THE LATTER ENABLING VALUE COMPARISONS WITH PARTICIPANTS’ WIDER EXPERIENCES</td>
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<td>ABILITY OF PARTICIPANTS TO DEPLOY THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE SERVICE AS AN EXEMPLARY LESSON FOR THEIR ASSOCIATES BEYOND THE ENCOUNTER – I.E. REALISING VALUE BY BEING PERCEIVED AS A DISCIPLINED, ATTRACTIVE PERSON.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PROVIDERS CREATE COMMUNITY SPACES TO FOSTER FRIENDLY INTERACTION AS AN ADDED VALUE TO THE SERVICE AND, THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA, TO PROMOTE MORE WIDELY THE VALUABLE NATURE OF THEIR OFFERING FOR EXISTING AND POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS. REQUIRING AWARENESS OF LATEST COMMUNICATION TRENDS AND PRACTICES.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS OF PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS (PRACTICE ENABLING MEMBERSHIP OF A CULTURALLY APPROVED COMMUNITY); LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS FORMED THROUGH INFORMAL INTERACTIONS WITHIN THE ENCOUNTER. VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES ENABLED BY SOCIAL MEDIA.</td>
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<td>PROVIDERS CREATE PHYSICAL COMMUNITY SPACES TO FOSTER ACTIVE RESOURCE INTEGRATION (SERVICE USERS, PROVIDERS, POTENTIAL USERS) WITHOUT LEAVING SPACES FOR PARTICIPANTS DISTRACTION AS A WAY TO DIFFERENTIATE THE SERVICE</td>
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<td>CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS OF DANCE STUDIO ATTRACTIVENESS</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOTIVE</td>
<td>Participants: Workout to lose weight, stay fit, release stress, stay healthy, gain confidence, escape from everyday life activities, vent frustration, have more energy, feel better Instructors: To teach confidence, discipline, respect, control. To make participants feel good about themselves Administrative Staff: To support the aerobic class and control participant’s attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANTS DEPLOY THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE SERVICE AS AN EXEMPLARY LESSON FOR THEIR ASSOCIATES BEYOND THE ENCOUNTER – I.E. REALISING VALUE BY BEING PERCEIVED AS A DISCIPLINED, ATTRACTIVE, HEALTH-CONSCIOUS PERSON.</td>
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<td>PROVIDERS CREATE MECHANISMS TO FOSTER RESPECTFUL INTERACTION AMONGST PARTICIPANTS (I.E. BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY) AND TO EDUCATE PARTICIPANTS TO EXPERIENCE PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH</td>
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<td>SOCIAL STRUCTURES OF SIGNIFICATION CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS OF PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS OF ACTIVENESS USING VALUE PROPOSITIONS IN THE FITNESS CONTEXT</td>
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</table>
taekwondo values (i.e. respect, control, confidence and discipline) in a respectful, supportive and fun environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POWER</th>
<th>Expert power and leadership by example is noticeable at encounters which heavily legitimise the practice</th>
<th>Providers manage power use to foster consumer discipline in service co-production as a way to differentiate the service.</th>
<th>Social structures of legitimation and domination -Structures of domination and legitimation in Taekwondo</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Table 4.3 The Taerobics “Performing Encounter” as a Practical System

**Summary**

To summarise, this chapter presents the findings of the empirical study carried out in the context of taerobics in Barranquilla, Colombia. The chapter uses the frame of the service encounter as a practical system to highlight how the different elements of the service encounter are integrated through lifeworld, relational and organising practices in three different dimensions of service encounters (facilitating, virtual, performing) existent in the context of taerobics in Barranquilla, Colombia. It highlights current practices, contextual relevance and context factors arising at these service encounters and which affect the accomplishment of value creation in taerobics. In short, it shows how the service encounter can only be adequately understood within the grasp of this wider social context.

In this chapter, the template of the service encounter as practical system is put to work and used in the context of taerobics in Barranquilla, Colombia. The researcher considers this new template, developed for the understanding of service encounters, useful for highlighting current practices, contextual relevance and context factors at service encounters in high customer participation services. It also serves to identify possibilities for enhancing value creation through service consumption practices in service encounters. Consumer actions integrating resources through service consumption practices during service encounters cannot be explained without taking into consideration the context (social, historical, cultural) where they take place. Consequently, to understand value creation during service encounters it can

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be assumed that service consumption practices are first and foremost social practices which are inherently contextual.
CHAPTER 5 - SERVICE PRACTICES DURING SERVICE ENCOUNTERS AT POSTGRADUATE HIGHER EDUCATION EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Introduction

The empirical findings of the study of practices at the Higher Education (HE) institution in Barranquilla, Colombia, are discussed in this chapter. First of all, a general explanation of HE as practice considering three main service consumption practices in this context (lifeworld, organisation, relational) is offered. The chapter subsequently maps these practices in context according to the proposed elements of the service encounter as a practical system in three different dimensions of service encounters (facilitating, virtual, performance). This mapping of service encounters highlights current practices, contextual relevance and context factors that are involved in the creation of value during service encounters. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief discussion of service encounters as practical systems which are constellations of resources potentially integrated through service consumption practices.

Postgraduate Higher Education as Practice

Higher Education (HE) service encounters can be considered as a group of highly related, interactional and communal practices in which the main activity or core service is the co-created learning activity of its participants (Giraldo et al 2010). As was mentioned before, the idea of this thesis has been always to delve into these communal activities and actions, which on the surface seem very simple but which in a broader sense are both intricate and contextually sensitive. The use of ethnographic methods enabled the researcher to scrutinise these aspects in greater depth and thus revealing the contextual referents to be added to the analysis.

These service consumption practices during service encounters in higher education can be classified into three main practices:
1. Lifeworld practice: the service encounter within the wider context of socio-cultural practices of education (moral, vocational, academic, economic, social related, hedonic related meanings and practices)

2. Organising practice: the service encounter within the context of socio-cultural practices that shape performances to culturally established standards (etiquette, civility, managerial quality standards, academic quality standards)

3. Relational practice: the service encounter within the context of social bonds and identities beyond the encounter (back-stage spill-over; identity-through-practice community, social bonds, networks)

Firstly, considering lifeworld practice, it became clear the presence of multiple and somewhat different motives pursued by the different systems involved in the HE experience bring both opportunities and threats to the HE practice. These meanings for entering the HE practice were far from simple and went well beyond a simple utilitarian exchange, but were deeply embedded in the participant’s own individual biographies, which, in turn, influenced the guiding of their lives well beyond the encounter itself. Accordingly, it appeared difficult to understand service encounters without taking into consideration the life-structure of the participants and their experiences beyond the actual encounter location. For example, different students bring different motives and cultural understandings to the HE practice constructed in the wider social context they are embedded in. These ranged from getting information about the subject, or learning from others, to applying knowledge to their jobs, having free consultancies, getting promotions or changing jobs. Most of them are related to economic and vocational relevance rather than academic excellence (Ng and Forbes 2009).

This is shown in the following excerpts from the interviews:

“I was about to start the third year of working in the financial department and I was interested in knowing more about the subject after acquiring some experience... the company I work for paid 70% of the specialisation. That was a motivation for me because the specialisation costs 17 million pesos (around $6.000 GBP)...and the company gave me a 0%
interest rate loan to pay for the rest. So, it was perfect for me. (Esteban Vihaio, Postgraduate student)

“The thing that interested me the most…I talked to the coordinator and she told me…I think that I have little work experience, because I have worked in small businesses and also in medium-sized companies. So, at the moment I saw that the group with which I was going to study were from big companies, managers and older people, I thought that I could both take advantage of what the Professors were going to teach and what these experienced people and their points of view could teach me, their opinions and how they solve real-life problems. With this, I can enrich my knowledge and I can then apply it in my company (Elliot Blitzer, Postgraduate student)

“Personally, to get promoted within the company or to find new opportunities, for a job they always ask your educational background and I hadn’t studied anything since I had graduated in 2005 so…this world is constantly moving and new things happen every day and I needed to update my information, in order to have better job opportunities (Jules Winnfield, Postgraduate student)”

Alternatively, lecturers are mediated by different cultural understandings and pursuing different motives, which are (to some extent) not only related to economic and vocational relevance, but also to moral and philanthropic contributions to the country and student reflection. They aim to exert an influence far beyond the actual service encounter in time and space. Consequently, some lecturers show concerns for knowledge transfer and use in context, contributing to Colombian companies’ practice, making the topics more relevant to students for their everyday life. This is shown in the following excerpts of the interviews:

“My main motive is to transfer knowledge and to put it into practice. I want to plant the seed towards a supply chain process that is totally Colombian, ours, applied to our idiosyncrasy, our culture...I call it “tropicalized”. What I want when I come to the University is to plant the seed of theories of marketing redistribution that are practical in our country (Drexl Spivey, Visiting Lecturer)”

“...when I started consulting, I didn’t teach, but rather I started learning about the reality of the current situation of medium-size Colombian companies. Normally, the entrepreneurs of medium-size and small companies tell me that the problem is a financial problem because they don’t get loans...well, they confuse the fever with the disease. The warehouses are full of inventory not because they don’t get loans but because their marketing strategies are failing. That’s why I feel interested in contributing teaching in the area of marketing...because it’s a reality that you see outside (Chester Rush, Visiting Lecturer)”

“When I was studying in the undergraduate course, Tax Law was a terrible subject for me. Even though I got high grades, it was because I learned everything by heart; I repeated and drilled continuously... It was only lectures and I repeated things, just like a parrot... and I said to myself that if I was ever going to teach this subject, I would do it in an easy way and not in a difficult way, like they taught me back in school. And the opportunity came to mean thanks to the experience that I have, the students tell me that they thought they would never learn Tax Law, which means that they learn. So, that’s my mission: to use my experience so
it’s useful to the students in a personal way more than in a professional way. (Bonnie Dimmick, Visiting Lecturer)”

In addition, for administrative personnel, encounters in HE hence became an important part of everyday life for participants, a part of their daily everyday routines. The influence of the wider social context in which they are embedded, leads them to pursue motives related to evolution in the academic field, job stability, professional growth and keeping studying as presented in the following interviews excerpts:

“I wanted to grow in the academic area, which is what I like the most…I like the educational sector. I know that the administrative part is indispensible, it’s not what I like the most…things that involve working on the curriculum, all those things and I wanted to have a combination and I wanted to grow in that area. (Cecil Evans, Administrative Personnel)”

“When I returned to the academic environment, after working for so many companies, for eleven years, coming back to the university tells me that everything you have lived as an entrepreneur and as an employee can be taken to the classroom. So, one of my expectations for this is to continue to grow at the academic level. I want to continue with another specialisation or a Master’s Degree. So, I think that I will get a very good professional development. There are plenty of opportunities for advancement for me in the best university on the north coast of the country. So, those are my motives: a professional growth both in the academic level and the work level. (Billy Wings, Administrative Personnel)”

“When I say stability, I mean the job stability. At (Colombian Official Company) I had fixed-term contracts and they were offering me an indefinite contract and when I say possibilities in the university… I’m not interested in working at an organisation where they don’t value what I’m capable of doing, I prefer to be at an organisation where I can grow and where they can see my potential… I got paid better at (Colombian Official Company) but only a little…then that changed and it was the same. I think coming to work to the Uni is the best decision I have made (Cherry Darling, Administrative Personnel)”

Finally, it is very important to mention that motives of senior administrative personnel were more market-oriented and related to demonstrating the importance of PGDip programmes both for the university and the wider regional economic and productive context. These motives were more related to practical relevance concerns as is presented in the following excerpt,

“My main motive was to reposition (PGDip programmes) the area as something that was very important for the university; contrary to what other people were doing…they were trying to minimise the importance of this area, saying that it was continuous education and that we needed to get rid of the specialisations (PGDip programmes)... Really, the specialisations (PGDip programmes), taking into account our market and the type of companies that we have here… companies here do need someone who specialises in marketing, in finance, in logistics.
And I said to myself that I needed to demonstrate that this was important for the region and the university... (Butch Coolidge, Administrative)"

These motives are also related to economic concerns (i.e. generating income) that respond to strategic concerns (i.e. leadership in the wider regional educational context) from the ideological and strategic system and the administrative system. This is presented in the following excerpt:

“... Once we hired an intern from (Colombian Technical and Technological Institute) and I said to her that she had to get 5,000 million Colombian pesos (about 2 Million GBP) and she almost fainted. Then, I started explaining to her that her job was simple but so important, that if she did things well we were going to get the number of students needed to get to those 5,000 million pesos. What she had to do was to check the database we had and the registries we had to see if the matched and she had to do it right to get that money. (Butch Coolidge, Administrative Staff)”

Secondly, considering organising practices, the HE practice can be considered as a form of communal learning experience construction: more than mere academic instruction. However, the presence of multiple motives among the different communities and systems involved in the HE practice not only brings confusion and uncertainty to practitioners active participation in resource integration, but also conflicts for power and control and sometimes ruthless power-plays and politics over resources. This situation affects communal collaboration in value actualisation (Grönroos 2008g) at service encounters and potentially hinders institutional development, pedagogic transformation and social communities’ (i.e. students, lectures, administrative staff) satisfaction and well-being.

Given the multitude of benefits associated with HE coverage within the wider context of education in Colombia, universities have become increasingly competitive within the postgraduate HE market and, as such, attracting students has become a strategic imperative for universities in the pursuit of development, growth and sustainability. Consequently, socially constructed organising practices associated with vocational, managerial and economic relevance are highly related to a short-term focus of the students and the
institutionalised university hedonic experience which trumps academic performance and long-term focus. This provokes role conflicts among different stakeholders in service encounters, as it is presented in the following excerpts from interviews with lecturers related to university’s economic concern and student and lecturer academic level and with administrative employees according to closing dates for enrolment:

**DR:** Because the Uni, when I say that my subject is fascinating, it fits with a feeling that I had about this university that its major concern was the education, that people who graduated from here were bright people. The last module I taught, after the reforms, it just became another university, which is more worried about the business, than the education. Of course, a university has to be…I don’t want to say profitable but, obviously it can’t go bankrupt…but, you shouldn’t forget your main reason, your philosophy…and that’s what I don’t see anymore… (Dick Ritchie, Lecturer)

“**CR:** When I started at the Uni I saw that the groups were really good, the students all participated and said interesting things. But, as time goes by, I have noticed that the groups don’t have the same academic level as the groups before and the university is accepting a lot of young people…it’s not bad if they study, but the problem is that there is an implicit belief not revealed, that is because the students pay 18 million pesos (about $6,000 GBP), then they should get an average score over 4.0 (over 5.0) for an assignment … The Uni as such and its human resources are very good, but sometimes they don’t take things seriously and I’m referring to the academic level of the university. I believe that we are not at the academic level where we should be. (Chester Rush, Lecturer)

“**CD:** We try to abide by the closing date and I’m not going to lie to you, because sometimes we accept students that apply after the closing date. We work following the calendar and we always try to follow the dates, but when we say that the closing date is May 28th and the interviews start on a specific day, we follow it, even if there are people that are still applying. But yes, it happens with the low demand specialisations: we keep accepting people and the coordinators can continue working so that they get more students in those programmes…we do it, until the last moment, just before we start classes we accept people. (Cherry Darling, Auxiliary Service Staff)”

Moreover, these benefits associated with HE coverage within the wider context of education in Colombia bring the need for organising and regulating in HE practices with quality standard accreditations to promote civilised interaction during service encounters. The implementation and promotion of a “quality” lifestyle from wider academic and managerial context (both national and international) is sustained by a connection with other aspects of administrative strategy such that ‘good practice’ is dependent on other facets of managerial discipline. This result is in line with the findings of Goss (1997) in health promotion at work. Consequently, practices carried out by different systems are arranged hierarchically where
administrative and ideological activity systems trump the practices of the other related systems to the HE experience.

Thirdly, relational practices in HE practices refer to Spill-over encounters which may occur ‘accidentally’ or spontaneously and not under the control of the provider. They seem to help practitioners adjust their expectations of the encounter. For example, students interacting ‘informally’ between themselves, socially construct cultural understandings about the programmes and education because of the lack of clarity in the student selection process. The contextual pressure of the HE context influences side-effects to postgraduate programmes’ selection process creating a myth that every person is accepted to them since the university is “a business”. This is presented in the following interview excerpt:

“ED: Well, someone that I know, a close friend, told me that this is really a business and said: ‘you’ll have to go to the interview but you won’t have any problems. Even if you have the worst interview, you’ll enter because this is a business and the more the people, the better... (Elle Driver, Postgraduate student)”

Spill-over encounters also take place between lecturers. For example, lecturers interacting ‘informally’ between themselves, socially construct cultural images about the groups they are teaching and the programmes. The HE contextual pressure of living a “quality” lifestyle also influenced them to collaboratively and supportively evaluate their performance. This can play a positive role in lecturers’ wellbeing but can influence both positively or negatively ongoing encounters. This is presented in the following interview excerpt:

“DS: We communicate and informally interact in the hotel. 
M: what do you talk about? 
DS: We give feedback to each other and we heal past wounds.
M: What do you mean with that? 
DS: Well, it’s what animals do after a fight, they lick each other’s’ wounds and that’s what we do. We listen and support to each other. (Drexl Spivey, Visiting Lecturer)”

In conclusion, postgraduate higher education is one of many practices in the “studying” category. Lifeworld practices can be considered as the main influence for participants to join
higher education practices. Thus, the wider social context influences different and sometimes conflicting motives pursued by different stakeholders in the HE experience, creating rifts among the various elements of the service encounter as a practical system. Some of these rifts are historical contradictions which enable/hinder action integrating resources at different service encounters within the HE practice. Basically, HE institutions represent a system of service provision (service provider), aimed at co-creating value with students (service user) and other stakeholders (i.e. lecturers, families, productive sector). They do this by enabling (or hindering) a civilised and organised integration of resources such as physical materials (e.g. procedures, teaching materials, technology, organisational guidelines and standards); cultural competences (e.g. task specialisation, job roles, power) and cultural images (e.g. cultural norms, classroom rules, political behaviour) (Giraldo et al. 2010).

Furthermore, central to organising practices is internal marketing coordination, in that it facilitates the sharing of information between HE systems positively impacting service co-production among stakeholders. Wider context measures for organising practices in education such as market trends, student satisfaction rates and academic and managerial quality standards (i.e. such as ISO, AACSB accreditations) discipline and mediate these practices, so they need to be taken into account in understanding actions integrating resources within service encounters. The free flow on communication through internal service encounters has a significant influence on achieving performance goals, yet it is something that HE institutions frequently do poorly (Giraldo et al. 2010).

In conclusion to this chapter, the culturally established bureaucratic mechanism of managing HE institutions is fundamental for relational practices to emerge. These practices display everyday life routines for problem solving, which exert influence far beyond the actual encounter in time and space. This historical contradiction between normative and practical
forms of problem solving may become a source of improvement in HE practice at the moment it is the subject of intervention. Consequently, even though it would be “artificial” if spill-over encounters were administered closely, there could be opportunities to build a space for spill-over to develop – as a source of insight for service enhancement in HE practice.

