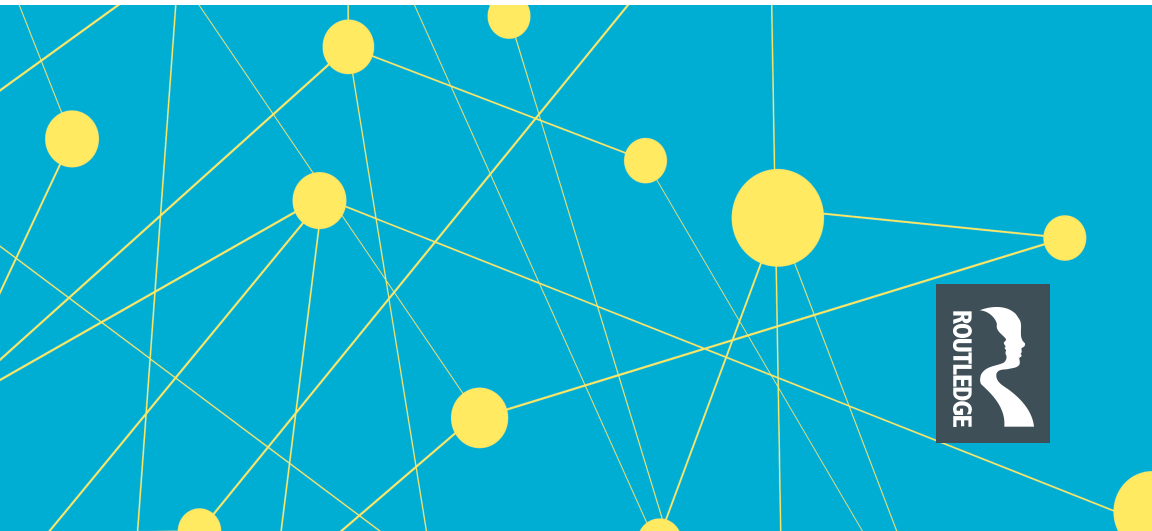
Routledge Studies in Marketing

PEOPLING MARKETING, ORGANIZATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

INTERACTIONIST STUDIES IN MARKETING INTERACTION

Dirk vom Lehn



"Vom Lehn's tour de force is to bring marketing and interactionist sociology together, to shed light on fascinating empirical settings including galleries, street markets and supermarkets. In turn, his rich approach feeds much broader and unique applications of the interactionist perspective in modern organizational and institutional studies".

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"This book embeds an interactionist approach within studies of marketing. Vom Lehn's 'sociological attitude' to studying marketing should be read by all those interested in the interplay between people, organisations and technology. This book casts a fresh look on how marketing scholars can theorise and understand everyday settings from street markets to museums and supermarkets. The writing style makes it accessible to interactionist novices and specialists and demonstrates the value of this approach to enriching a range of marketing subdisciplines. this is a must read".

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"With fearless aplomb, Dirk vom Lehn brings social interaction back into the field of marketing, revealing both the interactive nature of marketing, and the power of interactionist thought for those who study and practice it. This is a major contribution that bridges divides and is a must read for business scholars and practitioners, scholars of institutions and organizations, and sociologists alike".

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Peopling Marketing, Organization, and Technology

Peopling Marketing, Organization, and Technology takes an interactionist attitude to study the organization of marketing interaction and the embedding of technology within that organization. By analyzing clear illustrative studies, this book explicates the interactionist attitude and demonstrates that production, placing, promotion, and pricing are achieved in, and through, marketing interaction. The studies investigate marketing interaction on street-markets, decision-making about the digitalization of supermarkets, the design of exhibitions and social media to generate memorable experiences, the interactive experiencing of exhibits, and the development of guiding visions in the promotion of Virtual Reality. The analyses reveal the practical and social organization of actions through which marketing and consumption are accomplished. By using different interactionist research methods, they show the contribution research using the interactionist attitude can make to marketing and consumer research, as well as to interactionist sociology concerned with marketing interaction. Aimed at academics, researchers, and students in the fields of marketing and consumer research, as well as in sociology and social psychology, this book will encourage scholars and students to shift the focus of their interest from the meaning of 'objects' and 'events' to the marketing interaction through which they are co-created.