**Service Encounters in Postgraduate Higher Education**

Service encounters at the taerobics practice were shown to possess three broad dimensions which are also used in this chapter as a basis for analysis: (1) Facilitating encounters, which refer to practices related to student applications, payments for the programmes, interviews, signing attendance list, etc.; (2) Virtual encounters, which refer to practices on social communities (i.e. WhatsApp chats), emails, lotus notes and the web-page of programmes and (3) Performing encounters, which refer to practices that are related to what occurs in the classroom and the pedagogic system. These types of encounters will be further developed subsequently.

**Facilitating Encounters**

There are multiple facilitating encounters at the HE context which mobilise students or potential students to interact with administrative staff, mainly either auxiliary service or administrative staff. They also mobilise lecturers to interact with auxiliary service staff and auxiliary service staff to interact with (mostly) administrative staff. Primarily internal marketing interactions (within the university staff) work as value facilitation (Grönroos 2008g) practices to support/educate value creation practices from the students. However, due to internal pressures and frictions, these administrative encounters trump auxiliary service practices which support value creation at academic encounters. Indeed, value facilitation practices can trigger unexpected behaviour patterns from participants as a product of complex bureaucratic processes and systemic pressures. These behaviours can be interpreted as
deviant through a role theory lens missing the fact that participant agency is a dynamic interplay that emerges as participants creatively negotiate their choices against contextual (social, economics, background) pressures.

Administrative routines for the students in the HE experience are mainly (1) asking for information about postgraduate programmes; (2) application and payment of application fees; (3) bringing complete documentation to support application; (4) interviews; (5) payment of fees (if accepted); (6) introductory session; (7) paying for reinforcement courses (if needed); (8) taking reinforcement courses (if needed); (9) signing attendance lists in class; (10) looking and gathering for graduation documentation or documents that confirm the student does not have any debt with the university (i.e. finance, library); (11) paying for graduation fees and (11) bringing graduation documentation. From the observation and interviews the presence of conflicts and clashes was noted in the following areas: bringing documentation twice because of poor internal marketing coordination (application and graduation); lack of information about where the interviews took place; impossibility of attending the introductory session; paying and taking reinforcement courses and corruption in signing attendance on behalf of others. A situation which shows a clear conflict in the issue of reinforcement courses is presented in the following excerpt:

“(…) I received an e-mail where they told me that I had been accepted, but that I needed to take two reinforcement courses, each of them cost 200,000 pesos (about $100 GBP) and the schedule was written there. (…) I didn’t have the money or the time to take those classes because I had to work. Besides, I’m a BA graduate and I had taken those two subjects in the undergraduate programme, so I didn’t really think I should take the reinforcement classes (…) The answer I got back from them was that according to my grades from the undergraduate subjects, I had to take those classes and they included my grades in the e-mail. I didn’t like that, I didn’t like that I had to pay 400,000 pesos (about $200 GBP). I called the university to ask for an appointment and I wanted to talk to them. I think this was my mistake because I called some people that work in the administrative area of the university, but they have nothing to do with the specialisation programmes and I informally explained things to them. The Director of the Specialisation programmes noticed what I was doing and he didn’t like that. So, I had an appointment with him and as soon as I got there he asked me why I had talked to other people within the university to ask for that information… he said I should have talked to him directly (…) So I had the appointment with him and we talked in a very comfortable, friendly atmosphere and I told him that I was worried about the whole thing and
I told him that I didn’t like what had happened and that I didn’t want to go through all this, talking to him in his office… (Esteban Vihaio, Postgraduate student)

As this excerpt shows, making use of relational practices, the student communicates his concerns to some administrative system personnel of the university instead of the auxiliary services system of the postgraduate programmes. This action is not welcomed by the postgraduate diplomas administration, since the student is not following the normative way of dealing with complaints but solving his problem creatively (Jackson 1998) and this could be a source of relational pressures. This event brings us to the topic of internal encounters between the different systems at the university. This is a subject concerning power-plays and politics, since the different systems pursue different motives, which to some extent are in conflict with each other.

Internal marketing encounters present numerous barriers for communication in the way the University discipline its organising practices. First of all, the organisation uses different kinds of physical materials (i.e. email, lotus notes) not accessible to the whole service community (i.e. lectures, administrative staff, students) to electronically communicate within the organisation. This issue fragments the way different practitioners from different service systems within the university access information and resources. Consequently, participants (i.e. lectures, administrative staff, students) rely on spill-over encounters through informal means of communications (i.e. WhatsApp chats, personal phone calls) to start problem solving as they usually do in everyday life. This is shown in the following excerpt:

“There is something else, when I have a problem I call the person first, for instance when a salary changes, I call the person in charge of the budget and I explain why I have to change a professor’s salary and they approve it. Afterwards, I send an e-mail, well I send a lotus notes communication and five seconds later they reply…so I sometimes call first to see how the person can reply, to find out if the person is going to say no to my request and that way I can look for other ways to find the approval (…) There are many offices which send the request first and send e-mails back and forth and after 10 e-mails they get to an agreement. I call that person or if I have to go to the office, I go there and tell them about the problem I have and I involve all the people that help us and offer services to us in our goals. Everyone knows my academic calendar, everyone knows which my goals are, everyone knows how we are working and that’s one of our advantages (Butch Coolidge, Auxiliary Service Staff)”
Secondly, the process is highly bureaucratic and labour is very fragmented, bringing many possibilities for conflicts and misunderstandings that affect service encounter co-production, as is shown in the following excerpt:

“...what I want to say is that the specialisation department is not only constituted by the people who are in this office, it’s made by all the people who support us, because when anyone fails, you fail as well. (Billy Wings, Auxiliary Service Staff)”

Furthermore, poor internal marketing communication coordination influences actions and measures adopted by the auxiliary service personnel in postgraduate programmes. They serve as organisers, bridges and messengers for internal interactions, solving problems between various administrative services involved in the administrative (i.e. academic) process. This creates an environment of uncertainty for them since this is something which is expected to be automatic. This also brings unnecessary clashes to the performing encounter and conflicts of role to service employees as is presented in the following excerpt:

“Well...there’s...we have achieved, in some way or another, to identify the support units of the department and we always try to plan the work with each of those units. In that way, we minimise the number of problems that we may have with them. However, there’s something that I have noticed and I have already told them about it and it’s the lack of communication between the Financial area and the Registry area and the coordinator has to work as the bridge to communicate them. That’s a problem in the process. While the financial area has enrolled the student, the academic area has no idea that they have to enrol him or her academically speaking and you have to tell the academic part that the student has already been enrolled financially speaking. This should be done automatically, I mean, if the student already paid, then they should tell the academic part to enrol them and give them the subjects they will take, instead of the coordinator going back and forth asking if the student already has everything...I think that there’s a total lack of communication there. (Cecil Evans, Auxiliary Service Staff)”

Furthermore, the implementation of dominant international quality standard accreditations (such as ISO) commonly recognised in the wider managerial context, designed to organise and discipline practices at facilitating encounters at the university, creates more barriers to fast adaption and response to critical events for value facilitation and internal collaboration. These accreditations are also considered problematic as they are tedious, lengthy and inflexible; occasionally preventing rifts emerging between auxiliary service and academic
actions from being practically resolved. This is shown in the following excerpts:

“Sometimes we are limited by ISO and we can’t respond quickly to some things, things that the constant-changing market is demanding. This is a very competitive market. For instance, an alumni from BA, a commander of the US armed forces who has managed war hospitals in places like Afghanistan and Iraq and he’s an expert in health administration. (...) he offered to teach for free to promote health management programmes. So I wanted to publish an ad in the newspaper but I couldn’t because according to ISO you have to do that 15 days in advance for the design and...in total 18 days in advance...and I need that ad next Monday. So, that’s a great opportunity I have and I can’t take advantage of it. Sometimes there are things that must be done following the parameters of ISO, but the market tells you something different sometimes...it doesn’t mean that you are going to do things wrong, but sometimes you need to get out of that system that sometimes becomes bureaucratic. It’s very strict, it’s so strict that sometimes we forget the main objective we stand we achieve goals but we don’t achieve the objectives. (Butch Coolidge, Auxiliary Service Staff)”

“I think that the process takes a little longer than before...when you fill in a form, the grades, after checking the grades in the correction grade process, which can take around 15 days, plus the time they take to change the grade and publish it. I think that’s the problem, the processes take a little longer and are tedious, less flexible (Cecil Evans, Auxiliary Service Staff)”

Finally, all these different barriers (fragmented labour, lack of communication, multiple physical tools and bureaucracy) stimulate different practitioners to make the system work “creatively” whether through political, entrepreneurial, relational or pragmatic means. The following excerpts from the narratives show some of these practices related to “asking and doing favours”, “providing solutions” and “using relationships”:

“I think that the administrative part of the university doesn’t understand us, the academic part. So, what I decided to do was to adapt to the situation, because the administrative part is not going to adapt to the academic part...and I had to work hard, run and struggle in order to get things right. Sometimes, the administrative part of the university is very inflexible and says that we can’t (...) And then, what you have to do is to ask for favours...you have to talk to the designer and ask him to help you...and you have to make use of the relationships you have built with others in order to go and ask for favours...they don’t see it as something that they have to do, something mandatory, but they see it as a favour that they have to do to the academic part (Cherry Darling, Auxiliary Service Staff)”

“I learned something here...we can have all the cutting-edge, electronic means of communication but when the person knows you personally, things work faster. What I do is I don’t send the problem to the other departments of the university, I send the solutions (...) Another thing is that we like that people know who we are, because if they don’t know who we are, they won’t help us, if the university doesn’t know who we are, they won’t see our area as an important part of the institution. So I promote what I do and what my team does and people know what we do, what we are fighting for and they help us. It’s a matter of relationships. (Butch Coolidge, Auxiliary Service Staff)”
Table 5.1 describes “facilitating encounters” according to the standpoint for service encounters as practical systems taking into consideration current practices, their contextual relevance and context factors which influence value creation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOINGS</th>
<th>Current Practice</th>
<th>Contextual relevance</th>
<th>Context factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential Students: Asking for information about the programmes, attending promotional events</td>
<td>- Verifying formal responses against observed practice and physical resources compared to other educational offerings within the wider social context and the competitive context; -Comparing claimed value proposition against competition (e.g., universities, lifelong learning education and postgraduate education).</td>
<td>Individual biography;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students: Paying for tuition, enrolling for classes, using auxiliary services, doing interviews, signing attendance sheets, asking for help to solve both academic or administrative issues, Complaining about either academic or administrative issues, asking for rule bending about either or both academic or administrative issues.</td>
<td>-Drawing on wider practitioner-value discourses to negotiate concessions; -Evaluating service co-produced against consistency of administrative practices as encountered in wider consumer contexts.</td>
<td>-Social and economic relationships;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Service staff: dealing with internal problems, Dealing with complaints, Dealing with petitions for rule bending, managing students, managing lecturers, building a bridge between administrative and academic systems, doing managerial reports</td>
<td>-Engaging in revenue-earning practices to ensure regional leadership and reinvestment in an uncertain and competitive market; -Establishing organised routines to ensure orderly conduct of service and underpinning organisation to guard against loss to competitors and to promote professionalism; -Managing consumer demands within a competitive market for education and self-development; -Locating the specific educational offering as the best option for consumers in this market.</td>
<td>-Cultural values of education consumption;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative staff: establishing procedures, managing university resources and re-allocation systems, setting prices, managing communication, creating rules, evaluating different systems within the university, strictly following quality procedures and evaluating reports</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Market value of competitive services;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| PRACTITIONERS | Students, lecturers, auxiliary service staff, administrative staff and potential students | -Different levels of resources and managerial knowledge. | Known role-expectations for student satisfaction; |
|               |                               | -Different role expectations in relation to the service co-production. | Known role-expectations for student misbehaviour; |
|               |                               | -Overlap between these roles: administrators, students and lecturers as experts with experience of wider administrative contexts; | Known role-expectations for lecturer and administrative staff satisfaction; |
|               |                               | -Potential students as indicators of demand hence the utility of the service in the wider educational and self-development market. | Known role-expectations for lecturer and administrative staff misbehaviour; |

| PHYSICAL MATERIALS | Participants: Money, questions, petition letters, phone, computers, tablets, energy, effort | -Money as an indicator of value, comparable to market exchanges in the wider academic and economic context, requiring the university to work to maintain service co-production and avoid | Monetary values linked to wider economic climate (priorities) and to popular issues of educational/academic value. |
|                   | Administrative staff: Procedures, rule book. | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Participants' explicit know-how, academic explicit know-how | - Questions of professionalism, honesty and trust reflecting wider social trends and fashions relating to educational and academic gains. Framing these within the value proposition of the service activity in terms of professionalism and ethics and wider instrumental comparisons of value-for-money against competitors. | - Questions of professionalism, honesty and trust reflecting wider social trends and fashions relating to educational and academic gains. Framing these within the value proposition of the service activity in terms of professionalism and ethics and wider instrumental comparisons of value-for-money against competitors. |
| Social Communities | Students, auxiliary service staff, administrative staff, ideological and strategic system staff, lecturers, consultants, students’ friends and families, secondary stakeholders | Students, auxiliary service staff, administrative staff, ideological and strategic system staff, lecturers, consultants, students’ friends and families, secondary stakeholders |
| Interaction space within the service co-production zone but also ad hoc associational spaces as participants move around the university (cafeterias, parking) represent front stage and back stage opportunities for association, the latter enabling comparisons and evaluations with participants' wider experiences. | Interaction space within the formal service coproduction zone but also ad hoc associational spaces as participants move around the university (cafeterias, parking) represent front stage and back stage opportunities for association, the latter enabling comparisons and evaluations with participants' wider experiences. |
| Physical Servicescape | University (virtual and physical) | University (virtual and physical) |
| Providers create physical community spaces to foster friendly and respectful interaction (i.e. cafeterias, restaurants) amongst participants (service users, providers, potential users) as a way to differentiate the service. | Providers create physical community spaces to foster friendly and respectful interaction (i.e. cafeterias, restaurants) amongst participants (service users, providers, potential users) as a way to differentiate the service. |
| Students: To solve an administrative issue (paying, complaining, asking for rule bending) | Students: To solve an administrative issue (paying, complaining, asking for rule bending) |
| Auxiliary service staff: To | Auxiliary service staff: To |
| Providers create mechanisms to foster civilised interaction among participants (service users, providers, potential users) and easy problem solving according to | Providers create mechanisms to foster civilised interaction among participants (service users, providers, potential users) and easy problem solving according to |
| Motive | Motive |
| - Material and less material procedures supporting the service linked to wider educational market standards and to value issues above. | - Material and less material procedures supporting the service linked to wider educational market standards and to value issues above. |
| - Professional standards established against wider educational industry norms and student experiences. | - Professional standards established against wider educational industry norms and student experiences. |
| Cultural dispositions for problem solving | Cultural dispositions for problem solving |
| Social structures of signification | Social structures of signification |
manage and support the academic experience

**Administrative staff:** To keep customers and attract more customers, to manage strictly and uncritically following and fulfilling quality procedures, to do the part of the job they are being evaluated for.

established internationally accepted regulatory practices (i.e. ISO, academic accreditations) as a way to differentiate the service.

- Cultural expectations of administrative practices in the academic context

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POWER

Lecturers and auxiliary service staff are often vulnerable. Power balance seems to be in favour of the administrative staff which influences customer misbehaviour, administrative under-performance and auxiliary service entrepreneurial behaviour to make the system work. The use of power is sometimes autocratic and arbitrary to suit administrative motives.

- Providers manage power use to foster meeting accreditations standards and internal processes as a way to differentiate the service.

- Social structures of domination and legitimation

- Market competitiveness structure (i.e. perfect competition, monopolistic competition)

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**Table 5.1 The Postgraduate Higher Education “facilitating encounter” as a Practical System**

**Virtual Encounters**

Virtual encounters in HE relate to encounters over the internet (i.e. university webpage, email, blackboard, lotus notes) and through social communities (i.e. WhatsApp chats). Virtual encounters within the HE practice can be seen through the lens of participants which take part in these encounters (i.e. lecturer-student; lecturer-administrative; student-administrative; administrative-administrative; student-student) and can be related to official encounters and spill-over encounters. Virtual encounters through the postgraduate programmes’ web page are merely informational, linking direct users (i.e. potential students, students, etc.) to any programme of interest. Particular programme web pages are composed basically of 10 sections for (1) general information about the programme, (2) objectives, (3) expected vocational profile for alumni, (4) curriculum, (5) length and schedule, (6) further information, (7) application and admission, (8) online payments, (9) contact us and (10) general information about the university.
Relational practices and communication among students themselves and students with lecturers usually reflect their lifeworld practices using their everyday means of communication (i.e. personal email, mobile phone chats and apps). Students prefer to create communal email accounts and informal groups on their smartphones (i.e. group email account, smartphones groups), instead of using university’s formal and established platforms for communication (i.e. university email, blackboard, blackboard chats). Indeed, the usage of formal platforms for communication is practically non-existent (e.g. only for checking grades) and unknown since it is neither mandatory nor recognised by the participants. Informal platforms of communication (especially smartphone groups) are used for utilitarian purposes and academic encounters such as doing assignments, sharing views and concepts of class, asking for concepts about lecturers and informing students about the class. These views are seen in the following excerpts of interviews with alumni and students:

“We had a group e-mail which was nameoftheprogramme@hotmail.com and lecturers sent all the materials they wanted to send us(...) we also called each other on the phone, used e-mails, Facebook, smartphone chats...we had lots of ways to communicate. (Jacob Fuller, Alumni)”

“No one knows how to use the university e-mail and no one uses it. People don’t know how to check their grades and just recently I received instructions on how to use the e-mail. (...) They
They are also used for hedonic purposes and spill-over encounters such as gossiping about students and lecturers, killing time while in class, chatting while in class, etc. and two pictures from chats used by students of a postgraduate programme:

Picture 5.2 Different Smartphone Groups created by Postgraduate Students (August 2012)

Internal communication practices among administrative staff within the university are fragmented since they are basically organised through the use of two different means (physical materials): emails and lotus notes. While some auxiliary services personnel and administrative personnel have access to email and lotus notes, all the rest of the university community (i.e. lecturers, students, secretaries) has only access to emails. While lotus notes communications are used for taking and “pushing” internal decisions and for “more important issues”, emails are used for external communications (i.e. administrative to student; administrative to lecturer) and are considered more informal and less important for the community of users who have access to both means of communication. The following excerpts show some uses of internal communications within the organisation:
“I use Ofelia (lotus notes) mostly to coordinate, to communicate with the team. It’s more personal...the e-mail is used more for external things, compared to Ofelia (lotus notes). (Cecil Evans, Auxiliary Service Staff)”

“BW: It depends on the situation. For example, it’s like the case of a re-enrolment, which is easy and has to do with a person who graduated last semester and he or she needs to enrol in this new one, then I just send an e-mail to (department) and I specify all the information, so that they don’t have to call and ask...I send it and that’s it.

M: Do you call them beforehand to...

BW: It depends. When the topic is different and someone who graduated a very long time wants to enrol again, then I call them and explain the situation to them. It’s better to make that phone call because you can probably make a mistake, since it’s a specific case and you can complement the information on Ofelia (lotus notes) before you send the e-mail.

M: Do you handle the internal issues with Ofelia (lotus notes)?

BW: Yes and the external issues we send them by e-mail. (Billy Wings, Auxiliary Service Staff)”

“I use Ofelia (lotus notes) when I have to communicate very important things for the university. For instance, if I need things to be approved, things that I need that others spread, important things...I use the e-mail for more informal things. (Cherry Darling, Auxiliary Service Staff).”

Table 5.2 describes “virtual encounters” from the standpoint of service encounters as practical systems taking into consideration current practices, their contextual relevance and context factors which influence value creation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOINGS</th>
<th>Current Practice</th>
<th>Contextual Relevance</th>
<th>Context Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential Students: Looking for information, asking for information</td>
<td>-Enabling educational and evangelizing spaces which compare the value proposition against its competition (e.g., academic programmes, research, other activities).</td>
<td>-Individual biography;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students: Asking for information, communicating with lecturers, communicating with peers, communicating with auxiliary service personnel, doing homework, sharing academic information, gossiping</td>
<td>-Enabling educational and work spaces which support educational practices following wider contextual patterns in the academic world (e.g., assignments, research, debates).</td>
<td>-Social and virtual relationships;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers: Communicating with students, communicating with auxiliary service personnel, solving queries, problems and misunderstandings, supporting experience</td>
<td>-Locating the specific service offering (i.e. programmes) as the best option for consumers in this market</td>
<td>-Cultural values of education and academic life;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff: Informing students, informing potential students, communicating with lecturers, communicating with students, communicating internally within the university, doing everyday administrative activities, supporting academic experience, solving internal issues, receiving formal petitions</td>
<td>-Online practices (informational, behavioural) of competitors and comparators in the academic context</td>
<td>-Cultural values of online service consumption and online interaction in higher education;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRACTITIONERS</strong></td>
<td>Potential students, students, lecturers, auxiliary service personnel</td>
<td>-Different levels of resources and knowledge about using and creating virtual spaces.</td>
<td>-Known role-expectations for consumer civility and consumer misbehaviour in virtual spaces; - Consumption of latest communication trends and practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHYSICAL MATERIALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Potential Students:</strong> Computers, internet, webpages, smartphones  <strong>Students:</strong> Computer, internet, smartphones, tablets, webpages, email platforms, blackboard, chats, smartphone chats  <strong>Lecturers:</strong> Computer, internet, smartphones, tablets, webpages, email platforms, blackboard,  <strong>Administrative Staff:</strong> Computer, internet, email platform, Lotus notes platform, smartphone chats</td>
<td>-Web page, educational platforms, databases and social communities that identify the service with wider trends in virtual communications in the international academic context</td>
<td>-Adopted communication tools and materials in the academic and educational context - Adopted communication tools and materials in the wider context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CULTURAL COMPETENCES AND UNDERSTANDINGS</strong></td>
<td>Explicit Knowledge about virtual interaction  The image of a traditional web search.  The image of a traditional chat where agents interact collaboratively and ask for information politely  The image of traditional interactions amongst customers and service providers when they are communally solving problems  To bend the rules whenever it is possible no matter what, to overpromise, to distrust at all times</td>
<td>-Providers create virtual spaces to foster dialogical communication between service users and service providers to differentiate the service, solve problems effectively and identify with wider trends of virtual communications -Users create virtual spaces to foster spill-over and utilitarian encounters through applying their knowledge of wider trends of virtual communications -Providers create virtual spaces, through social media, to promote more widely the valuable nature of their offering for existing and potential consumers. - Participants wanting to be informed of latest communication trends and practices in the wider context.</td>
<td>-Adopted online communication trends and practices in the academic and educational context -Adopted online communication trends and practices in the wider context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL COMMUNITIES</strong></td>
<td>Potential students, students, lecturers, auxiliary service personnel, administrative personnel, alumni, strategic and ideological system personnel and secondary stakeholders</td>
<td>-Ability of participants to deploy their participation in the educational service as an exemplary lesson for their connections beyond the encounter – i.e. realising value by being perceived as a disciplined, experienced, educated, professional and a part of an academic community.</td>
<td>-Virtual communities enabled through social media - Local associations formed through informal interactions within the encounter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHYSICAL SERVICESCAPE</strong></td>
<td>University web page, email platform, Lotus notes platform, blackboard platform, smartphone chat rooms</td>
<td>-Providers use virtual community spaces to foster civilised interaction and active student participation as a way to differentiate the service. - Providers use virtual communication spaces to solve managerial problems using wider trends of virtual administrative communications -Providers use social media to promote the valuable nature of their academic offering for existing and potential customers more widely.</td>
<td>-Cultural expectations of social media and electronic means attractiveness, usefulness and convenience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Users use virtual communities, (i.e. smartphone chats, Facebook, Twitter) to promote hedonic and utilitarian encounters following wider trends of virtual communications.

**MOTIVE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Students: solve queries about the programmes</th>
<th>Students: solve academic and administrative issues</th>
<th>Lecturers: Support the academic experience</th>
<th>Administrative Staff: support the experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providers create virtual mechanisms to foster community interaction, facilitate problem solving, grow consumer base and evangelize about the academic programmes, the educational service provided and the impact of the organisation regionally.</td>
<td>- Participants use informal virtual spaces to collaborate, encourage and evangelize the valuable nature of their offering for existing and potential students.</td>
<td>- Social structures of signification attached to social media, managerial and academic activities.</td>
<td>- Cultural expectations of online practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**POWER**

| Administrative staff and customers have more informational resources than lecturers and also have complete control of formal physical servicescapes but no control of informal physical servicescapes | Providers manage unbalanced informational resources to resolve administrative misunderstandings and clarify expectations according to wider context regulations. | Users manage unbalanced informational resources to resolve misunderstandings, facilitate communication, freely interact and evaluate the programmes and to somewhat misbehave in different encounters following wider trends of virtual communications. | Social structures of domination and legitimation attached to social media. |

Table 5.2 The Postgraduate Higher Education “Virtual Encounter” as a Practical System

**Performing Encounters**

Picture 5.3 A Student’s Presentation in Class
Performing encounters are encounters that frequently take place at the classroom or are the result of the core service of education, which it is expected to be co-created learning. They can also be considered as an interactive encounter of teaching practices (lecturers) and studying practices (students). These encounters appear to be co-produced, very diverse, uncertain and emergent. Postgraduate classes are predominantly practices for lecturers to enable/ hinder students’ active participation, integrating classroom resources such as physical materials (i.e. readings, methodologies); cultural competences and understandings (i.e. concepts, work experience, myths); social communities (i.e. students, companies, families) and motives (learning, getting a diploma) through civilised actions and interactions. Consequently, rules of wider society, education and academic contexts (both tacit and explicit), or at least some of them, apply in performing encounters in higher education, so, actions and participants in service encounters therefore shape their performances in accordance with these demands.

Practices emerging at performing encounters are mediated by physical materials, cultural competences and understandings and position in the social community which influence both participants and lecturers actions in the construction of the whole class experience (i.e. participants supporting other participants, active discussions, passive killing time, bench warming, etc.). Academic encounters are usually divided into eight components: (1) socialisation and preparation; (2) greetings and picking up; (3) rolling the class list for signing; (4) essential class (emergent); (5) coffee break (Saturday classes); (6) essential class (emergent); (7) leaving and reminding of tasks and (8) class closing and query solving. Most participants actively participate in the whole class; however, some students just participate in first four components of the class and use the fifth component (coffee break) for carrying out relational practices (i.e. spill-over encounters), such as gossiping and making excuses to other
participants, to then leave the university missing the second half of the class in order to carry on with their lifeworld practices (i.e. working, family time, hedonic time).

Performing encounters integrate different networks (especially students and lecturers) which also integrate other university resources (including motives) in various activities. As was mentioned before, the academic encounter is co-produced, uncertain and emergent. However, actions taken by the most important networks of participants involved in pedagogic systems (students and lecturers) are deeply mediated by organising practices adopted by administrative and ideological networks. These organising practices associated with the performing encounter facilitate, hinder or pressure actions for value creation at these performing encounters. Cultural images, understandings and standards of quality in social, managerial, education and academic contexts (both tacit and explicit), apply to organising practices in performing encounters in higher education. For example, the election of lecturers, setting the maximum number of students admitted into programmes and incorporating physical materials such as, class materials, databases, simulators, evaluations, etc., adopted by the performing encounter with the motive of offering an improved learning experience, need the approval of administrative systems which follow directions from ideological systems. Administrative systems motives are related to very tangible and measureable utilitarian motives in the short term (such as cost-effective management of resources, efficient measurement and economic income), while the ideological system, the pursuit of sustainability, internationalisation and leadership in the region and country, are motives which are attainable only in the long term.

Furthermore, cultural understandings associated with the academic encounter have a cultural biography and are related to the social and cultural context in which academic encounter is embedded. This influences practitioners to occasionally adopt opportunistic and undesirable actions integrating resources. Also, motives of the encounters and the interactions within are
highly influenced by Colombian structures of domination, signification and legitimation (Giddens 1984). The encounter is also influenced by the evolution of the broader international academic context from just teaching universities, to universities which perform teaching, research and consultancy activities.

Performing encounters vary in intensity and liveliness. There are some performing encounters where students and lecturers actively and energetically participate in integrating their resources, while other classes are passive and dull. The performing encounter thus becomes an important part of a part of their weekly academic routines, routines thereby exerting an influence far beyond the actual encounter in time and space. Consequently, active participation depends on how lecturers and students prepare for academic encounters; how they use their knowledge, experience and discourses of both work and life; how they use their physical materials such as laptops, smart phones, tablets, class materials, etc.; which cultural understanding they bring about the nature of the encounter and the relationships of the participants within; the motives historically attached to the practice and the networks they use for the encounter.

Students at academic encounters are just one element of the practice of studying participating in resource integration, depending on the configuration of the other elements of the practice, as shown in the following analytic note:

“One key finding was to see that the route taken by most of the students was to minimise involvement and participation due to the presence of rules within the university activity systems that unconsciously encourage student opportunistic behaviour and hedonic consumption. Our second key finding was to understand that student participation in HE is highly influenced by the different mediators and communities who take part of the activity and operate as enablers or barriers for customer action rather than just individual customer agency. Our final finding is that effective role participation in student transformational practices cannot always be assumed. What the literature assumes to be effective, desirable, customer participation is not always the case, since relationships among different systems have different goals and motives. These findings are significant for marketing researchers, academics and for higher education institution directors (Analytic Note used as an excerpt for an Abstract for AMS Conference and Publication 25-5-2011)”
As a result, active participation in resource integration is sometimes influenced by how the lecturers transmit a sense of mastery and respect to students, regulating and organising the practice in the encounter:

“a good lecturer motivates you, inspires you, but is also a respectful person...a professor should not have to raise the volume of his voice to talk. For instance, I think it was disrespectful that (Lecturer A) raised the volume of his voice and to me that isn’t respectful: he is showing his power. (Lecturer B) was too relaxed and (Lecturer C) was someone who got serious and demanding whenever he needed to, but he was respectful (Jimmie Dimmick, Alumni)”

It is also influenced by how lecturers shape students’ performances making them feel they can contribute to the social co-production of knowledge in class:

“Lecturers who motivate me to read and investigate more or to be in class every time...well, I never miss class, if I miss class it’s because of circumstances beyond my control, but those are lecturers who are interested in knowing what you can contribute to the class, what you can contribute to the Professor as well (Jacob Fuller, Alumni)”

Active participation by students is also influenced by how lecturers legitimate themselves sharing knowledge about their professional experience in everyday life world activities:

“He told us that he had worked at (Company X) and he has lots of experience in the financial area. He shows us the formulas and financial math, but I like it when he starts talking about his experience, the real life, specific cases about real companies, where you can see how everything is. That’s what motivates me and catches my attention too...there’s no way you can get distracted. That’s the kind of professor that I like...the person who doesn’t have to read a piece of paper, but who talks about current news.(Esteban Vihaio, Postgraduate Student)”

This can also be influenced through lecturers organising practices such as teaching styles and class structures:

“International lecturers come with a very energetic attitude...I don’t know...it’s probably because we had just had class with a very relaxed lecturer and they came with a lot of energy and you could see it, very dynamic, very active and they combined that with group work strategies...the follow up of the readings...I mean, it’s not like other lecturers who just tell you to read and, if you read then we can go on...but, the lecturer came to class and the follow up was, not with questions like: what did you learn? What did you understand? What did you read? But it was through practical cases. So, the lecturer used to present a case and we had to solve it or compare it with the reading that we had previously done...there were dynamic exercises inside the class, negotiation models...sample exercises...different methodologies...it was quite different. (Jacob Fuller, Alumnus)”
Another source of influence is organising practices shaped by lecturers such as the methodologies used and applied to demanding lifeworld assignments,

“(Lecturer A) set a context that made us speak publicly and I think he did it on purpose, he has quite a strong temper and he’s a very demanding lecturer. The projects were so demanding that we had to wake up very early, work at the weekend. From the first day, people didn’t like him much, but after the classes, at the end students said that he was the best lecturer, because of the level of demand and the world he put us into. The final assignment in (subject of study) I can say that it was one of the most demanding I’ve done in my life as a student; it has to do with the launch of a new product in a real life context, things we had to do real research and you had to make the presentation as if the lecturer were your boss and you were the employee. It was very interesting because afterwards he would ask why? why not?, looking at different alternatives. And the time the group made a mistake, he immediately changed into the academic level, he changed the thing and he told the group to get together for five minutes to solve that problem. (Elliot Blitzer, Postgraduate Student)”

“I don’t know, it depends on the methodology...you know that all of them have experience and all of them have their diplomas and accreditations so they are teaching us because they deserve it. But it depends on the methodology (…) what motivates you the most is when you can apply in your company what you learned in class...there are a lot of theories but not all of them can be applied. Show everything in every day practical terms, that’s what motivates me the most (Jackie Brown, Alumnus)”

It is also influenced by how lecturers academically assess students and settle on an organised class plan and grading system:

“I make bigger efforts when professors are demanding, when they assign things to do at home...not so much the quizzes, but the assignments for home, for instance a reading that we have to finish by next week. I suppose there are people who don’t like that and sometimes people complain when the lecturers send a lot of work to do at home, especially stuff in English, people still suffer with English. (Elle Driver, Student)”

“That depends on the lecturer. Yes, because if it’s a lecturer that gives them a quiz at 6 p.m. on Friday, or a lecturer who fails a student on a topic when he doesn’t prepare it, then they do it, they comply with that. But if it’s a lecturer who just gives class and he doesn’t ask questions, they don’t prepare the class. (Cherry Darling, Auxiliary Service Staff)”

“M: What about the grading system of the international lecturers?
JF: They were tougher than the rest...
M: What do you mean by that?
JF: They...I don’t know...they showed us the work plan, the way we were going to work and how they were going to grade and we had to reach those percentages they had mentioned: the percentage for quizzes, etc. When I say tough, I mean that the assignments we turned in and the dynamic exercises...they were very tough, demanding” (Jacob Fuller, Alumnus)”

Active participation in performing encounters is also dependent on the dynamics among students and between students and lecturers participating in the encounter. Students
discourses are considered legitimate and are “taken seriously” depending on their level of argumentation:

“It depends on the person who speaks. If you see that the person has tried many times but has failed attempts and he or she is going to say something again, you know that he or she is going to say something stupid. But when you hear a strong argument, then you pay attention to it. (Jungle Julia, Alumnus)”

“I avoid taking a student seriously when he insists that there’s no need to argue, or to defend his views stubbornly. I consider that person as someone who is not serious, not committed.

M: can you explain that?

DR: A person who is stubborn and sticks to a position or gives a view without adding reasons or further arguments. (Dick Ritchie, Postgraduate Lecturer)”

Thus, students are considered as contributors to knowledge creation in performing encounters this also possibly being affected by how they use their knowledge obtained in their jobs in everyday life work activities, a contribution which goes far beyond the actual encounter in time and space:

“I didn’t take her seriously when she bragged about her position. …and there was another girl who was…very…very stupid and when she participated, she simply said words and didn’t pay attention to what she was saying. Also, she talked with a very unexcited attitude, in a very indifferent way, demotivated…so, from the start, everyone started to feel annoyed whenever she spoke in class. She didn’t contribute to the class… (Jacob Fuller, Alumni)”

“I believe more in the people who have high positions in a company. Age doesn’t matter much because there are some classmates who are my age and they have high positions (…) You can see that it’s a person who debates with the lecturer, who argues with him, who asks questions…mostly, I pay attention to the position, the type and name of the company where they are working (Elliot Blitzer, Postgraduate Student)”

This may also be affected by their sense of respect of civilised interaction within encounters organised by lecturers by making contribution to class discussion:

“There are students who raise their hand to ask something that the professor already explained and that’s not an important opinion that disrupts the class. So, whenever that student raises his hand, you know that his opinion won’t be something relevant… (Gloria Hill, Postgraduate Student)”

“When they start talking about their experience I take them a little more seriously…when they ask questions that don’t lead to anything…maybe they just want to draw our attention to let us know that they also participate in class. When they start discussing with the lecturer, when they start talking about their experience, if they make the lecturer dig deeper into a certain topic, then you pay attention to them, so you can learn. (Jules Winnfield, Postgraduate Student)”
Moreover, students’ track record of commitment to studying in class can also affect whether or not they are taken seriously:

“The ones who commit to study, who are really into it... the ones you see that aren’t making jokes and laughing, but those who are eager to do things well. When you see a person who is a mediocre, you don’t take him seriously. I take seriously the person who proposes we should do something and the person does it, that we should investigate and he does it... not someone who delegates tasks, but the one that commits to do something and does it. (Francesca Mondino, Student)”

On the other hand, lecturers are taken seriously by students for using professional practice obtained in their lifeworld work activities to enrich academic conceptualization:

“About that, what we said at that moment was that it was nice that he shared all that, because he’s a very recognized and successful entrepreneur and it was important for us to know how he created his company and the conflicts that arise among a family, how it started, everything... but it’s also important to complement that with something theoretical, concepts, that... what you said, it’s good to complement the practice and the theory, a hybrid in order to have... to understand a topic correctly. (Jacob Fuller, Alumnus)”

Thus, how a lecturer is considered as trustworthy may be influenced by how their professional experience in lifeworld activities emulates students’ lifeworld practices:

“If I feel that the person is sincere, that he’s telling the truth and that he actually went through that or had that experience in real life. If I feel that his true ideas resonate with my true professional ideas, I believe in that lecturer. (Jungle Julia, Alumnus)”

It may be influenced by the way lecturers interact with students, recognising their knowledge and engaging respectfully with them:

“When a lecturer respects the student, when he treats us like equals, like colleagues... when he knows that he’s in front of students who did BA and who have work experience. Also, when you notice that the lecturer knows what he’s talking about. Because there are some lecturers who start talking about themselves and their work experience and what they did. To me, that’s a silly lecturer, very egotistical. But when the lecturer shares his work experience to enrich the class, you see how important he is... also when he cites authors, or when he talks about a book that he had us read and that he knows what the content is about... that’s a serious person. (Francesca Mondino, Postgraduate Student)”