Dirk vom Lehn is Professor of Organisation and Practice in the Public Services Management & Organisation Department and a member of Work, Interaction and Technology, a research group at King's Business School, King's College London. In his research, he primarily explores the practical organization of action and interaction in museums and galleries, on street-markets, in optometric consultations, and in dance workshops. He also has an interest in the history of ethnomethodology and in the further advancement of video-based research methods for the study of the organization of action.

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Peopling Marketing, Organization, and Technology

Interactionist Studies in Marketing Interaction

Dirk vom Lehn

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Preamble and Acknowledgments

The book is part of a larger effort to broaden the scope of interactionist sociology and to demonstrate the impact studies using the interactionist attitude can have, both within sociology and in other social sciences. I have begun this work together with Will Gibson (University College London) over a decade ago in a special issue of Symbolic Interaction (vom Lehn and Gibson 2011). The contributions to that issue shifted the focus of research published in the journal back to "interaction" and "social organization", after in previous years there had been a bias toward the "symbolic". The special issue has provided the basis for a joined publication led by Will, "Institutions, Interaction, and Social Theory" (Gibson and vom Lehn 2017), that reveals interactionists long-standing contributions to studies of institutions. As Robert Dingwall and Phil Strong (1985) and more recently Patrick McGinty (2014, 2019) have pointed out these interactionist contributions have often been ignored in disciplines like management and organization studies, although management scholars are interested in what they call the "microfoundations" of institutions (Barney and Felin 2013; Powell and Colyvas 2008; Roulet et al. 2019; Stinchcombe 2002).

Since then, Will and I have been joined in our interactionist efforts by Natalia Ruiz-Junco (Auburn University). We co-edited two volumes, "The Routledge International Handbook of Interactionism" (vom Lehn, Gibson, and Ruiz-Junco 2021) and "People, Technology, and Social Organization" (vom Lehn, Gibson, and Ruiz-Junco 2024), that collect interactionist contributions highlighting the social and interactional production of the social world. They include chapters by scholars whose work is theoretically and methodologically based on either the symbolic interactionist or the ethnomethodological attitude. Thus, these two books as well as another, forthcoming edited collection add to our joined effort to demonstrate the important contribution studies undertaken by members of the interactionist family make to sociological discussions on the social organization of the everyday, work, and institutions, as well as to research on societal developments like the digital transformation of society.

This book further expands this small body of work. It introduces the interactionist attitude, in particular symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, to a business studies and marketing audience. Discussions in these disciplinary areas often address issues and questions that for long have been investigated by interactionists. Their research though has had little resonance in marketing, consumer research, and other business subjects. With this book, therefore, I hope to raise the visibility of interactionism in these areas. At the same time, the eight studies reported in the book are firmly grounded in interactionism and, therefore, will also be of interest to students and scholars in (interactionist) sociology.

The writing of the book was facilitated by time and office space granted to me by my colleagues at King's Business School (King's College London). Thank you to my colleagues here, in particular to Başak Yakis-Douglas who tiptoes around me in a very elegant way whenever we coincide in the office. The book would not have been started never mind been completed without the support from my colleagues at Work, Interaction and Technology, a research group at King's College London that has been more than my intellectual home in the United Kingdom for almost 30 years. Very many thanks to Christian Heath, Jon Hindmarsh, Paul Luff, and Sylvaine Tuncer with whom I have worked and discussed the video-recordings gathered in museums and on street-markets analyzed in later chapters.

Data collection and analysis was funded by the UK Research Councils[1] and ethically approved by the relevant ethics board at King's College London. However, it was made possible only by museum managers, exhibition designers, and market vendors who gave me access to their institutions, exhibitions, and work. Without the generous support of Richard Glassborow (Glassborow Associates), Louise King (then, National Maritime Museum), Ben Gammon and Dave Patten (both Science Museum London), Kathy Sykes and her colleagues (then Explore at Bristol), the vendors on various markets who participated in the study, as well as the many visitors and customers who allowed me to film their interaction and use of figures in presentations and publications the research and its publication would not have been possible.

I also would like to thank the many colleagues who provided me with invaluable comments on my presentations of the analyses at conferences of the American Sociological Association's Section on Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis, the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, the Academy of Marketing, and the International Colloquium on Arts, Heritage, Nonprofit and Social Marketing. It was at one of the colloquia on arts marketing where management and arts marketing scholars pointed out to me the relevance of my research to their fields. Many thanks to Finola Kerrigan (University of Birmingham) who

saw this link straight away, invited me to attend these colloquia, and to contribute to the excellent collections on "Marketing the Arts" (Kerrigan and Preece 2022; O'Reilly and Kerrigan 2010) that she has (co-)edited over the past two decades.