It may also be influenced by the way lecturers transfer academic knowledge to students’ lifeworld practices:

“If the lecturer gives an example that cannot be applied in real life, or if the lecturer doesn’t give you tips as to how you can use the things you learn in class, then you don’t learn it or
internalize it. If they give you an example and you can relate that to your experience, then you start liking that and you take the lecturer more seriously (Jules Winnfield, Student)

Lecturers also rely on additional resources and previously organised practices depending on how the groups actively interact with them at performing encounters. For example, lecturers can spontaneously bring moral meanings to give added weight to the lecture (not even organized in advance) if there is assertive communication and active academic and vocational request from one or more of the whole class:

“The requests of the group are what obligate you to give something extra. If you don’t have an assertive, demanding group, you don’t feel encouraged to give more. (Drexl Spivey, Visiting Lecturer)"

More resources might be used depending on how the group actively shape their performance about the topic discussed in the class:

“... It depends on how you’re working on a topic...and then you see if you need to do a debate, or show a video. That starts to sort itself out depending on how you’re working on the topic. Sometimes I start with a video, or I can do that at the end...there isn’t a strict order, because it also depends on the group. There are groups that make you use more material...you have to make use of the material that you have in stock. (Clifford Worley, Visiting Lecturer)"

Even though the physical classroom does not leave much opportunity for subjects to get distracted from the performing encounter, there are some less physical and virtual elements which influence misbehaviour and unwelcome participation during academic encounters. Internet access encourages students to disconnect from performing encounters to connect to their lifeworld and relational practices. Consequently, students and lecturers bring physical materials to help them actively participate in their academic encounters in a more structured manner, but this kind of participation cannot always be assumed. It was observed at different classes that students bring different artefacts, such as laptops, tablets and smartphones, to communicate with the class (i.e. spill-over encounters with other students) and with the world outside the classroom (i.e. spill-over encounters with family, friends and work). Lecturers also use different computer programmes, assignments, class materials and presentations to
get in touch with their students. In some cases, the misuse of physical materials by practitioners is the subject of pejorative evaluations and the social construction of predispositions about them, since they may either contribute or distract participants from their projected and civilised participation in performing encounters. These kinds of evaluations and preconceptions are constructed by the students:

“Today, it happens a lot with...agh, how do you call that disease in kids that they don’t pay attention and...autism. I sometimes call them the autistic students, because it’s those students that go to class, open their laptop and their smartphones and their minds are focused on their laptop and their smartphone and they start answering emails, read other things and do things that have nothing to do with the class. They think that the simple attendance is enough, they assume that it's enough... (Drex Spivey, Postgraduate Lecturer)”

These evaluations and preconceptions can also be constructed for the groups influencing conflicts in the lecturers’ role:

“To me, the bad group is the group that is thinking about something else, the students who are using their smartphones. I sometimes have to say to them that if they don’t turn off their smartphones, then I will leave the classroom. It’s striking sometimes! (Bonnie Dimmick, Postgraduate Lecturer)”

This misuse of physical materials can also bring socially pejorative evaluations of lecturers,

“ED: … There are other types of lecturers who are the karaoke lecturers
M: Karaoke lecturers? What do you mean?
ED: Yes, the lecturers who stand in front of the class and who start to read the slides. We thought that wasn’t going to happen, but it actually happened. (Elle Driver, Postgraduate Student)"

There are some other resources which could be very significant for organising practices related to the performing encounter, such as class preparation and doing assignments, which are not used and even not recognised by the majority of the members of the academic encounter community (both students and lecturers). Apparently, these resources are basically not integrated or under-used because of a lack of training, lack of knowledge and attachment to lifeworld practices:

“MG: Do you use the web catalogue?
DS: No.
MG: Why not?”
DS: Because they haven’t shown me that, I haven’t been trained.
M: What about the databases?
DS: No, I don’t use them at all.
M: You haven’t been trained for that or…
DS: You know? Four years ago we had training in systems, but it was mainly a training to learn about the intranet, but we don’t use that much, either. (Drexl Spivey, Postgraduate Lecturer)”

“M: Have you used the databases?
BL: No. Not at all. I only know how to get to the graduate course building and that’s it. Once I had to…when I was teaching a class for a certificate course I had to go to the buildings that were at the other side of the cafeteria and that’s it. I have never asked for that and they have never told me anything or gave me training…I know it’s my fault because I haven’t asked about equipment or training…I’ll do it after this (laughs) (Beaumont Livingston, Postgraduate Lecturer)”

There may also be administrative issues related to organising training sessions:

“We tried, I organised everything, I called the lecturers but in terms of logistics it’s very difficult because they come at different times of the year. The first thing you have to do is book the training rooms. Then, you need the person who gives the training available and you also need the usernames that the lecturers get. Sometimes they lose that username, or they don’t have them…so I have to look for that and give it to them (Cherry Darling, Auxiliary Staff)”

Underuse of these resources may also be due to student attachment to lifeworld practices for finding information in the wider context:

“I would like to use the databases a little bit more. The first lecturer assigned some articles that were very good and much updated. However, whenever someone assigns readings, the first thing you do is search it on Google and if you find it there, then what’s the use of using the databases? I think I have the appropriate tools to search things on Google. I use Google Docs and things like that and I almost always found the things. Other times, the Professor sent the articles by mail, so it’s not very necessary. (Elle Driver, Student)”

It may also be due to historical teaching practices followed by lecturers and routine practices for which they use alternative means to provide and use class materials:

“I think, I think we didn’t use the web catalogue. Why? Lecturers never uploaded the material on the web catalogue. Last year they gave us all the material in hard copy, we read it and if they had to send something, they sent it to the e-mail. Some of the lecturers used the web catalogue, like for instance, the international lecturers, they uploaded information there, but the majority of them didn’t use it. (Jacob Fuller, Alumnus)”

Lack of time and some other cultural understandings about students’ lifeworld practices were also mentioned:
“Well, they have the knowledge...we have heard from the students that they don’t have time to check them. A lot of them are external, I mean, the students can check the databases at home, but apparently (laughs), the students don’t have much time during the week to explore them. (Cecil Evans, Auxiliary Staff)

Furthermore, attached, shared, historical and unquestioned cultural understandings about how to behave (what it is to be a student) and what the academic encounter is all about are central to participation in resource integration at performing encounters. Signification, domination and legitimation structures in the wider context (i.e. Colombian culture and academic context) encourage opportunistic behaviour of some students towards other students and the university. For example, when doing group assignments, cheating and misbehaving are legitimate and somewhat premeditated practices, which aim to help “the dominated group” (peers or themselves), without reflecting on how these actions weaken the quality of civilised interaction and active participation in further performing encounters. Some of these actions are influenced by the cultural understanding (signification structures) that this kind of “collaboration” is part of the “Colombian Culture”:

“JB: … all the assignments are done in groups and they were in groups of 5 or 6 and there is one person who doesn’t do anything and he gets the same grade as his fellow classmates who do the project and the presentation. When they have to make the presentation in front of the class, you can see that they don’t say a thing and it’s because they didn’t do their job.
M: And the other group members didn’t kick that guy out?
JB: No, because they’re buddies…
JD: I think it’s like part of the Colombian culture, we don’t sanction those behaviours. We don’t like to punish...we don’t have that capacity to tell somebody off. (Jackie Brown and Jimmie Dimmick, Alumnus)”

Alternatively, the actions may be influenced by the image of feeling pity for the cheater (dominated participant) and evading future arguments:

GH: Yes, because we were all in the group. So, if you kick them out of the group, they can fail the subject and...it’s hard to kick them out. I feel the need of doing it but, I don’t…I wouldn’t do it I know them and I don’t want to start a possible argument because of it. I feel bad, I feel pity because they could fail the subject and because it becomes a problem for them. (Gloria Hill, Postgraduate Student)"
Sometimes students want to avoid a socially constructed image which makes them seem “childish”, adopting an individualistic position without acknowledging how they are harming the performing encounter:

“M: And who does the projects, everyone does his or her part?
FM: No, in a group of four, only two work. In a group of three only one person works, but they all get the same grade.
M: Does someone tell the lecturer that one of the members of the group hasn’t done his or her part?
ER: No, no one does that.
M: Why?
FM: Just to not be like little children. I think to myself that ultimately, the person who is learning is me…but there’s a moment when you get so tired that you kick out a person… (Francesca Mondino, Postgraduate Student)”

Furthermore, although a psychological contract setting the rules for performing encounters is negotiated among the parties before programmes start, these agreements are rarely followed and violated on a regular basis without any kind of consequence. For this reason, this historical and Colombian legitimation structure (i.e. you can misbehave and not be penalised) basically becomes a tacit rule which mediates students’ role at performing encounters:

“M: What’s the role that students have during performing encounters at the university?
CD: I think that the students, you, as a graduate course student, you behave like a student again. You make jokes, you talk in class, you cheat, you eat in class...like innate habits that you have. Now, I have to remind students that they can’t eat, but I used to eat in the classroom. (Cherry Darling, Auxiliary Service Staff)”

Finally, table 5.3 describes “performing encounters” according to the standpoint of service encounters as practical systems taking into consideration current practices, their contextual relevance and context factors which influence value creation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Practice</th>
<th>Contextual Relevance</th>
<th>Context Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DOINGS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing assignments, preparing classes, doing examinations, attending class, exchanging arguments, using materials, resting, chatting, cheating, following class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lecturers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivating students, teaching classes, updating materials, using rubrics, grading, assessing, managing classes, creating discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-Establishing an instrumental fit with other life commitments;</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Individual biography in education and work;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-Establishing emotional fit with confidence levels and desired outcomes;</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Social and economic relationships;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-Negotiating adjustments to service co-production in line with other life commitments;</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Cultural values of education and academic success;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-Verifying formal responses against observed practice and physical resources compared to other educational service offerings within the wider social context;</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Market value of competitive educational services;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-Comparing claimed value</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Perceived social (community) value of service outcome;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-Pedagogical, research</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **PRACTITIONERS** | Students, lecturers | - Different levels of resources and knowledge in participants’ everyday life  
- Different role expectations in relation to the co-production of the service.  
- Overlap between these roles: participants (lecturers and students) as experts with professional and academic experience;  
- Participants as role models of civilised interaction helping to acknowledge and promote the service’s success in the wider context. | - Known role-expectations for student and lecturer satisfaction;  
- Identity symbols for being co-producers of a self-development service (executive, academic and professional conduct). Linked to biographical experience. |
| **PHYSICAL MATERIALS** | Students: Energy, expertise, dispositions, laptops, tablets, smartphones, materials, academic schemas, power point presentations, effort, discourses, languages  
Lecturers: Energy, methodologies, discourses, languages, materials, attendance sheets, PowerPoints, markers, rubrics, smartphones  
Classroom: Blackboard, internet, desks, computer, lights, air-conditioning | - Clothing, gadgets and accessories that identify the service with wider trends in business management and enable participants to identify themselves, to self and others, as professional and executive.  
- Emergent ‘in-class routines’ organised through methodologies that create the image of relevance and rigour and, in turn, differentiate the service offering against the wider educational context competition.  
- Accreditations that signify success and effectiveness and identify the service as successful within the wider context of education and against modern practices of educational value co-production, i.e. positioning the service within the wider market of management education and self-development offering and the need to keep in line with changes of trends in this context.  
- Computer programmes, databases and other artefacts that create the image of entrepreneurial and internationally adjustment and in turn, differentiate the service offering against the wider educational context competition.  
- Material items supporting the educational service linked to wider educational market standards.  
- Professional standards established against wider industry norms and consumer experiences in the educational context.  
- Participants identity markers (dress codes, gadgets). Linked to biographical experience. |  |
| **CULTURAL COMPETENCES AND UNDERSTANDINGS** | Explicit knowledge about the class that people are taking, explicit knowledge about the class that is being taught, a good assignment entails a | - Discourses of discipline, education and academic attainment reflecting wider social trends and methods relating to knowledge-shape and activity levels and | - Cultural discourses of the self and identity.  
- Established standards of achievement in education (i.e. |
| SOCIAL COMMUNITIES | Students, lecturers, alumni, auxiliary administrative staff, administrative personnel, alumni, strategic and ideological system personnel, secondary stakeholders | -Interaction space within the formal service coproduction zone but also ad hoc associational spaces as participants move around the university (cafeterias, parking) represent front stage and back stage opportunities for association, the latter enabling comparisons and evaluations with participants' wider experiences.
-Interaction space within the formal service coproduction zone but also ad hoc associational spaces as participants move around the university (cafeterias, parking), as well as offside university sites, represent front stage and back stage opportunities for participants to access hedonic and utilitarian networking (i.e. managerial opportunities, business opportunities, hedonic relationships). |
| PHYSICAL SERVICESCAPE | Classroom, class webpage | -Providers create physical community spaces to foster active resource integration and knowledge creation (service users, providers, potential users) leaving virtual spaces for participants' distraction (internet connection, access to social communities).
-Providers organise physical spaces with modern technology used in wider context as a way to differentiate the service. |
| MOTIVE | Students: To study to learn, to study to get a better job, to study to improve status, to study because they have to
Lecturers: To teach because they have to, to help in a transformation process, to show off, to teach just for money
Auxiliary Administrative: To | - Students deploy their participation in the service as an exemplary lesson for their associates beyond the encounter – i.e. realising value by being perceived as professional, executive, academically conscious people.
-Providers create mechanisms to |
Table 5.3 The Postgraduate Higher Education “Performing Encounter” as a Practical System

Summary

To summarise, this chapter presents the findings of the empirical study carried out in the context of HE in Barranquilla, Colombia. The chapter uses the framework of the service encounter as a practical system to highlight how the combined elements of the service encounter are integrated through lifeworld, relational and organising practices in three different dimensions of service encounters (facilitating, virtual, performing). This exists existent in the context of postgraduate HE in management in Barranquilla, Colombia. It highlights current practices, contextual relevance and context factors that arise at these service encounters and which affect the creation of value in HE.

We can therefore say that the practice of HE goes further than the academic encounter in the classroom. In fact, the classroom is just a physical servicescape where multiple and somewhat conflicting actions are carried out by different practitioners (i.e. students, lecturers); multiple resources are integrated (i.e. methodologies, rubrics, computers, books, databases, internet); knowledge (tacit and explicit) is exchanged and co-created and value and learning is co-created by practitioners and other different elements of the encounter.
Additionally, the researcher suggests that the class encounter (pedagogic system, performing encounter) is surrounded by multiple “neighbour systems”. These include the auxiliary services system (i.e. programme administration, campus facilities, application processes, payment of fees, counselling services, registry services, etc.); the administrative system (i.e. processes of purchasing, human resources, marketing and communication and resource allocation, etc.); the ideological and strategic system (i.e. philosophy, promise making, etc.) and the student system (i.e. family influence, work influence, friends’ influence, market influence etc.). All of these are pursuing different and somewhat conflicting objectives. This connection between the main practice (the pedagogic practice) and its “neighbour systems” (auxiliary services, administrative, ideological and strategic and student practice) produces inevitable conflicts and clashes which emerge in resource integration and which are being produced by contradictions or may become contradictions themselves. Contradictions are not the same as conflicts or problems, but historically accumulated structural pressures within and among practices. In other words, contradictions produce troubles and clashes, but also offer novel opportunities to learn and to transform the practice.

It was observed during the research process that some service encounters (performing encounters) are very similar to different service encounters occurring in other cities, regions, countries and other wider academic contexts (i.e. high school; continuing education). We can also include academic areas different than management (i.e. engineering, psychology) where vocational learning is the main objective. However there were also some practices which seem typical to the wider social context of studying and teaching in the particular case studied. Furthermore, facilitating virtual and performing encounters presented some peculiarities related to the wider socio-historical context where the case was being carried out. As such the specific service encounter needs to be understood within the context of other offerings available to the consumer (i.e., different forms of education and higher education).
as well as their own motives and experiences. The practices of service providers and service users can therefore be expected to reproduce these contextual factors but also to shape the way in which the service encounter is organised and co-produced on an ongoing basis. By mapping the observable encounters and identifying their potential contextual features, the research will aim to identify a fuller range of factors that need to be taken into account when service encounters are co-produced than is the case with traditional concern with the direct relationship between service users and providers.

In this chapter, the template of the service encounter as practical system is put to work and used in the context of postgraduate higher education in Management in Barranquilla, Colombia. The researcher considers that this new template developed for the understanding of service encounters was useful for highlighting current practices, contextual relevance and context factors at service encounters in high customer participation services. It also serves to identify possibilities for enhancing value creation through service consumption practices in service encounters. Consumer actions integrating resources through service consumption practices during service encounters cannot be explained without taking into consideration the context (social, historical, cultural) where they take place. Consequently, to understand value creation during service encounters it should be considered that service consumption practices are first and foremost social practices which are inherently contextual.
CHAPTER 6 – THESIS CONCLUSION

Summary of Research

Research in service encounters has been traditionally dominated by trade-off approaches considering consumer value creation in dyadic service exchange interactions (Langeard et al 1981; Grove and Fisk 1983; Carlzon 1987, Normann 2001). Only a small number of contemporary service researchers (Holttinen 2010; Korkman et al 2010; Echeverri and Skålen 2011) and consumer behaviourists (Schau et al 2009; Shove and Pantzar 2005) have addressed a perspective which centres its analysis on the whole service practice within a specific socio-historical context. This study addresses this gap and provides more in-depth understanding of how value formation through service consumption during service encounters can be set within a stronger contextual framework.

Due to their focus on the encounter as a narrowly defined event, existing analyses have failed to specify the ways in which consumers and producers are influenced by wider contextual factors and how these shape the nature of the encounter itself. This thesis addresses this limitation by drawing attention to these contextual factors as embedded in the very practices through which the encounter is conducted. In terms of the initial research objectives:

- First, to demonstrate a gap in the traditional service marketing literature relating to the neglect of social and contextual factors within service encounters and to identify their potential role in structuring the ways in which value is created for participants. By pointing to the neglect of such contextual factors, it is also shown that there has been a tendency for over-reliance on the role of individual decisions taken in isolation which may limit the full understanding of service encounters, especially in non-standard settings.
- Second, having shown the neglect of social and contextual factors, the research will collect data from two case study service encounters to demonstrate the role played by such factors in creating value within these encounters. In particular it will seek to demonstrate that such factors are integral to service encounters and are necessary to a complete understanding of their accomplishment. To contribute to this field it will also be necessary to provide a systematic conceptualisation of these factors, as covered in the following objective.

- Third, the study will seek to demonstrate that an understanding of ‘practice’ – what participants actually do within an encounter and the material, social and psychological resources they deploy within it – provides one means of understanding service encounters. Following from this will be an attempt to explicitly conceptualise the ways in which practices within the encounter reflect social and contextual setting within which the encounter is performed.

- Finally, to construct a model of value creation within the service encounter which incorporates contextual factors as an integral component, thereby addressing the gap identified in the literature, contributing to knowledge in this emerging area, and providing a tentative model that can be used to develop further research. In this way the study will contribute to an emerging but under-researched conception of service encounters and value creation which goes beyond merely recognising the active and creative role played by participants to include an understanding of how such activity can be located within wider structures of society through which material and intellectual resources and opportunities are enabled or constrained.
In addressing these objectives, this thesis has developed a deeper understanding of how and why value is formed during service encounters through ordinary service consumption, adopting practices as the unit of analysis. Specifically, the analysis proposed in this thesis is distinguished from other types of analysis previously used in the literature (Langeard et al 1981; Grove and Fisk 1983) since it explains and describes service encounters as practical and contextual. Therefore, the understanding of the service encounter presented in this thesis proposes a shift towards the study of service encounters: First, from studying dyads towards studying networks and relationships; second, from studying individuals in isolation towards studying individuals as always embedded in a social context; third, from studying cognition alone towards understanding cognition as part of a complex process of material and mental practices.

The literature review examined service encounters, value creation and theories of practice providing an overview of the current understanding of value creation during service encounters in service marketing and management. Thus, the research design used a research methodology that allowed the collection and analysis of data to address the guiding research questions:

- How do service encounters in high customer participation services demonstrate their status as sites of practice?
- How can the contextual factors involved in the accomplishment of service encounters be specified and related to value creation practices?

As will be summarised below, the first question has been addressed by demonstrating the applicability of a practice framework as an effective method of analysing the conduct of encounters so as to reflect their material, subjective and relational dimensions. The second question was addressed by compiling the elements of contextual relevance identified within
the practice framework into a definable set of context variables that can be represented in
general terms through the notion of the service encounter ‘onion’ (see below).

**Originality and Contribution to Knowledge**

This study has contributed to the literature and potentially to marketing and service practice,
in a number of important ways. The contributions of this research study are discussed in
detail below and then summarised.

**Originality and Theoretical Contribution**

There is a series of elements of this study that provide an original contribution to knowledge
about consumer value formation during service encounters through ordinary service
consumption practices. First, this study focuses on two types of services, physical fitness and
postgraduate higher education, both of which involve high levels of engagement and are
complex in terms of the individuals involved, the timescales over which they operate and the
physical and material environment within which they are delivered. This complexity
demonstrates the need to understand the contextual nature of encounters and this thesis has
provided a model, derived from theories of practice, to do this. There are few studies of how
value is created within such complex service consumption practices (Korkman 2006) in
service marketing and management. The present study offers a contribution to this field in
studying value formation during service encounters in high customer participation services.

Second, the study analysed the service encounter as a practical system and illustrated this
novel conceptualisation through a framework that mapped current practices within service
encounters, identifying their contextual relevance and specifying the contextual factors (see
chapters 4 and 5) that need to be taken into account. This is consolidated into a novel
summary and model, outlined below.
Thus, by analysing the summary tables from the preceding two chapters it is possible to summarise the contextual factors that appeared to be relevant to the encounters studies. Thus from the tables, the following set of factors could be identified as common to the holistic encounters. To provide order for these factors, they are organised according to the level that appeared as most relevant to their functioning as practices, namely the individual level, the relational level (social networks and group processes), the material level (objects and physical space) and the social level (macro-level structures and discourses of economic, political and cultural activity). This process was undertaken in two stages: the first combined the elements from all the tables under the four headings (see Appendix 7); the second then summarised these as individual concepts (to remove any remaining repetition and present them at a higher level of abstraction that allows them to be related to a wider set of encounters than those of the current empirical study).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Level</th>
<th>Relational Level</th>
<th>Material Level</th>
<th>Social Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual biography</td>
<td>Communities (local and virtual)</td>
<td>Material items</td>
<td>Economic relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity symbols</td>
<td>Professional standards</td>
<td>Technology (soft and hard)</td>
<td>Cultural values, discourses and standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual resources</td>
<td>Role-expectations</td>
<td>Physical servicescape</td>
<td>Market values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local networking</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social structures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 Contextual Factors that Shape Service Encounters

Subsequently, figure 6.1 presents the service encounter “onion” to illustrate the contextual factors that shape service encounters.
Individual context factors refer to personal sets of resources historically accumulated that practitioners bring to service consumption practices within service encounter such as individual biographies, identity markers, perceived economic and social value of service outcomes etc. The individual context provides a stock of resources that can be used by practitioners in different service encounters as soon as new opportunities and situations arise and which influence their way to shape and form value within service encounters through service consumption. These individual resources can be considered as: physically embodied, such as strength, energy, emotions, effort and motivation; material, such as possession of relevant resources including money, transport, materials necessary to participate (e.g. clothing, accessories, books, etc.) and practical, which refers to cognitive and physical competences such as the capabilities or skills (acquired through formal education or practical experience) by which subjects can engage in the encounter’s practices and extract value from them.
It can be noted that these aspects will often overlap. Effort, for example, can be seen as a dynamic resource (Hirschmann and Holbrook 1986) that involves the expenditure of energy and the application of knowledge and abilities, deploying their own and the service provider’s resources to a given individually valued end. However, the application of effort cannot be separated from its wider social context, especially in terms of the biographical experiences of individuals which may predispose them to apply their efforts in very different ways to achieve the same value-gain from the encounter. This was specially noticed in the higher education case where, some students would favour cheating to achieve their social and economic goal of obtaining a diploma whereas others came to the encounter with the belief that it was to obtain deep understanding and learning from academic modules and that a diploma represented a personal intellectual achievement rather than an instrumental one.

Relational context factors relate to social resources (social capital), such as family relationships, commercial relationships, work relationships, communal and tribal relationships, which are formed within the wider historical and social environment but are used in service consumption practices within service encounters. Resources in this context are put to work by the enactment of relational and organising practices. In this respect they can act both in terms of social bonds which link certain people together in solidarity or opposition or as frameworks through which access to resources is controlled (e.g. members vs outsiders). The relational context thus includes all the commercial relations accessed by service providers to shape their value propositions and the market relationships available to consumers in assessing value propositions from service providers. They also include networks of influence and opinion that are part of the wider culture (or of particular social groups) and which inform consumer opinion and the ways in which providers attempt to respond to this. The power of this relational context in service consumption during service encounters is evident both in the literature review (particularly in relation to theatrical
approaches) but has not been explored much beyond this in relation to how structured social relationships can enable the types of roles that consumers and providers can enact effectively (Grönroos 2011; Ravald and Grönroos 2011).

These relational networks can be seen to provide practitioners within service encounters with three types of social resource: technical/utilitarian; hedonistic and commercial. Technical or utilitarian networks define the nature of the value proposition of service providers in relation to what is offered and how this conforms to wider standards or alternative offers, and for consumers the extent to which such propositions are seen as part of a group identity with status value (e.g. looking good; being educated). Hedonistic networks support a more emotional construction of service value-propositions that define offerings in terms of their relevance for pleasure-seeking or ‘identity projects’ through which individuals can define themselves as embodying features and characteristics that give pleasure because they are admired and approved of by others in the wider social environment. Service providers are required to tailor their value propositions to engage with such discourses if they are to be attractive. Commercial networks provide the resources for providers to enable them to identify trends in the market and to secure the resources (e.g. loans, talent) that allow them to respond to these. For consumers, these networks provide access to the resources to engage in different types of service encounter through the availability of money, credit and control over time. This was specially noticed in the fitness case where taerobics participants paid considerable attention to the competing technical competence of the provider (technical), to the views of their friends and family in relation to the ‘goodness’ of fitness (hedonic) and utilised their financial resources to determine when to attend and to participate in allied activities (commercial).
Material context factors relate to the material objects that are appropriated and used to accomplish value creation within service encounters (Shove and Araujo, 2009). Physical materials are essential to the value creation process since they enable/hinder practitioners’ performances during service encounters. Similar to the findings of Shove and Pantzar (2005) about Nordic walking and Holt (1995) about how spectators support baseball teams, it was observed in taeobics how the use of different physical materials (dumbbells, heart-rate transmitters, music) were integral to practices. It was also observed in higher education how the use of smartphones influenced relational and organising practices in the academic context. Furthermore, money as an external resource (Hirschmann and Holbrook 1986) played an important role for value creation since it motivated action. This was noticed in the taeobics case where some participants used advance payment as a motivational means to keep practicing taeobics. On the other hand, and mirroring the analysis of other educational sites (Delucchi 2000; Delucchi and Korgen 2002), the payment of expensive tuition fees in private postgraduate higher education created misunderstandings and consumerism among students. It should be noticed that these material factors are part of the immediate context of the encounter but their full impact can be only appreciated by recognising that their ‘utility’ and value is created often within the wider context external to the encounter (e.g. fee rates set by governments, motivational value of money in relation to overall earnings).

Less obviously material resources or tools can also be included in this category, especially those employed by the service provider as a means to support value creating activities of the consumers. It was noticed in the fitness case that routines and music were central elements of the taeobics practice, while PowerPoint slides, rubrics, syllabus, enable performing encounters in the higher education practice (not always succeeding). Once again, these latter resources gain their relevance through connections to the wider context of e.g. popular music and academic subject knowledge.
Social contextual factors relate to social structures which empower and enable practitioners to mobilise and reconfigure individual, relational and social resources embedded within service encounters through service consumption acts. Indeed, service encounters are embedded with service practices which are first and foremost social practices which in turn are contextual. In short, the ways in which people think and act and are enabled to be providers or participants in service encounters must be located within a macro-context that historically and geographically conditions these practices. Three main structures can be identified here: economic; political and cultural, all of which can also be seen as mutually interacting. The economic context can be as broad as the capitalist basis of the economy with its market structure for the delivery of services. This can also be related to local economies and labour markets where the balances of different industrial sectors and the distribution of jobs can determine life-chances and resource allocations for individuals. The political structure is including the nature of the state and other political institutions that shape how communities are governed and how economic structures operate (e.g. private vs public ownership) and how provision such as education is organised and controlled. Finally the cultural structures can be seen to include values and beliefs that characterise ‘ways of doing things’ at both national and regional levels. These will include values around such issues as masculine and feminine beauty, the value of education, standards of health and fitness and attitudes towards consumer choice and service. All of these factors will influence the ways in which individuals engage in practices of all sorts. However as was discussed in the literature chapter, this is not a form of simple determinism because social structures do, following Giddens, exist independently of particular individuals and exert an influence over them, but the structures are also capable of being influenced by individuals (usually acting collectively) and thereby transformed. This is why it is important to recognise service encounters as a form of practice because it draws attention to the way in which practice is shaped by a range of
contextual factors (as outlined above) but also recognises that such practices can define themselves within the encounter (because of the different resources that participants bring) and thereby transform the encounter itself. If such a transformation is distinctive and is shared with other people more widely (e.g. through social media) it is possible that the new form of encounter becomes part of a wider evolving social structure which will influence new participants in different ways. As such, the view of service encounters and their value is inherently dynamic rather than a static phenomenon that happens in isolation to the wider social context and as such can only be understood within this dynamic and evolving context.

Consequently, by acknowledging that social contextual factors inform practice, it is suggested that what practitioners learn to do and perceive within service encounters is always dynamic. As much as service practices at first sight can be depicted to obtain rational goals, their discrepancies in content reveal that frequently, social legitimacy, communal or individual contingencies are stronger than rational plans.

Practitioners bring to service encounters varying amounts of knowledge about cultural schemas (including specialised cultural capital, skills and talents) to service consumption interactions as it is acknowledged by Arnould et al (2006). This was noticed in the higher education context where students of different programmes came from different cities, graduated from different universities, studied different majors and worked for different companies in different positions bringing different tacit and explicit knowledge to performing encounters, enabling/hindering student and lecturer effective participation in these encounters. Ultimately the success or failure of these encounters is likely to induce a change in institutional practices which could, in turn, depending on their intensity, have implications for national level structural policies.
This requires the recognition that there is a negative, downside aspects about value creation as captured by Echeverri and Skålen (2011), who use the terms of value creation (positive) and value destruction (negative). However the dynamic contextual standpoint developed above points to the fact that even value destruction at the level of the individual service encounter could create resonances in the wider context that lead to expectations and frameworks for service delivery being reshaped in a positive form. Or alternatively it could be imagined how very successful value creation at the local level could lead to an excess of demand that could not be supplied, leading to macro level moves to restrict provision (e.g. by raising tuition fees nationally to limit the over-supply of qualifications).

In summary, this study contributes to filling the knowledge gaps regarding value creation during service encounters found in the literature on service marketing and management. First, it put forward and operationalised a practice perspective to examining service encounters as practical constellations embedded in a socio-historical context. Second, the research study sheds light on the dynamics of value creation during service encounters by outlining how contextual factors can shape and are shaped by such practices. Finally, the study shed light on the understanding of value-in-context by specifying a range of factors at general and specific levels that need to be taken into account for an adequate understanding of service encounters and their value-creating processes.

**Managerial Contribution**

The direct managerial contribution of this thesis is modest as it has been primarily concerned with the development of an analytical framework for understanding service encounters. However a number of possible implications can be identified. The first is to encourage managers to take account of their service provisions within the context of the everyday life experiences of their consumers rather than, as is often the case, only by reference to their
market competitors. Ironically, this does not mean a move to focusing on the consumer as a purely individual choice-maker but on consumers as practitioners with socially shaped skills and aspirations that they bring to the encounter and that are more deeply embedded than purely instrumental choices.

Second, the study could help managers to realise that service companies are just one element of the service encounter that offers value propositions to service users and other social communities which are embedded in complex service consumption practices. As a result, service strategy could use the dimensions of practice identified here to identify the practices they are interested in or concerned about, then working on assuring their position on these selected service consumption practices.

Third, segmentation, according to this consumption-centred approach to service encounters, cannot see the consumer as a fragment or cluster as with traditional approaches, but must consider the consumer in the context of specific practices and the wider contextual factors that influence these. This means that service practitioners are determined by the practices they carry on instead of being categorised as members of stable unit with fixed characteristics and identifiable parameters that group them together. Indeed, service practitioners appear to be very fragmented and dynamic, even when they are integrated in service encounters.

Furthermore, in this thesis the emphasis on mapping service consumption practices during service encounters and pursuing a deeper understanding of value creation in consumers’ everyday lifeworl ds provides one model that could be adapted as a framework that managers could use to model their service provision on both a longitudinal basis (recruitment to delivery) and in relation to the range of contextual influences articulated in the ‘onion’ model.
Thus the main benefit that the thesis may provide to service marketing and management, in comparison to traditional methods of getting service user insights, is the mapping of real behaviours of practitioners (service user, service provider, social communities) not only the ones reported by them. The use of different communities involved in the service practice as subjects of empirical insight provide a deeper understanding of the different and sometimes conflicting motives pursued during service encounters. These differences are central in developing and enhancing services and service practices. The method used in this thesis focuses on getting insights about mundane, taken for granted, routine behaviour which constitutes ordinary life. The strength of the market-oriented ethnography lies on spotting obvious behaviours that seem unproblematic for service practitioners (service users, service providers, social communities) but showing how their complex contextual relationships can in actuality be significant for such activities.

As a result, the study proposes a service encounter design and development process which consists of the following phases:

- **Selection of service encounters**: The objective of this step in the process is to look for different service encounters which deserve further analysis. It includes a service provider explanation of which service encounters require analysis and why. This step includes benchmarking of service encounters in other contexts which may be different from the one in which the service provider operates.

- **Historical description of service encounters**: The idea of this step is to gain a further understanding of the service encounters selected and the way practices have been carried out by different stakeholders at these encounters with an special focus on changes that have taken place over time and the reasons for such changes particularly as these relate to the wider context.
- **Investigation of current practices at service encounters:** This step examines ethnographically current practices carried out by service users and service providers during service encounters. It could be undertaken using the framework developed above.

- **Mapping of service encounters:** By analysing the information gathered at steps two and three of the current process, there could come to light possible fissures and contradictions as well as synergies. They may suggest the introduction, reduction, or reconfiguration of elements involved in these service encounters, bringing opportunities of transformation at these encounters.

- **Service encounter intervention:** In this step service providers intervene so that they may reduce, enlarge or reconfigure the elements of these practices, redefining participation and resource integration during these encounters. These interventions may bring to life new practices and element arrangements which would develop the service encounter.

- **Service encounter intervention assessment:** The idea of this step is to further analyse and take into consideration the changes made at the intervention phase. These changes made to the elements of service practices at service encounters would inevitably produce new conflicts and cracks which may require further intervention.

The effects experienced by subjects and communities during service encounters might be intended, unintended, or even unknown by the service provider that contributes to their creation. As a result service encounters could therefore be enhanced by interventions that adopt the fine-grained analysis used above. With this approach the idea is to imply that value creation in service encounters cannot be assessed by only one group of stakeholders in a community (i.e. customers, employers, investors). In fact, listening too much to service users
may inhibit innovation and listening too much to service developers may increase customer
vulnerability. Table 6.2 presents a list of examples of interventionist-initiated opportunities to
improve service practices at service encounters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of the Service Encounter</th>
<th>Possibilities for “enhancement” through intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Change the practitioners of action to introduce people who view the practices with different perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Materials</td>
<td>Evaluate the physical materials currently used in the service practice. Adapt the physical materials to integrate closely with the practices carried out by different stakeholders and to emerging opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Competences and Understandings</td>
<td>Develop nudges and images of service practices which are more desirable to be carried out. Create alternative images of service practices which are being carried out in undesirable forms. Question current practices and develop communal spaces to produce new images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Communities</td>
<td>Show how the service practice connects to primary and secondary social communities. Develop a sense of community and learning from different participants in current service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Servicescape</td>
<td>Develop a more functional and interesting physical servicescape for different stakeholders. Use intangible resources present in the physical servicescape according to desirable images of the service practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Recognise where power is located and how it is used by and against different participants, particularly how it relates to factors beyond the encounter. Identify how power differences can be used or rebalanced within the encounter to create greater engagement and involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motive</td>
<td>Develop nudges to persuade stakeholders carry out ethical and communal service practices. Also identify which contextual factors are influences motivated efforts and how this can be utilised within the encounter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doings</td>
<td>Reconfigure the interactions needed for certain practices to be carried out by stakeholders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 Examples of Possibilities for Service Practice Enhancement at Service Encounters

Finally, the empirical work conducted showed that the empirical research process and the use
of various ethnographical techniques for exploring the service encounter as a practical system
offers an interesting alternative to traditional approaches to market research based on
relatively static and categorical approaches to the measurement of activities and consumer
responses.
Summary Contribution to Knowledge

Theoretical Contributions

1. Building on emerging but under-researched approaches to service encounters that focus on the socially constructed nature of value by active consumers and practitioners within the encounter. Specifically by giving detailed attention to the role played by contextual factors in shaping the activities and associated resources deployed in this process. This involved a novel attempt to utilise a ‘theory of practice’ approach to conceptualise such encounters.

2. Developing this conceptual framework through empirical analysis to arrive at an explicit articulation of relevant contextual factors that provides a novel model of these in relation to the service encounter. This model is capable of a) informing other researchers of the variables they should consider in attempting to fully understand service encounters and b) providing a basis for future testing using a sample capable of statistical generalisation.

Empirical Research Contribution

1. Providing empirical insight into settings not widely featured in the literature, namely fitness and education within the country of Columbia. Columbia has had very limited coverage as a setting for marketing research reported in English. In this respect this works adds to the availability of comparative studies and provides insight into an important developing economy. It is hoped that as future research in this field develops this will allow investigation of the differential impact of contextual factors in value creation across cultures.
Managerial Contributions.