Finally, a special "thank you" to the team at Routledge, Brianna Ascher and Jessica Rech as well as all those people who have supported the production, distribution, promotion, and pricing of the book behind the scenes. All being well, the book will be out in paperback soon and thus more affordable for students and academics. But I leave that in your capable hands! A BIG thank you!

With this book I further advance the relationship between interactionist sociology, marketing and consumer research, and other areas in management research and organization studies. The contribution I make here is small and builds on the already large body of work that has been done before me in these disciplinary fields of research. I still hope the contribution is worthwhile.

Note

1 The research was funded by ESRC's Science and Society Programme's (RES-151-25-00047) project "Design for Participation in Museums and Galleries" and the AHRC-funded project "Enhancing Interpretation: New Techniques and Technologies for Fine and Decorative Art Museums" (RG/AN19805/APN17441).

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1 Peopling Organizations, Marketing Interaction, and Technology

Marketing is an interactional achievement. Products and services are developed, promoted, distributed, and priced in interaction between people. Yet, in the marketing literature interaction is often either ignored or taken for granted by scholars whose interest is more in developing generic concepts and models of market relationships than in exploring the practices through which such relations are accomplished (cf. Ramani and Kumar 2008). The concepts developed and the studies undertaken tend to be more concerned with (the measuring of) the outcome of interaction for firms or organizations and customers than with studying the organization of marketing interaction through which these outcomes are produced. Let me briefly provide some background to the notion of interaction I will use in this book.

In this book I adopt a sociological attitude[1] that is principally concerned with how people generate the world they live and work in by interacting with each other. The attitude I am referring to is called *interactionism* (Atkinson and Housley 2003; Brekhus, DeGloma, and Force 2022; vom Lehn et al. 2021). Interactionist sociology encompasses a "family" of approaches and methods that share an interest in investigating the organization of actions (Dingwall, DeGloma, and Newmahr 2012). Like other families, members of the interactionist family are not in complete agreement with each other but have their differences and occasional squabbles. When Garfinkel (1967b) published his "Studies in Ethnomethodology", symbolic interactionists began to differentiate their own attitude from ethnomethodology. They argued, for example, that symbolic interactionism is primarily concerned with "the relationship between individual conduct and forms of social organization" (Denzin 1969: 922). Researchers assuming this latter approach explore "how selves emerge out of social structure and social situations" (ibid.). Consequently, there has often been more interest in issues related to "identity" than in the social organization of action through which identity is (momentarily) produced (vom Lehn and Gibson 2011).

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In a related way, ethnomethodologists sometimes distance themselves from symbolic interactionists and describe ethnomethodology and conversation analysis as "The Other Interactionism" (Turowetz and Rawls 2021). They argue that symbolic interactionists' focus is (mistakenly) on the individual and on interpretation, rather than on action and social order. Therefore, ethnomethodologists have developed their own principles and methods of analysis. Their studies investigate how actions are practically accomplished in intelligible ways allowing others to align with them and create a social order recognizable to all those in perceptual range. They shift the focus of their analysis more strongly to the actors themselves and examine the methods through which actors produce and design their actions (Garfinkel 2006; Gibson and vom Lehn 2017; Rawls 2003).

Interactionists have been criticized for being microsociologists with little interest in structure while being preoccupied with studies of the self. This view of interactionism ignores the long-standing tradition of interactionist research concerned with structure and power (Athens 2013, 2015; Hannem 2021; McGinty 2016), and the large body of ethnographic and audio-/video-based research exploring the reflexive relationship of social order and interaction (Atkinson 2006; Drew and Heritage 1992; Goffman 1961; Heath and Luff 2000; Llewellyn and Hindmarsh 2010; Salaman and Thompson 1973; Silverman 1970). For the purposes of this book, this latter literature is of particular interest as it shifts the focus from organizations as essences to the practices of organizing, a shift whose origin can be seen in Mead's (1932a) studies of time and Garfinkel's (1956) as well as Bittner's (1965) discussions of the distinction between organization and organizing. With this shift in focus toward studying the organizing of actions through which institutions are produced the studies reported in later parts of this book address the gap that has opened up between interactionist sociology and research within management and organization studies (Dingwall and Strong 1985; Gibson and vom Lehn 2017; McGinty 2014, 2021).