1. The model developed, although tentative, provides an intuitively straightforward way for managers not trained in social theory to grasp the key factors in their operating environment that may shape the way in which service encounters operate. Framing the final model as the ‘service encounter onion’ was done deliberately to provide a metaphor that would be accessible to practitioners without the need to be familiar with the complex underlying theory.

2. Following from this the study points to a series of steps that practitioners can take when considering the design of service encounters. These include: being aware that the same encounter may perform differently in different contexts; being aware that encounters are not static but develop and change over time and so may evolve away from their original function; understanding that a planned encounter may be usefully understood and designed by mapping the practices that may be involved; recognizing that encounters are social processes and that they can be changed by intervention – although the outcome is never entirely predictable and require ongoing monitoring – i.e., the encounter is a dynamic and evolving process rather than a fixed ‘event’.

3. The study may help managers should be able to understand the value of being able to stand back from their direct involvement in a service encounter (i.e., performing a work role) to understand that the their own roles and those of the other participants are not merely influenced by the ‘service script’ (as tends to be assumed within servuction and theatrical approaches) but also by the wider social context and by the experiences and resources that participants bring to the encounter. This ability to take a ‘detached’ view may help to prevent unrealistic expectations of what service encounters can deliver.
Limitations of the Study

The research methodology for this study was designed to enable a robust exploration of consumer value creation during service encounters in high customer participation services and especially the significance of contextual factors. However, the researcher identified a number of limitations as the thesis unfolded. These limitations can be considered as general to studies using ethnographic methods and some specific limitations to the main study carried out.

Studies adopting an ethnographical methodology are traditionally connected with the limitation of small number of cases that bring doubts as to their representativeness and the subjectivity of the researcher’s interpretation (Firat and Shultz 1997). These have been issues widely addressed and usually refer to the nature of ethnographic and case study approaches which are claimed to rely on the logic of particularising rather than generalising so that they gain in-depth understanding of what can be lost in the breadth of coverage. Similarly, the basis for interpretation is often dealt with by reference to the detail of the data provided which allows the reader to determine the plausibility of what inferences are being drawn from the material which can be evaluated against experience which is likely to be for some degree shared by subjects, researcher and readers. Thus it would be argued here that these limitations are inherently part of this research approach and there is limited scope to remove them; indeed for many working within this perspective the limitations of lack of breadth and the search for intense interpretation of meaning would be regarded as a strength rather than a limitation. As such, the issue at this level is one of making an informed decision with awareness of what qualities are being lost and gained.

Despite these common general limitations, the researcher also introduces the following set of suggestions, proposed with the benefit of hindsight, identifying areas where the method used
by this study and future studies could be improved. These areas of improvement can be divided into seven main groups:

- This study involved a single researcher doing a single process of coding and categorization of the data at the analysis stage. Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest that the consistency of the findings can be promoted either by having a group of researchers independently coding data to come to consensus on emerging codes and categories, or by choosing to implement a process of double coding that compares coding the same data set in different moments of time. Neither of these processes was implemented due to limitations of time and resources. Further studies should overcome this limitation by adopting either (or both) the process mentioned above. However, the detailed discussion of the coding approach adopted and its systematic method may have gone some way to reducing this potential source of bias, although it is accepted that it has not been categorically eliminated.

- Scope of research techniques adopted in the study. The applied ethnographical study could have been extended to include video recording and detailed and specific analysis of physical artefacts and documents. It is possible that the use of these techniques would have enriched the description and analysis of service consumption practices in the context of study. However, whilst this could have had a positive effect the absence of these additional techniques, it is not considered to have undermined the usefulness of the data that was collected. Indeed, the data collected proved to generate a very large body of material that was challenging to analyse and draw specific conclusions. The addition of more data of different sorts would have made the interpretation and presentation of results problematic within the constraints of time available.
This study involved a single round of interviews. Interviewees were asked to describe present activities and to reminisce historical activities in order to overcome the transversal nature of some other research studies. Nevertheless, further rounds of studies in future years would help to monitor how changes in social contexts transform actions of service practitioners in service practices during service encounters. They would also identify whether the other elements of the practice (cultural competences and understandings, social communities, physical materials, power) enable/hinder changing patterns in service practices during service encounters. Other studies should also plan for opportunities to have a more lengthy contact to the phenomenon under study within its context so that rapport with participants can be established (i.e. through formal and informal interactions) and multiple angles can be studied and taken into account and to moderate the potential for socially desirable answers in interviews (Krefting, 1991).

The context of the research. In the case of this thesis, the study is circumscribed to high customer participation services context whose core value offer is transformation. Even though the two sites explored (postgraduate university programmes and fitness club) are considered as high customer participation services, they only belong to two different sectors (education and leisure) and therefore provided a limited context for the research. Other high customer participation services such as consultancy, weight loss, and counselling could be studied to overcome this limitation. Also more closely related sites to the leisure sector (i.e. recreation, sports) and education sector (undergraduate studies, continuous education) could be studied. This would provide the basis for greater comparisons within the case study method and could have moved the study somewhat from particularity to greater generality. However, as pointed to
above, this would be an added benefit the absence of which does not undermine the usefulness of the particular cases themselves.

- The service setting. The service settings explored in the research study were a single case in the fitness sector (taerobics) and a single case in the postgraduate education sector (postgraduate studies in business) in a particular Colombian city (Barranquilla). To overcome this limitation, further studies can explore different service offerings in fitness and education sites and within the same city and in different cities. The types of setting were also a limitation since the fitness site was a small size private club offering group classes and the postgraduate education site was a large private university in terms of members, classes, ownership and physical space. Further studies could overcome this limitation varying the types of sites studied. Again, this would have been an interesting addition but, as above, does not undermine the specific cases studied for depth in this research.

- A relatively small sample of 2 cases and 31 participants was essential to undertake the kind of in-depth investigation necessary to create detailed new knowledge and improved understanding of value creation through service practices during service encounters. A larger sample would enable results to be more widely generalised. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies would ensure broader applicability and give greater depth to results. For example, the tentative model developed in the concluding chapter could be translated into measurable constructs and testable propositions, allowing the study to progress to a more measurement-focused perspective with the possibility of being able to operationalise this across statistically representative samples. This is an opportunity that may be explored for future research.
- Research would also benefit from a study that have a more equal spread between different types of services according to the level of participation of the consumer in the process of value creation. Greater emphasis in future studies on ensuring a better representation of services types, particularly in low and moderate consumer participation services, would be beneficial to provide a better understanding of value creation through service consumption practices during service encounters.

**Avenues for Future Research**

Given the nature of this research, there are many opportunities for researchers to extend it. The introduction of the service encounter as a practical system standpoint brings new opportunities to service management and marketing and consumer behaviour.

First, this study has isolated a number of dimensions of the wider social context that impact upon the service encounter and value creation within it. This has been achieved by use of in-depth qualitative research but having identified these factors and the components of the service encounter as a site of practice, it would be possible to test these results by means of a larger survey using structured measures (based on the qualitative concepts uncovered here) within a more representative larger sample.

Second, future researchers may want to explore the ways in which service encounters as practical systems could be used to enhance service design and service development. This thesis did not attempt to examine service design. However, its findings provide opportunities to tackle the issue of service design and value formation based on the dynamics of service encounters as practical systems within a wide social context. This characteristic has implications for service development which deserve further attention.
Third, the idea of service encounters as practical systems proposes that service encounters are multi-voiced negotiations, a characteristic that brings the issue of power in service encounters as an opportunity for further research. One central issue in the study of service encounters as practical systems was the service structure. Domination structures such as power at service encounters has implications for managerial marketing issues that deserve more study. In the current study power was only dealt with in a general way and this could be extended into more precise concepts and measures.

In addition, the characteristics of multi-voicedness and dynamic transformational activities in service encounters as practical systems introduce the issue of stakeholder learning. In fact, service encounters seem to be potential spaces for transformation of cultural images and competences by active participation of stakeholders. This intricate process of learning, knowledge co-creation, knowledge use in socio-historical context and potential transformation at service encounters would benefit from further studies. For example, service practices integrate cultural understandings which have effects on the ethical responsibilities of different stakeholders and regulations for them that may bring changes in society’s well-being. This link of service encounters as practical systems and public policy requires further attention. Transformative service research (Rosenbaum et al. 2011; Anderson et al. 2013) emerges as an interesting field of study where the idea of service encounters as practical systems and transformative service encounters (Giraldo 2012; Giraldo and Halliday 2012) needs further research.

The framework presented by this study adopts an ethnographical approach, since given the state of knowledge at the time of this research, it was important to attain a more realistic explanation of service encounters based on actual behaviours as observed in the real-world context. It is now necessary to further the knowledge developed by this research through the
application of interventionist research methodologies capable of developing more depth of understanding of the five characteristics of services encounters proposed by the thesis.

Finally, the framework of the service encounter as a practical system may be used by future researchers in different empirical contexts. The empirical context explored in this thesis was high customer participation services, specifically education and fitness. The same approach could be carried out in some other high customer participation services such as health and also on less customer participatory services.
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Symbolic interactionism can be summarised as a concentration upon interaction between people. This perspective rejects many of the central principles for understanding service consumption during service encounters since it is not merely focused upon the individual, their personality, motivations or even their past experiences (Gabbott and Hogg 1988). This rejection of the passive consumer in favour of the socially interactive consumer encompasses a major shift to understanding service consumption during service encounters in particular. A further major criticism to symbolic interactionism is the reduced explanation of human action as “intersubjective” interactions between individuals or to actions which are products of symbolic orders (Reckwitz 2002b).

Blumer (1986) proposed that symbolic interactionism is grounded on three basic assumptions about human beings. First, the human being acts toward things on the basis of the meanings that they have for them; second, the meanings of such things are derived from and arise out of the interactions that human beings have with their peers; and third, those meanings are handles in and modified through an interpretative process used by human beings in dealing with the things they encounter. In essence, the cornerstones of symbolic interactionism are interaction, meaning, language and thought (Charon 1995). A positive outcome of using this paradigm in the literature of service marketing and management is that it helps researchers to gain a more dynamic understanding of role expectations and role response of interacting parties in service encounters (Grayson and Shulman 2000).

From the symbolic interactionist perspective, service encounters are interdependent social interactions where service users are brought together into service co-production by directly interacting with service employees (McCallum and Harrison 1985). As a result, the service encounter becomes the channel where service users develop their participatory roles in value creation through service consumption (Mills and Morris 1986). Impression management (Goffman 1959), a branch of symbolic interactionist theory, has been used in service marketing and management as an empirical arm to explain value creation through actors theatrical performances during service encounters (Grove and Fisk 1992; Grove et al 2000; Grayson and Shulman 2000). A major limitation in this argument, is that social interactions are just treated as a transference of meanings internalized in the individual’s mind (Reckitwz 2002a) to a service offerings, service sign or a service performance. This means that the paradigm puts too much emphasis on service users engaged in a process of abstract thinking evaluating service offerings economically (Zeithaml 1998) or emotionally (Price et al 1995b), rather than service users engaged on their practical doing (Korkman 2006) in their everyday lifeworlds (Gummerus 2011).

There is vast research within this explanatory paradigm regarding the assessment of service performance and service workers as actors. Research has particularly focused on the negative effects of emotional labour in service workers (Hochschild 1983); the interpretation of emotions on extraordinary and extended service encounters (Price et al 1995b); how consumers meet role requirements for particular service activities (Grove et al 1992; Bitner et al 1994); and purposely poorly employee performance (Becker and Martin 1995) to mention...
some. Further explanation of value creation during service encounters involving not only service agents and their “intersubjective” relationships, but also the impact of non-human tools in practical doing (Latour 1987, 1996; Engeström 1994; Shove et al 2008, 2012) would be beneficial to the literature of service marketing.

Role theory stresses the character of individuals as social actors who learn behaviour suitable to the positions they have in society. It examines the degree to which a specific role is acted properly (role enactment) as driven by the responses of other actors and observers participating in the service encounter (Solomon et al 1985). Role expectations are determinant for satisfaction at service encounters to the degree to which there is congruency between the service script and the role definition inside a service situation (Surprenant and Solomon 1987). Moreover, role congruence depends on the agreement on a common meaning among participants of how roles should to be played properly at service encounters; and service suppliers’ notion of their own role consonance with the company’s (Solomon et al 1985). A positive outcome of role theory is that it allows better management of interactive features of the service encounter (Gabbott and Hogg 1998) giving clearer roles for customer/employees’ performances which affect quality and satisfaction, paying more attention to interpersonal relations on dyadic performances (Solomon et al 1985). However, role theory has been challenged on the grounds of being rigid, too focused on the functional role, and for neglecting the natural functioning of human roles in ordinary life (Allport 1955).

Role theory has been combined with dramaturgy (Goffman 1959) by service marketing and management scholars. Service performance can be analysed by means of dramaturgical elements (Burke 1945; Goffman 1959): the scene or the setting or condition where the act happens (the physical servicescape), the actor(s) implicated (service employees), the audience (customers) and the script together construct a credible performance for an audience. Scripts specify customers’ and employees’ expectations. Therefore, when there are discrepancies and dissimilarities among customers’ and employees’ expectations, the possibility for an unsatisfactory outcome at service encounters is greater (Bitner and Hubbert 1994). For example, if companies build scripts based on inadequate observations, this may lead to inflexible procedures and guidelines which might not allow service employees to adjust to customer practices, leading to consumer dissatisfaction and employee burn-out. A major limitation of the study of role discrepancies within service encounters in the literature of services marketing is that they acknowledge them in terms of consumer deviance (Becker et al 1995; Harris and Reynolds 2003, 2004; Ertimur and Venkatesh 2010) rather than in terms of unpredicted responses on the part of the individual to power inequalities (Giraldo et al 2010).

Even though role theory and script theory seem to share numerous common aspects their major differences fall back on their focal nature. Consequently, while role theory is expected to be extra-individual, which means that “every individual is expected to display the same set of behaviour in certain roles” (Hoffmann and Bateson 1997-93), script theory is expected to be intra-individual, which means that “scripts are a function of an individual’s experience and personality and that therefore differ among individuals” (Hoffmann and Bateson 1997-93). A major drawback of role theory is that it supports social conformity by recommending a normative analysis of human behaviour without sufficiently addressing human agency in practice where some individuals actively resist enacting predetermined roles (Jackson 1998).
Moreover, the servuction framework recognizes the interdependent relationship among different functional departments within the service organization affecting the consistency of service employees’ behaviour and consumers’ evaluations of service quality. This view has been advanced by Gummesson (1991) who emphasizes the active role of service employees as part-time marketers in shaping consumers perceptions. Thus, Normann (2002) highlighted the importance of service employees who have not only good technical skills but also emotional skills that fit the nature of service encounters and service firms’ procedures and norms. Furthermore, some previous research in service design (Shostack 1981) has highlighted the importance of internal organizational systems as central to support consumer resource integration through service consumption practices. However, the servuction framework has been challenged by Charon (1988) who argues that it systemic nature oversees the relationship between internal and external marketing practices which are closely interdependent.

Theatrical insights have been acknowledged as central to getting insights about consumer participation in experiential consumption (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999) and value co-creation (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2006, 2008) as well as for service design (Stuart and Task 2004). A serious limitation of the theatrical metaphor to services in the literature is that it neglects the natural functioning of human roles in ordinary life (Allport 1955).

Both frameworks have the advantage or being visual in nature so they provide a snapshot of the elements that structure a service experience and facilitate the exploration and observation of the details related to designing and producing a service. Overall both frameworks are dyadic in nature, identify the fundamental elements embedded in service encounters, capture the interactive nature of the service experience and the interconnection of their elements, and have been proven generalizable across service sectors and contexts. For example, the servuction framework has been applied in the context of consumer productivity in consulting services (Martin et al 2001); for marketing cities as shopping destinations (Warnaby and Davies 1997); and the determination of service experiences (Davies et al 1999), while the service theatre model has been used to explain service encounters at shopping experiences (Moisio and Arnould 2005) in different settings such as retail organizations (Harris et al 2003), higher education (Halliday et al 2008) and health care (John 1996).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework Components</th>
<th>Servuction Framework</th>
<th>Theatrical Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Invisible area</td>
<td>Backstage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visible area</td>
<td>Frontstage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>Contact Personnel</td>
<td>Actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>Customer A (focal customers)</td>
<td>Audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customer B (other customers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Bundle of Benefits</td>
<td>Performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.1 Frameworks of the service encounter. Adapted from Fisk et al (2008:28)
This view is connected to the conventional cognitivist conceptions of consumer behaviour that sees consumers as information-processing beings involved in a buying behaviour process as a causal linear path of cognition, affect, behaviour and satisfaction (C-A-B-S) (Holbrook and Hirschman 1986). As a result, consumers mainly make comparative judgments about how experiences and transactions are valuable and satisfactory for them (Oliver 1980) making a trade-off evaluation between the benefits and the sacrifices of obtaining certain product (Zeithaml 1988) or relationship (Ravald and Grönroos 1996). However, these notions share the common ground of being utilitarian assessments made in the internal mind of a rational consumer, leaving affective responses unconsidered. Consequently, the trade-off perspective of value is considered by some critics as narrow and outdated (Holbrook and Hirschmann 1982; Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2006, 2008; Korkman 2006; Gummesson 2007; Heinonen et al 2010).

Moreover, the idea of value creation as essentially conceived from a utilitarian perspective which might be produced by the effects of a few or multiple antecedents makes easier the operationalization of the concept for managerial purposes. This understanding provides a “general” picture of what the customer perceives as valuable and can be used to construct a check list of what is valuable for them. Holbrook (2006) posits that the trade-off cognitive and merely economic interpretation of value creation can be considered as a “sub-species” of value since the concept of value is much richer than such simplistic notion.

In terms of value estimation and location, the trade-off perspective considers the notion of value as being embedded in the product not in the process of production. As a result, this view is usually associated with the provider delivering value (Vargo and Lusch 2004) and the consumer gaining value in exchange for the price paid (Bagozzi, 1975). This interpretation ties the idea of value being able to be added within a chain of production (Porter 1985). Exchange value could be considered as an economic archaism that understand service providers concentrating upon adding value to products instead of understanding how value emerges for the consumer in value creation processes (Gronroos, 2011) and how value is formed through service consumption practices (Korkman, 2006) in consumer everyday lifeworlds (Gummerus, 2011).

The trade-off perspective to value has been theorized as a one-dimensional or a multi-dimensional construct. As a one-dimensional construct, value is formally defined in terms of a give –get relationship and through means-end theory traditionally considering quality and price as antecedents rather than as formative elements of value (Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo 2007). Subsequently, in the one-dimensional approach to trade-off value some studies have attempted to interpret value through a multiplicative or additive function of sacrifice and benefit (Cronin et al 1997; Thaler 1985: Bei and Heslin 1997; Ravald and Grönroos 1996; Gallarza and Gil 2006). As a multi-dimensional construct the trade-off perspective includes the conceptualization of the theory of consumption values (Sheth et al 1991b) and the customer value hierarchy of (Woodruff and Gardial 1996).