1.1 Peopling Organizations: The Interactional Underpinning of Institutions

In recent years, researchers coming from interactionism and organization studies have begun to address the disconnect of these areas of research as they believe both can benefit from each other's approaches, methods, and studies (Gibson and vom Lehn 2017). The theorizing and research in this area have culminated in the concept of "*inhabited institutions*" (Hallett and Hawbaker 2021; cf. Hallett and Ventresca 2006) that emphasizes the social,

interactive, and symbolic actions through which people in concert with each other create institutions. The inhabited institutions approach has been motivated by a growing interest of scholars in the sociology of work and organizations to "bring work back in" (Barley 2019; Barley and Kunda 2001) and to study how technology features and is embedded within, interaction in complex work settings (Engeström and Middleton 1998; Heath and Luff 2000; Luff, Hindmarsh, and Heath 2000). Research in these areas shifts away from considering organizations and institutions as abstract concepts and, instead, suggests the concept of "*peopling organizations*" (Hallett, Shulman, and Fine 2009), and to investigate how institutions are accomplished through action and interaction. Scholars like Hallett and Ventresca (2006) who pursue the inhabited institutionalist program demonstrate "how employing a symbolic interactionist lens provides a way for institutional theory to bring persons, their interactions, and their meaning making more fully into depictions of institutional processes" (Creed et al. 2014: 277). Their research explores participants' orientation to institutions and organizations. Yet, they are not concerned with individuals' motivations and interests but rather are sociologically oriented toward examining "the social, symbolic, and interactive nature of the action that underpins the social construction of institutional arrangements" (ibid.).

In a related way, researchers using the inhabited institutions approach highlight the dynamic features of institutions and organizations by exploring how people make sense of their daily activities through interaction (Everitt 2013). They refer to Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) concept of "agency" when investigating how participants interpret and negotiate "institutional logics" (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012) in, and through, interaction. Everitt's (2013, 2017) study of people's experience of socialization into a new institutional setting, that is, education, reveals how participants not only retrospectively make sense of their place within education but also prospectively orient to their future role in the institution which is a way in which they contribute to change in the institutional arrangement. In a related way, the inhabited institutions approach has been used to study the relationship between newcomer immigrants and long-standing residents in a community (Everitt and Levinson 2016). Everitt and Levinson (2016) concur with Lawrence and colleagues (2006, 2011, 2013) who argue that institutions are created, maintained, and disrupted through people's action and interaction. Their research suggests that "local sense-making […] is central to understanding the persistence and legitimacy of institutions more broadly" (Everitt and Levinson 2016: 138). Institutions do not persist over time because actions are predefined by an underlying "logic", but because participants locally make sense of them in a way that legitimizes their current mode of operation.

Studies of teacher socialization have been motivated by the opportunities these fields provide researchers with expanding interactionist research into investigations of institutions that for long have been dominated by scholarship that largely ignored the importance of "agency" (cf. Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Adopting an interactionist attitude allows researchers to examine institutional work and entrepreneurship from the actors' point of view and to consider the incorporation of newcomers in institutions. The actors they have been studying are socialized into these institutions as members who have often been assigned a functional role they inhabit within an institution.

In this book, I will turn to marketing as another scholarly discipline whose researchers often neglect to investigate how institutions, such as the market, and activities, such as producing, promoting, distributing, and pricing, are underpinned by interaction between people. Rather than exploring how these activities are accomplished marketing often relies on the marketing mix, that is, the "4Ps" of production, promotion, place, and price, as a tool to refer to when being asked "what is marketing?" and "what are marketing managers doing?". In recent years, the status of the marketing mix as a cornerstone of marketing has been challenged and critiqued (Constantinides 2006), as well as confronted with reformulations and expansions[2] (Constantinides 2002) and threatened to be replaced by the creation of new paradigms, such as "the new dominant logic of marketing" (Vargo and Lusch 2008). Despite these developments, the marketing mix is still at the heart of most marketing textbooks, and with this book I am not aiming to throw it out with the bathwater. In fact, as a glance at the table of contents will make apparent, throughout the book I regularly refer to the 4Ps, yet not as marketing functions but as activities produced by market participants who interact with each other. The focus of the subsequent chapters, therefore, will be on how producing, placing, pricing, and promoting are accomplished in, and through, *marketing interaction*.