Give-get and means-end are categorizations where individual consumers process information in the internal brain, cognitively and rationally assessing the value of a service exchange. The idea of value created as an individual, rational, internal choice of consumers puts consumers at the centre of the analysis without including considerable aspects of the context which would influence the way they behave in the process of value creation.
Within this trade-off cognitive view the consumer is a rational spectator and judge of the product, service, or relationship he is using and consuming. This notion is narrow and omits affective, contextual and pragmatic actions of consumers consuming services in social contexts (Holbrook and Hirschmann 1982; Korkman et al 2010; Edvardsson et al 2011).

Deconstructing value in singular factors is an ordinary practice used in the trade-off cognitive approach in order to manipulate the notion of value and to operate the concept in empirical research. For example, Sheth et al (1991a; 1991b) introduced the theory of consumption values, to explain why consumers decide to choose, buy, and use products, brands or services over others by categorizing value into five types (functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value and conditional value). Similar deconstructions for the concept of value have been also proposed by Woodall (2003) (net value, marketing value, sale value, rational value, and derived value); Parasuraman and Grewal (2000) (acquisition value, transaction value, use value and redemption value); Butz and Goodstein (1996) (expected value, desired value and unanticipated value); Albrecht (1994) (basic value, expected value, desired value, unanticipated value); and Mattsson (1991) (practical value, emotional value, logical value), to mention some.

Comparable deconstructions have been made in terms of how products relate to different types of consumers and how relevant they are to fulfill their goals by the use of means-end theory (Woodruff and Gardial 1996). For example, Parasuraman (1997) proposed a framework for studying consumer value focusing on four types of customers - first-time customers, short-term customers, long-term customers and defectors or lost customers - to assess consumer involvement related to attributes, consequences, and goals. In a similar vein, The work of Zeithaml (1988) show the complexity of costs or sacrifices of getting a product or sustaining a relationship by a classification into monetary aspects and non-monetary costs such as psychological cost, direct and indirect relationship costs, time and effort.

Furthermore, the trade-off perspective to consumer value has also been influenced by the literature of quality and service quality (Rust and Oliver 1994) and customer satisfaction by analyzing service quality as an ideal value standard which is an outcome of the satisfaction process (Mattsson 1992). The most influential models for service quality with implications in the context of customer value are the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, et al 1985; Parasuraman et al 1988) from the American school of thought in services, and the model in perceived service quality (Grönroos 2008b) from the Nordic school of thought in services. Service quality and service value have been traditionally viewed as a cognitive assessment (Cronin et al 1997; Rust and Oliver 1994), however, service quality and value are tied to customer co-production and consumption experiences, therefore, customers highly influence quality and value with their interactions both in the service process and service outcome activities (Edvardsson 2005), a fact that challenges the trade-off cognitive approach for perceived value.

Holbrook and Hirschman (1986) suggested the consumption experience conception of consumer behaviour challenges conventional cognitivist conceptions of cognition, affect, behaviour and satisfaction (C-A-B-S) with
four more broadly conceived constructs which are thought, emotion, activity and value (TEAV). TEAV do not manifest as a traditional causal linear flow, but as a systemic interdependent and overlapping relationship that can be viewed as a gestalt-like phenomenon. Consequently, for Holbrook and Hirschman (1986:236) the consumption experience must be viewed as: “an emergent property that results from the inter-relationships and overlaps among person, environment, thought, emotion, activity, and value”. This consumption experience can be divided into four main phases: pre-consumption, purchase, core consumption and remembered or nostalgia consumption (Arnould et al 2005)

Even though some authors have wanted to add emotional and hedonic features into the traditional studies of consumer value, they tend to remain provider centred and tied to the idea of experiences as added value (Porter 1985) to a service offering. These views are tied to traditional behavioural perspectives (Chase and Dasu 2001) or resource-based views for consumer value (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999). Indeed, Pine and Gilmore’s experience economy (1999:98) conceptualizes an experience when: “a company intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event”. According to this view, contemporary consumers look for memorable experiences rather than commodities where they connect to them within four realms of experience: entertainment, education, aesthetics and escapism. This view could be challenged since the notion of experience is often associated with entertainment and extraordinariness (i.e. Rainforest, Disneyland, Hard Rock Café) missing the fact that marketers are obliged to understand the complete extent of an experience, from the normal to the surprising, from the marketable to the non-marketable (Carú and Cova, 2003). The creation of value in everyday, mundane practices tends to be overlooked by some of the experiential researchers who seem to be more interested in extraordinary experiences (Caru and Cova 2007) rather than in routine and mundane everyday activities which are also embedded with value (Korkman et al 2010).

In fact, the consumption experience includes phenomena that involve the interaction between a subject and an object (Holbrook 1998b) which diverge from each other based on the weights assigned to subjective responses and objective features depending on the utilitarian or hedonic nature of the product (Addis and Holbrook 2001). While utilitarian consumption refers to objective attributes intimately associated to the functionality of the value offering, hedonic consumption relates to the multisensory subjective reactions of the consumer to the determination of value. Furthermore, some value offerings can have similar weightings of objective features and subjective responses in which either both or possibly neither, the objective and/nor subjective element are/is significant to the judgment of value (Addis and Holbrook 2001). (See figure A.1 for a diagrammatic demonstration of how the experiences can be categorized).
Figure A1 Utilitarian versus hedonic consumption. Source: (Addis and Holbrook 2001:60)

The experiential perspective to consumer value refers to authors who view consumers from a first person perspective in a phenomenological fashion. All these authors have in common the emphasis on emotional and non-utilitarian aspects of consumption which were noted in the 1970s by Baudrillard (1998), who already identified the importance of symbolic power in product consumption for value creation. For them, consumers (subjects) in addition to receive utilitarian aspects of products in consumption, they also define their selves and built their identities (Belk et al 1988), as well as they are experiencing the world (Addis and Holbrook 2001).

Perhaps, the most serious limitation of this perspective is being considered as individualistic and subjective (Korkman 2006). Thus, the experiential approach is also criticized by the use of introspective methods (i.e. auto-ethnography) which are not taken seriously in academia (Brown 2012).

In terms of value estimation and location, the experiential perspective considers the notion of value as being embedded in the holistic experience of consumption. This view contradicts the notion of value emerging in exchanges and posits that the pursuit of utility is not only rational but also pleasure seeking and meaning laden (Hirschmann and Holbrook 1982; Holbrook and Hirschmann 1982). Consequently in this perspective value emerges as sign value Baudrillard (1996; 1998). This means consumers use products for what they signify despite of their exchange or use value. Belk et al (1998) provide evidence of this considering the sacred and profane meanings of consumption and Venkatesh et al (2006) also supports this view acknowledging the presence of value as intertwined with the meaning and symbolism than consumers associate with the service.

Furthermore, Holbrook and Hirschmann (1982) characterize the consumption experience as a flow of fantasies (unconscious desires, imagination, dreams); feelings (emotions such as hate, love, joy, sorrow, fear); and fun (hedonic pleasure resulting from playful actions or aesthetic gratification). From this perspective the separation between the consumer (subject) and the product/service (object) seems to disappear since the consumer is seen as embedded in the acts of consumption. This phenomenological view of the active consumer embedded in the world experiencing life through consumption activities could be seen as an excessive form of subjectivist thinking (Arnould and Price 1993). This is different from the trade-off perspective which shows a clear distinction between the consumer (subject) and the product (object) and which sees the consumer as a mere passive observer. Because of this phenomenological view of value creation, research methods are more related
to interpretive solutions which give a nice departure point to scrutinize the subjectivity of consumer decision processes and experiences.

There are different contributions which specifically discuss the concept of consumer value in the experiential perspective (Babin and Babin 2001; Babin et al. 1994; Chiu et al. 2005; Holbrook 1994; Holbrook 1998a; Holbrook 2006a; Lee and Overby 2004; Mathwick et al. 2001). Holbrook (1998b; 2006b:5) defines consumer value (CV) as “an interactive relativistic preference experience”, which indicates that experience delineates what is valuable and important for the consumer. With interactive Holbrook means that that value is created in the relationship between the consumer and the object (i.e. product); the term relativistic implies that consumer value is comparative, personal and situational; the concept of preference implies judgement; and finally experience refers that value is not embedded in the object of consumption but in the experience of consumption.

Subsequently, Holbrook (1994; 1998a; 2006a; 2006b) proposed a typology of consumer value based on three key dimensions: (1) extrinsic versus intrinsic value, which refers to how the consumption of a product/service is viewed functionally and instrumentally as a means to some end versus a consumption experience appreciated for its own sake as an end in itself; (2) self-oriented versus other-oriented, which pertains to how aspects of consumption are prized by virtue of the effect it has on oneself or for one’s own sake, versus an aspect of consumption which looks beyond the self to someone and is positively evaluated based on how others act in response to it, the effect it has on others, or for the benefit of someone else; and (3) active versus reactive, which is based on a physical or mental manipulation of some offering by its consumer, versus the enjoyment of and response to a consumption experience in which an offering affects the consumer rather than vice versa. When merged in all feasible combinations, these three key dimensions yielded eight distinct types of value, each of them exemplified by one or more pertinent illustrations (see table A.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-Oriented</th>
<th>Other-Oriented</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Reactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>Efficiency (output/input, convenience)</td>
<td>Excellence (quality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Play (fun)</td>
<td>Aesthetics (beauty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>Status (success, impression management)</td>
<td>Ethics (virtue, justice, morality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esteem (reputation, materialism, possessions)</td>
<td>Spirituality (faith, ecstasy, rapture, sacredness, magic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.2: A typology of consumer value (Holbrook 1998b:12)

In this vein, different authors have contributed to the typology in the values of efficiency (Leclerc and Schmitt 1999); excellence (Oliver 1999); status (Solomon 1999); esteem (Richins 1999); play (Grayson 1999); aesthetics (Wagner 1999); ethics (Smith 1999); and spirituality (Brown 1999). However, this typology of experiential value proposed by Holbrook (2006) has been criticized by Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo (2007) for its complexity in determining value specifically, unclear definition, and the lack of empirically research attached to it.

Central to the resource-based perspective to value is the thesis that consumers are active resources in value co-creation through resource integration (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2006, 2008) in service consumption activities.
Therefore, this approach underlines the consumer as an active resource in the production process who may increase productivity and decrease the costs of the provider (Constantin and Lusch 1994). In fact, the positive impact of consumers’ active participation in service production has been acknowledged since the beginnings of contemporary service marketing research (Lovelock and Young 1979; Tofler, 1980; Lengnick-Hall 1996; Bitner et al. 1997). With this perspective value becomes a theory of labour where consumers are seen as a resource for service providers who activate other resources and create value with a larger network of actors in the market. A serious weakness of this perspective is that it basically focuses on potential labour-power (Warmingto n and Leadbetter 2010) without directly approaching that value co-production appears to be restricted to matters of division of labour and the dynamic reproduction and reconfiguration of social practices (Engeström 2000; Shove et al 2012) in a determined context which will gain from analysis through social construction (Edvardsson et al 2011).

Following the rationale that value is embedded in the use of resources, there are three different branches of the resourced-based view perspective for value creation: as dominantly created by the provider (Treacy and Wiersema 1993; Albrecht 1994; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999) as created by the working consumer (Normann 2001; Storbacka and Lehtinen 2001; Grönroos 2008c; Grönroos and Ravald 2011) and as mutually and relationally co-created through service (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004b; Vargo and Lusch 2004; Lusch and Vargo 2006; Vargo et al 2008; Grönroos 2008c).

The first subcategory of the resource-based value perspective is related to value dominantly created by the service provider. This subcategory assumes that value propositions are implicit promises that organizations make to their publics to deliver a distinctive mixture of attributes (Treacy and Wiersema 1993; Albrecht 2004) to engage individual consumers to participate in ways they create valuable experiences (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999). According to this, consumers assess value based on basic combinations of attributes of processes in which they are involved in value creation as it was previously proposed in the trade-off perspective. Therefore, authors propose that providers should focus their resources on offer value propositions in forms of unique value (Treacy and Wiersema 1996; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Albrecht 2004) and offer this proposition to a selected market to narrow their operational focus. The main limitation of this subcategory is that it is still trapped in a G-D logic for value creation (Vargo and Lusch 2004) and provider centric, where consumers fundamentally integrate their cognitive and emotional resources through assessments of finished products by the use of the voice of the market (Johne 1994). This view limits the potential of enhancing and developing services through a deeper understanding of service consumption (Korkman 2006).

The second subcategory for the resource-based value perspective is related to value dominantly created by the consumer. This subcategory proposes that consumers produce their own value independently with the support of service providers (Normann 2001; Storbacka and Lehtinen 2001; Korkman 2006) who play a role of value facilitators (Grönroos 2008c; Grönroos and Ravald 2011). The practical implications of this subcategory need to be carefully considered since the most significant challenge for service providers is the idea of understanding that value creation is less about isolated products and services that meet expressed consumers’ wants and needs, and more about how consumers use available offerings and resources to create value in their productive
processes (Wikström et al 2010). Indeed, the role of service providers is to understand to be familiar with the process by which consumers create value for themselves (Storbacka and Lehtinen 2001) with the purpose of helping them to accomplish their own purposes by either easing or enabling consumer’s roles to perform diverse tasks (Normann 2001). A drawback with this subcategory is that it tends to consider value creation as work-like and customer-centric missing the contextual nature of value creation (Vargo and Lusch 2008; Korkman et al 2010).

The third subcategory for the resource-based value perspective is that value is co-created and which has been discussed by different academics in a relational perspective (Grönroos 2008c; Grönroos and Ravald 2011; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004b; Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2006, 2008). This view underlines the mutuality of relationships embedded in networks and the prerequisite for consumer participation in service interactions (i.e. through the use of goods and services) in order to make value creation possible, seeing the consumer as a “participant of the customization of one’s world” (Firat et al 1995:50).

Value co-creation is something that is not limited to the activities carried in the service exchange dyad, but related also to service systems and networks of stakeholders working through the integration of existing resources in society (Vargo et al 2008). This view connects to Kotler and Levy’s (1969) marketing is everything standpoint, and broadens the notion of value creation to various aspects of organisational and social life.

Moreover, the concept of value co-creation encapsulates the concepts of co-production (i.e. customer participation in producing the core itself) and co-creation (i.e. value received by the customer through usage, consumption or experience) (Ertimur and Venkatesh 2010); and posits that whether the consumer actively participates in co-production or not value is determined uniquely and phenomenologically by the beneficiary during use (Vargo and Lusch 2008). This pinpoints the contextual, emergent and temporal nature of value determination (Korkman et al 2010) which is explained by Vargo and Lusch (2008:7) by arguing that value is “idiosyncratic, experiential, contextual and meaning laden”. The concept of value as always positive, always collaborative and equally co-created in use has also received criticism (Ple and Chumpitaz 2010; Heinonen et al., 2010; Voima et al 2010; Brown, 2012).

The consumer logic perspective to value creation focuses on studying and understanding the life of consumers in a very deep level (Heinonen et al, 2010). The consumer logic attempts to position the consumer as the locus of study attempting to find and investigate both the invisible and intangible processes and practices that create value for them (Heinonen et al 2010; Voima et al 2010). The main objective to this novel approach is to move away from the interactions of the consumer with the service to the bigger picture of consumers integrating services to support their independently arranged practices within their own lifeworlds (Gummerus, 2011). A major limitation of the consumer logic perspective for value creation is that it is just one-party centric, in this case consumer-centric. Indeed, Gummesson (2008) calls for more balanced centric approaches for understanding value creation.

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The consumer logic perspective moves away value creation from the service provider delivering services to the consumer integrating services to support their everyday practices. As a result, the consumer makes all their decisions about using and acquiring resources within their value creating networks (Wikstrom et al 2010). Indeed, researchers within this perspective suggest the service provider role is one of supporting consumers to create their own value (Wikstrom et al 2010; Gummerus, 2011). This thinking fits the resource-based perspective thinking (Ramirez 1999) and the S-D Logic thinking (Vargo and Lusch 2004; 2006; 2008), however, Heinonen et al., (2010, p.2) propose in contrast to S-D logic that value is: “not always actively and mutually created”.

Additionally, the consumer logic offers service research the study of hidden aspects on the role of services for consumers in their own value creation practices. This means value is embedded and formed in the dynamic and multi-contextual reality and life of the consumer, fact which fits the practice perspective thinking of value creation. Nevertheless, the biggest difference about the consumer logic and the practice perspective to value creation is the unit of analysis. In view of that, the unit of analysis flees from the whole practice, in the practice perspective, to the individual consumer, in the consumer logic perspective. Perhaps this is the most serious limitation of the consumer logic perspective which puts much emphasis on individualistic, subjective and invisible mental actions of the consumer in value creation. This emphasis brings practical implications to researcher design that should be carefully considered.

A particular strength of the consumer logic perspective to value creation is being grounded in consumer agency so their insights can be converted into concrete ways for companies to participate in and support consumer’s value creation processes (Grönroos 2008d). As a result, Heinonen et al (2010) propose that understanding the consumer’s logic of value creation should be the basis of company’s marketing and business logic. Putting the consumer first is not new in marketing as such. However, the consumer’s logic for value creation logic differs from traditional notions of customer orientation by shifting the viewpoint from what are companies doing for creating services that consumers will prefer to understand what consumers are doing with services to accomplish their own goals (Heinonen et al 2010). This shift is subtle but important. The main premises of the C-D Logic in are shown in table A.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Provider-dominant logic</th>
<th>Customer-dominant logic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-creation (Involvement)</td>
<td>Customer involved in co-creation</td>
<td>Company involved in customer activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (Value-in-use)</td>
<td>Company controls co-creation</td>
<td>Customer controls value creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility (Customer Experience)</td>
<td>Focus on Visible interactions</td>
<td>Also considers invisible and mental actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>Formed within the service</td>
<td>Emerges in customers’ life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Extraordinary and special</td>
<td>Also mundane and everyday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.3 The provider-dominant vs the CD logic of service. Heinonen et al (2010:542)

Moreover, Voima et al (2010), suggests that the literature of value in service marketing and management is ontologically thin and needs further discussion of the what, how, when, where and who of value creation. They suggest, the key ontologically starting point for explaining consumer value creation is the consumers’ reality and life (Voima et al 2010:4). As a result Heinonen et al (2013) propose: first, the determination of value may
not be co-created but formed in the accumulated and continuously restructured reality of the consumer; second, value is not limited to a cognitive or resource-based perspective but is also socially determined and results from the experience of the consumer; third, it needs to be seen in the dynamic and multi-contextual reality of the consumer; and finally, value is not isolated since the reality of the consumer is connected to the reality of others. Consequently, this perspective has the positive advantage of potentially providing a more in-depth understanding about the negotiable, ever-changing, reality of consumer value creation.

Heinonen et al (2010) recognize that consumers have been traditionally considered as passive evaluators of value embedded in units of output produced by service providers. Consequently, service marketing and management researchers and practitioners have traditionally limited the consumer role in value creation to simply understand their needs, wants and expectations by focusing on the voice of the consumer (Korkman, 2006). This traditional view also lacks the idea of focalizing research in consumer and their contexts (Korkman, 2006; Korkman et al 2010; Ng, 2014). With the introduction of the consumer logic perspective Heinonen et al (2010) attempt to address this proposed gap by building Holbrook’s definition of value (Holbrook 1998:2006), proposing that value is something that “an individual can perform at any time when needed concerning a particular part of their activities or life” (Heinonen et al 2010: 543).