1.2 Marketing Interaction

The key argument pursued in this book is that interaction underpins all marketing activities and, therewith, the "co-creation of value" (Grönroos 2012). The body of research concerned with the co-creation of value, principally originating from service and relationship marketing, is complex and wide-ranging. Research in marketing and consumer research often uses the concept of "co-creation of value" as a gloss obfuscating the action and interaction people are undertaking when producing experiences, and when distributing, pricing, and promoting goods and services. The empirical analyses discussed in Chapters 3 to 9 illustrate how interactionist studies of

the four key marketing activities can add to the existing body of studies. They unpack the "co-creation of value" gloss by revealing how market participants systematically accomplish marketing, and how they orient to "value" when participating in marketing activities.

When using the term "marketing interaction"[3] I attached the qualifier "marketing" to interaction to indicate that the interaction subject to my investigation is oriented to one or more of the marketing activities or functions. The study of marketing interaction in this book builds on an existing body of interactionist research concerned with the social and interactional production of experiences in museums (vom Lehn 2006; vom Lehn, Heath, and Hindmarsh 2001), sales (Prus 1989b, 1989a), media analysis (Altheide 2021), and price setting (Prus 1985). This body of research challenges earlier investigations in marketing and consumer research that up to the present day are dominated by psychological and behavioral approaches to experience and selling and buying (Andersson et al. 2012; Harris, Baron, and Parker 2000; Hwang and Oh 2020; Mitchell, Kahn, and Knasko 1995). This research also often involves studies highlighting the impact of advertising and promotion on consumer behavior and considering pricing more as a bureaucratic process than as an interactional achievement.

There is, however, a growing body of marketing and consumer research that demonstrates the shortcomings of research shaped by theories and approaches originating in the behavioral and cognitive sciences. Some of this research has become known as "critical marketing" (Brownlie and Tadajewski 2008). Here, scholars use a critical stance to traditional, managerial approaches to marketing, criticizing the long-standing preoccupation of marketing and consumer research with behaviorist theories and methods, the overuse of experiments, not rarely with students as research subjects, the lack of interest in the context in which marketing is undertaken and to which marketing contributes to, and the neglect of studies that consider "marketing-as-practice" (Brownlie 1997; Brownlie and Hewer 2011; Echeverri and Skålén 2011; Hackley 2009, 2013; Hackley et al. 2009; Skålén et al. 2022).

A related body of research known as "consumer cultural theory" (CCT) shifts the focus to the consumer. CCT scholars investigate how consumers orient to and make sense of their relationships to the market (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 2007, 2018). They explore among others phenomena like brand communities (Cova and Pace 2006; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001), subcultures of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), and the relationship between consumption and identity formation (Jackson 1999; Schau, Gilly, and Wolfinbarger 2009). They also delve into contemporary issues including the emergence of

ethical consumption and resistance against this development (Devinney, Auger, and Eckhardt 2010) and the emergence of new economic forms such as the "sharing economy" (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Eckhardt and Bardhi 2015). In their research they are adopting research methods such as qualitative interviews, ethnography, videography, and others that are closely related to the research discussed in this book (Belk 2006; Belk and Kozinets 2005; Thompson 2011). These studies, however, are rarely interested in the organization of action and interaction and instead are primarily concerned with some of their outcomes, including the emergence of communities, subcultures, and identities.

The chapters that follow after a more in-depth discussion of the interactionist attitude in Chapter 2 contribute to research in critical marketing and consumer cultural theory. They also add to studies of marketing interaction in the everyday (Lien 1997; Prus 1989b, 1989a) that are common knowledge in interactionist sociology but have had little impact on discussions within marketing and consumer research. The chapters, therefore, provide studies through which I try to bridge the "divide"[4] separating interactionism and marketing and consumer research.[5] Apart from their substantial contributions, the analyses also explore how interactionist studies can add to current marketing and consumer research, and to what extent research in those fields can be relevant and contribute to interactionist investigations.

I am not the first making an effort to introduce interactionism to marketing and consumer research. For example, already in the 1980s Michael Solomon (1983) pioneered the use of symbolic interactionism to address marketing questions. He, for example, explored how concepts of consumer identity may have to be amended or extended in light of the opportunities offered by the internet (Sheth and Solomon 2014; Solomon 2010). A decade after Solomon's original introduction of symbolic interactionism into marketing and consumer research, Leigh et al. (1992) have explored the relevance of symbolic interactionism for consumer behavior and marketing strategy. In a similar way, Armstrong (1999) investigates how symbols featuring in Nike's advertisement influence the company's communication with Black audiences. In these cases, the focus of analysis often is on the symbolic features of interaction and communication rather than on the interaction and communication itself. Hence, it is not surprising that also in consumer cultural theory the majority of studies are concerned with the semiotics of interaction and communication rather than with the organization of actions (Holbrook 2018; Holbrook and Hirschman 1993).

There are, however, interesting developments in the field that challenge established assumptions of relationships between market participants. Giesler (2006), for example, reveals the complexity of "consumer gift

systems" on the music-sharing platform Napster, and Giesler and Fisher (2017) challenge marketing's focus on either consumers or producers while excluding other market participants, such as institutions from analysis. And in a different way Woermann has begun to unpack consumption practices, including people's participation in freeskiing and eSports (Woermann and Kirschner 2014; Woermann and Rokka 2015). Despite the shift in focus toward the dynamics of interaction, little research in CCT and cognate areas explores the organization of action and interaction. Research in this area largely remains focused on semiotics and meaning and, therefore, often ignores the social and interactional production of value (Peñaloza and Mish 2011; Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2014; Venkatesh, Penaloza, and Firat 2006; Preda 2009a & 2009b). In the view of many CCT researchers, symbols have value for consumers because they transcend the objects they are attached to (Akaka, Vargo, and Schau 2015; Levy 1959).

With both their interests in the co-creation of value, a relationship between CCT and the "service dominant logic" (SDL) can easily be made out. However, neither CCT nor SDL scholars work to unpack the action and interaction in, and through, which the co-creation of value is accomplished. For example, they ignore to study marketing interaction in, and through which, goods and services are promoted and priced, and they fail to study how experiences of objects and environments arise in action and interaction.

1.3 Marketing and Technology

Apart from an analysis of marketing interaction, the chapters in this book also investigate the interleaving of technology with interaction. The interactionist attitude put forward here for the study of the ways in which people interact with, and around, technology, allows us to investigate how people make technology work for them in particular situations and for the purposes at hand. The studies discussed in Chapters 3 to 9 stand in contrast to the hyperbole pervading much of public and some of academic debate making claims about how technology impacts, transforms and revolutionizes society and marketing. These debates are often dominated by theories and concepts that can be likened to "technological determinism", a view of the impact of technology on society that has been critiqued for decades (Smith and Marx 1994; Wyatt 2008). This deterministic view of technological innovation underpins descriptions of society as being impacted by computers – "the computer age" (Dertouzos and Moses 1979), nuclear power – "the atomic age" (McKay 1984) – and subjected to "the digital revolution" (Sidhu 2015) or most recently to the deployment of Artificial Intelligence and robots (Castell 2023; Ford 2021).

Rather than following this line of discussion, I will use the interactionist attitude to investigate the complex "entangling" of technology with the social world (Orlikowski 2005). Interactionism provides me with theoretical and methodological tools and techniques to examine a wide range of data, including qualitative interviews, ethnographic fieldnotes and video recordings, and media discourse. The interactionist attitude adopted here, therefore, also differs from the actor-network theoretical approach proposed by Simakova (2013) who considers the market as an "actor-network" at the cost of examining how market relationships arise in, and through, the interleaving of technology with social interaction (cf. Bajde, 2013). The analysis pursues interactionist arguments concerned with the contingent interweaving of technology with action and interaction (Heath and Luff 2000) as well as with how people's interpretation of technology influences and shapes the development and deployment of technology in organizations (Blumer 1990; Housley 2021; Housley and Smith 2017; Maines and Morrione 2001). Through detailed analyses of data gathered in a wide range of settings and analyzed by using interactionist research methods the chapters in this book show how people are making technology "at home with the rest of our world" (Sacks 1992: 548). The studies investigate how technology is embedded within marketing interaction and explore how technology features in the creation of relationships among market vendors, companies, museums, and consumers. Thus, they unpack how value is co-created in, and through, marketing interaction.