The practice perspective of consumer value proposes that “value is embedded in the practices of the customer” (Korkman 2006:49) in a similar vein than a number of authors of the resource-based perspective suggest that value is embedded in the processes of value creation (Normann, 2000; Storbacka and Lehtinen, 2001). However, practices are not process of creation but systemic contexts in which value is formed by interlinking multiple resources (i.e. subjects, tools, communities, images) through action. Indeed, practices refer to formal and informal constellations of resources integrated through action (Dourish 2011). Consequently, in this approach value creation is not only up to the consumer but also embedded in the broader context of the practice. With this conceptualisation value can only be studied by observing consumers and practices from the outside fact that call for the use of ethnographical methods (Korkman 2006; Holtinnen 2010).

The practice perspective interprets social phenomena as practical constellations from which it is possible to study everyday lifeworlds (Reckwitz 2002). Practices have been studied by researchers, such as Vygotsky (1978), Giddens (1984), Bourdieu (1984; 1990), de Certeau (1984), who emphasize routines, shared habits, competences and techniques used and developed through social reproduction (Shove and Pantzar 2005). The Practice perspective has been pioneered to service research by Korkman (2006:27) who defined practices as “more or less routinized actions, which are orchestrated by tools, know-how, images, physical space and a subject who is carrying the practice” Korkman (2006) posits that researching value from a practice perspective would assist a change from cognitive and subjective dominant modes of studying value creation in service marketing research. However, there is a limitation with using this approach since practice theory is fragmented, therefore many interpretations of it are apparent (Schatzky 2001; Holtinnen 2010)
A particular strength of practices is they are considered as “way of doing” rather than merely “ways of thinking” (Korkman 2006). Consequently practices put emphasis on interlinking resources within contexts (Shove and Pantzar 2005) and they can range from objective to subjective (Korkman et al 2010). This means that whereas some practices are the product of imitation (e.g. typing), some others can be ingenious and inventive (e.g. painting). This notion progresses the conception of hedonic and utilitarian consumption proposed by experiential researchers in which experiences can range from utilitarian to hedonic (Addis and Holbrook 2001). This approach is particularly useful in circumstances where historical evolutions of practices affect value creation in service activities (Engerström 2000).

In determining value through practice, service researchers (Korkman 2006; Holttinnen 2010; Edvardsson et al 2011) discuss the phenomenon of value creation differently than previous perspectives introduced in service marketing and management (i.e. trade-off, experiential and resource-based). As a matter of fact, Holttinnen (2010) and Korkman et al (2010) do not make a clear distinction between where is value found and how is value estimated other than to incline towards a holistically evaluation of value. Nevertheless, the practice approach to value creation seeks to move value creation and determination beyond the brains of consumers to view real consumer practices within their contextual lives (Ng, 2014). This represents a major move to the study of value creation in service marketing and management. In fact, in contrast to traditional conceptualization of value creation, Korkman (2006:3) concludes that “consumer value is not perceived, experienced, co-created, or created, but formed in a dynamic way in the practices of the consumer”.

In addition, practice researchers posit that service offerings are not fundamental for their own sake but for the practices they invite consumers to carry on (Holt 1995; Holttinnen 2010; Korkman et al 2010; Schau et al 2009; Shove and Pantzar 2005). This view has been advanced through the study of the practice of baseball consumption in which consumers manipulate object meanings to fit their own personal identity (Holt 1995). What Holt (1995) does not fully acknowledge in his study is that consumers create value beyond what a firm anticipates by identifying, examining and categorizing value-creation practices by engaging in brand communities (Schau et al 2009). Perhaps, the most serious limitations of Holt’s (1995) and Schau et al (2009) is missing to take into consideration that consumer actions partaking practices are also mediated by physical tools and motive oriented (Giraldo 2014).

On the one hand, according to tool-mediation, Shove and Pantzar (2005) highlight how physical tools (i.e. shoes, glasses, sticks) used by consumers undertaking practices carry cultural meanings within the context of Nordic Walking; Korkman (2006) shows how physical spaces (i.e. Buffet, duty free shops) guide consumers’ practices in certain ways within the context of Sea cruising; and Holttinnen (2010) who sheds light how meanings of objects (i.e. casual dinner, family dinner) and tools (i.e. dinnerware, glassware, cutlery, table linen) act as value co-creation guides informing what is (un) desirable, (un) acceptable and (un) realistic within the context of dinner weekday practices. On the other hand, according to power mediation, Echeverry and Skålen (2011) reinforce the idea of how different motives of consumers partaking service practices during service encounters may be in conflict with other stakeholders’ motives causing dysfunctions, cracks, and the formation of negative value (Ple and Chumpitaz 2010). Holttinnen’s (2010) and Echeverry and Skålen’s (2011) practical
views challenge the optimistic view of value co-creation in SD-L (Ple and Chumpitaz 2010). Although Echeverry and Skålen’s (2011) provided understanding of interactive value formation during service encounters, the contextual nature of those encounters is still under researched.

The practice perspective to value creation links with the resource-based perspective in terms of considering resource integration as a central topic of study. Holtinnen (2010) argues that value co-creation is dynamic and tied to practices where consumers and firms act as resource integrators, integrating and changing their resources guided by what is meaningful to them. In a different vein, Korkman et al (2010) proposes that value is formed as actors (subjects-communities) perform practices, arguing that practices are resource integrators since as practices are performed, resources are integrated. Progressing Holtinnen (2010) and Korkman et al (2010) standpoints from a SD-L view, Akaka and Chandler (2011) conceptualize the notion of practices, processes, and positions. The authors’ associate practices to the integration of resources, processes as the practices that connect actors in value co-creation, and positions as continually (re)created social roles in value networks offering and accepting different value propositions. While Holtinnen’s (2010) and Korkman’s et al (2010) contributions are based on empirical findings, Akaka and Chandler’s (2011) is another theoretical contribution of the (S-D) Logic for Marketing.

There are a number of weaknesses associated to the study of value creation from a practice perspective. First, it is important to clarify and consider if practices are socially constructed or if practices construct the social. On the one hand, studies carried on by Korkman (2006) and (Schau et al., 2009) following practice theorists such as Reckwitz (2002) and Schatzki (2001) put the practice first such that. This view has been criticized by Warde (2005) who posits that this view fails to consider the social processes involved in the creation and reproduction of the practice. On the other hand, Echeverry and Skålen’s (2011) and Edvardsson et al (2012) agree with Warde (2005) viewing services as socially constructed and outlining their view towards practices as socially constructed. Holt (1995) also follows social constructionism to classify consumption practices of baseball fans. Despite the fact that researchers consider practices are socially constructed or practices construct the social the practice perspective of consumer value uses the practice as the principal unit of analysis. Another weakness of current studies of practices in service literature is that they miss to consider the impact of division of labour and rules as mediators (Engeström 1999; Engeström 2000) issues related to power relations that may facilitate/hinder customers’ agency in the way they integrate asymmetrical distributed resources at different service practices. Finally, this approach has been challenged since it uses the practice as the principal unit of analysis instead of the consumer (Voima et al 2010). A review of the different approaches to value creation in the service marketing and management literature is presented subsequently in table A4.
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Table A4: Different Approaches to Value Creation in the Service Marketing and Management Literature
Different types of cultural theories provide divergent paths to underpin consumer value creation when examining service consumption during service encounters. Reckwitz (2002) has determined four diverse types of cultural theories with dissimilar ontological arguments to explain human action and social order by referring to symbolic and cognitive structures and their social construction of reality; these subtypes are: cultural mentalism, textualism, intersubjectivism, and theories of practice.

First, cultural mentalism posits that social life can be examined by using the human mind, the place for knowledge and meaning structures, as a unit of analysis (Reckwitz 2002). Accordingly to this subtype of cultural theory, consumer value creation has been traditionally studied through the trade-off perspective (Zeithaml 1998) and the experiential perspective (Holbrook and Hirschmann 1982) associated to consumers’ evaluations of exchange value (Bagozzi 1975). A serious weakness for interpreting service consumption through this subtype of cultural theory is that it relies too heavily on acknowledging consumers as individuals capable, knowing, and willing to share their knowledge about their actions with service providers. Consequently, it is questionable whether this perspective is suitable to enhance service consumption since it is merely individualistic and can constrain service providers to see service development only through the voice of the consumer by the use of different kinds of questionnaires and focus groups.

Second, textualism claims that reality is neither created in the minds of consumers nor in their context, but rather in their discourses (Foucault 1977) which are the unit of analysis. Therefore to explain structures in the social world it is not necessary to climb to the level of the mind but rather stay on the level of signs and texts where symbolic structures are located (Reckwitz 2002). Accordingly to this subtype of cultural theory, consumer value creation has been traditionally studied through the experiential perspective of consumer value creation (Holbrook and Hirschmann 1982) associated to consumers’ discourses of sign value (Braudrillard 1996; 1998). There are a number of limitations to study service consumption as signs, texts and semiotic processes. Even though discursive practices carry meaning and intentionality and influence consumers’ actions, they are not enough to explain the world we live in by their selves (Nicolini 2012). Moreover, discursive practices can be considered as subjective (Korkman 2006) and vastly examined through the use of research methods (i.e. auto-ethnography) which are not considered as reliable in academia (Brown 2012). As a result, it is problematic that services may be successfully enhanced just relying on the authority of either service users or service provider unquestioned and one party centric discourses.

Third, intersubjectivism claims that reality is constructed in the interactions between human beings, making the social interaction as the unit of analysis. Accordingly to this subtype of cultural theory, consumer value creation has been traditionally studied through the trade-off perspective (Zeithaml 1998) and the experiential perspective (Holbrook and Hirschmann 1982). This approach is mainly represented by symbolic interactionism which views people embedded in social contexts where they create their views of the world (Blumer 1986; Goffman 1959). Human beings, according to symbolic interactionism, are “not only actors but interactors whose life-chances are dependent on how their performances are received by others” (Prus and Frisby 1987:63), something which has been used in the study of service encounters through the dramaturgical metaphor (Grove and Fisk 1983; Prus and Frisby 1987; Grove et al 1998; Halliday et al 2008). A major drawback for the study of service
consumption through this subtype of cultural theory is seeing it as mere symbolic intersubjective exchanges between humans (Nicolini 2012) transferring meanings of expected roles and responses which are internalized in the individual’s mind (Reckitwz 2002a). Even though, the use of intersubjectivist approaches have had a positive impact in the field of service, it is debateable if services can be enhanced only depending on evaluations of expected intersubjective interactions without taking into account the impact of non-human and material elements in practical doing (Latour 1987, 1996) as well as the natural functioning of human roles in ordinary life (Allport 1955).

There is no consensus about a single definition of context. However, no matter which elements present in the context, they all have an ontological stance on their own and they are not subordinated to each other but rather arranged in a systemic totality and integrated through action (Schatzky 2001; Korkman 2006). Practices indeed are complex wholes constituted of other smaller elements (Nicolini 2012). Consequently, practices vary from mundane doings such as sitting correctly at a table (Bourdieu 1984) to short patterns of activity such as must-do-shopping (Korkman 2006) to more organized patterns of activity such as car driving (Shove et al 2012) to long term environmental practices such as climate change (Shove 2010). Consequently, no matter what the elements of the practice are or how complex the practice is, what it is important is how the elements fit together and how they are integrated (Shove et al 2012). This could present some difficulties on practice since what can be considered as a practice for some researchers could not be considered as so for others.

Practice theorists consider that actions build a bridge between the mind, the body, the subject and the context, rather than just appearing as a response from a mental stimulus, through the inter-social and materialistic nature of action (Vygotsky 1978; Engeström 2000). Consequently, understanding that value which emerges from service encounters cannot be separated from the context of consumers’ life is a central insight for the improvement and enhancement of services. This approach is particularly useful for service researchers who acknowledge the pervasiveness of service in human life (Fisk 2008; Anderson et al 2011) and how they extensively affect consumer well-being (Rossenbaum et al 2012; Anderson et al 2013).

Leont’ev (1978) introduced a hierarchical distinction between automatic operations, goal-directed actions and practices acknowledging that operations and actions can only be understood and interpreted against a background of collective social practice. Service consumption during service encounters have been traditionally understood placing too much emphasis on consumers engaged in individual processes of abstract thinking. Perhaps the most serious limitation of this traditional thinking is missing the practical and situated aspects of service consumption which acknowledges the consumer as a practitioner of their own life.

In the practice standpoint, service practitioners (i.e. users, providers, communities) do not primarily have needs, expectations, or wants but they carry practices (i.e. studying, exercising) that require different elements of reality, such as physical tools and competences, cultural images, social communities, motives, power, to be reproduced and potentially transformed. Consequently, only when exploring practices involved in a scene of
action, it can be asked what sort of agency is made possible under these conditions (Nicolini, 2012). Accordingly, empirical accounts of practices are described in the doings of participants rather than just the perceptions of them according to the tradition of ethnography (Spradley 1982; Korkman 2006). A particular strength of this perspective to the study of service encounters is that it provides valuable insights concerning consumer participation in value creation through the exploration of their ways of doing as a combination of actions and context.

A practical view of service consumption means that service is essentially constructed and reproduced through consumers carrying out routine actions by using and arranging different elements of the practice (Shove et al 2012). This is a counter reaction against the Cartesian dualism traditionally used in service marketing and management that positions thinking in a superior position than doing. As a result, service users and service providers become practitioners or carriers of practices, and the practice as such is something a participant can either remain in or leave from pragmatically. A positive outcome of seeing consumers as practitioners is that it offers a remedy to tackle the duality between abstract thinking (subjectivity) and routine doing (objectivity), seeing consumers as carriers of mental activities, bodily activities, things, knowledge and interests.

Understanding of value creation during service encounters have adopted—either service provider-centric or service user-centric—positions concerning interests and purposes (Gummesson 2008). Perhaps the most serious limitation of this traditional thinking is missing the fact that these views of are too limited to explain the complexity of value creation during service encounters engaging communities with dissimilar and somewhat conflicting interests.

Practices serve certain stakeholders interests and purposes at the expense of others. Engeström (2001) proposes the specific direction social practices can be seen as a hierarchy of longer-term formations that cannot be transformed into outcomes at once but through subdivided the relationship between the object (i.e. solution) and the social community. This relationship is mediated by the position and power that individuals can exercise in the transformation process (e.g. roles, status, and level of expertise). Consequently, practices arrange people and things in place giving (or denying) power of applying their competences in certain ways producing and reproducing differences and inequalities (Nicolini 2012). This standpoint is particularly useful to the study of value creation during service encounters through an S-D logic lens (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2006, 2008) which acknowledges the application of skills and knowledge as the source of competitive advantage and a key factor to service development and enhancement.

Finally, the effects of power use influencing consumers actions during routine service consumption remain to be fully explored. Some authors have suggested that power has been an almost absent theme in empirical service marketing research (Merlo et al 2004; Gummesson 2008; Skålén 2010). Indeed, Skålén (2010) argues that power has been mainly framed with a normative and managerial agenda not challenging its potentially dysfunctional effects in marketing practices on organizations and its members. Further explanation of service practitioners using their power to integrate the elements of the service encounter and co-produce services from a
A number of theorists have aimed to conceptualize the bodily nature of skills and knowledge. First, Polanyi (1958) introduced the concept of tacit knowledge as knowledge that can be revealed through practice but that it is difficult to articulate formally (i.e. riding a bicycle, driving a stick car). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) build on the work of Polanyi by introducing the SECI model which aims to explain knowledge transformation in a shared context (Ba concept). Second, contemporary thinkers further evolved the discussion about tacit knowledge examining the relationship between the individual and the context aiming to build a bridge between the subjective and the objective (Vygotsky 1978; Bourdieu 1984; Giddens 1984). Consequently, Bourdieu (1984) posits that “thoughtless habit” cannot be understood only by seeing both individual behaviour and its decision-making processes or by seeing the collective structure. In the same vein, Giddens (1984) proposes a similar view of this phenomenon by using its concept of “practical consciousness”, while De Certeau (1984) differentiated strategic (subjective) from tactical (objective) activity by illustrating the discrepancies of dominance by the mind and the body in different activities of everyday life. Third, ethnometodologists imply that reality is constantly constructed through situations in which practical understanding (common sense) is applied in a changing constellation of resources (Dourish, 2001). Overall, collective practical understanding is a collection of skills, abilities and knowledge enable practitioners to participate in a certain practice which cannot be understood solely through individual behaviour decision-making or structural collective action.

The notion of practices as collective practical understanding is particularly useful for the development and design of service encounters. This notion supports the idea that services can be remodelled in ways they support, empower or reinvent consumer practices. For example, with the introduction of new information technologies practices in the fields of medicine, education and fitness have established emerging practices of monitoring users at a distance through the development of the practice of communication. However, the practical implications of using this standpoint needs to be carefully considered for understanding practices that are culturally embodied require the use of research methods (i.e. ethnographical) that are time consuming and relatively under used in the literature of service marketing and management.

Activity theorists suggest that practices are modified through contradictions that result from the historical accumulation of cracks and pressures inside and among activity systems (Engeström 1987; 1999; Marken 2006; Kaptelinin and Nardi 2006). Engeström (2001) distinguished four levels of contradictions for the analysis of human activity: (1) the primary level happens when the element contradicts itself; (2) the secondary level takes place when different elements contradict each other; (3) the tertiary level occurs when a culturally more advanced form of central activity becomes the dominant form of central activity; (4) and finally a quaternary level emerges between the main activity and its neighbouring activities in the moment of interaction. Accordingly, these contradictions and disruptions act as the heart and the drivers for the system to change.
This standpoint has the positive advantage to be applicable to the study of service consumption during service encounters in a contextual manner and would be beneficial for service design and enhancement.

Practice theories posit that neither individual actors nor social structures may operate without the other. This process generates an institutionalized social order that outlives individual actors and actions (Edvardsson et al 2012). Institutions both guide and delimit actions; however, this relationship is not “written in stone” since individuals remain aware reflexive agents with the potential to act otherwise, sustaining or modifying institutions through their actions (Giddens 1984). Indeed, theories of practice carve a specific space for individual agency and agents leaving space for creativity, initiative and individual performance (Nicolini 2012). Racism, inequality, impunity, and corruption are examples of structural supports that determine the institutional social order in developing countries and which deeply affect service consumption during service encounters.

In relation to service encounters, value creation through service consumption seems to display a dual nature. On the one hand, practices are historically path dependent activities that enable or constrain resource integration during the service encounter. On the other hand, knowledgeable practitioners with their own schemas and experiences to carry out the practice and may follow or not established institutional paradigms. At heart, the action sphere encloses habitual and purposive interactions that communicate meanings, display power, and bring into play rules and sanctions recreating structures of signification, domination and legitimation (Giddens 1984). Further explanation of service consumption according to this dual nature of practices may provide valuable insights to the understanding the active role of the consumer participating in value creation during service encounters.