For good reason, marketing textbooks as well as marketing and consumer research currently often focus on areas like digital marketing (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick 2022; Kingsnorth 2022) and social media marketing (Li, Larimo, and Leonidou 2021). Moreover, books and articles are often primarily concerned with specific social media and their impact on marketing. They, therefore, discuss how in light of the proliferation of social media new forms of marketing have emerged: Facebook Marketing (Wiese, Martínez-Climent, and Botella-Carrubi 2020), Chatbot Marketing (Van den Broeck, Zarouali, and Poels 2019), or Influencer Marketing on Instagram and TikTok (Haenlein et al. 2020). Research focusing on these technologies is challenging because their parameters are changing very rapidly.[6] Scholarly research as well as practical advice given in textbooks, therefore, is often outdated shortly after, if not before, their publication. This is not an argument against undertaking research on these marketing technologies but an argument for research that helps us reveal how decisions about the development and deployment of technologies are made in concrete situations, how technology is deployed to facilitate the emergence of relationships between organizations and consumers, and how people orient to and

embed technology within their action and interaction. By drawing on actor-network theory Simakova (2013) provides one approach to explore the associations that have formed between people and marketing technologies. In this book, I divert from her approach and propose to adopt the interactionist attitude to reveal how marketing technologies are embedded within the organization of action and interaction.

1.4 Contents of Book

Before I turn to the first chapter, I would like to briefly discuss the content of the book. Although interactionism is not entirely new to marketing (Solomon 1983), it is useful to at least briefly introduce how in Chapters 3 to 9 I orient to interactionist theories and methods. The following Chapter 2, therefore, provides a foundation of interactionism and discusses symbolic interactionism as well as ethnomethodology as the two sociological attitudes I principally use in the empirical chapters. In the subsequent Chapter 3, I turn to the empirical studies, beginning with an investigation of marketing interaction on street-markets. Here, I discuss how marketing interaction arises at market stalls and how street-market vendors promote their wares by taking into consideration customers' orientation to the market.

The analysis in Chapter 4 shifts the focus from the inspection of concrete marketing interaction between market participants to the explanations and accounts managers and other staff of a supermarket chain provide for their decision-making about the deployment of technology in their operations. From the analysis of oral history interviews, it transpires that managers and staff have adopted technologies for their practical purposes. Thus, those technologies have become marketing technologies.

In Chapters 5 to 7, I explore the deployment of technology in exhibitions and visitors' interaction with and experience of exhibits. Chapter 5 is concerned with how "professional theories" (vom Lehn et al. 2019a) about the audience are used to produce "dramatic experiences". The analysis also explores how exhibition designers use an analytic scheme as a technology they have developed and used to structure the communication about their work. In Chapter 6, I examine the importance of professional theories in the creation of online experiences for remote museum audiences. I inspect how video recordings produced and published by a museum on the social media site YouTube have been edited to enable remote audiences to experience a gallery talk. Subsequently, in Chapter 7, I study marketing interaction arising at self-service systems, that is, interactive exhibits, deployed in science exhibitions. I explore how visitors experience self-service systems by acting and interacting with, and around, them. The analysis uses video recordings as its principal data that I have gathered as

part of a research project concerned with the communication of science in, and through, exhibitions.

In Chapter 8, I return to investigating marketing interaction on street-markets. Here, I am concerned with the interactional production of price by vendors and customers as they discuss and negotiate the price for which the ownership of wares will be transferred between them. Having discussed the production of experiences, the technological enhancement of the distribution of products, and the interactional production of price, in Chapter 9, I turn to the promotion of Virtual Reality (VR) by journalists and companies' CEOs. The analysis suggests that the promotion of VR in the public discourse is pervaded by "guiding visions" (Dierkes 1992, 2001) that may influence the technology's future development. By examining these guiding visions, I explicate the future of VR as predicted by journalists and CEOs producing "talk about technology" (Weyer 1989).

The conclusion to the book in Chapter 10 draws on the empirical Chapters 3 to 9 to explain the contributions interactionist studies of marketing interaction can make to the current discussions in marketing. It will highlight the importance of studies of the organization of action and interaction to reveal how through marketing interaction experiences are provided for and produced, the distribution of goods and services is facilitated, sales items are priced and promoted, and how companies attempt to situate new technologies within their operations and on the market.

The following chapters will explore marketing interaction and the methods and techniques managers of retail and cultural organizations use to provide their customers with resources to generate value when acting and interacting in retail or experiential spaces. The analyses reveal how market participants accomplish marketing activities, such as production, distribution, pricing, and promotion, and how technology is entangled with marketing interaction. Thus, we see how market participants (co-)create value as they engage in "joined action" (Blumer 1969) to, for example, innovate the operations of a company, design a technology-rich exhibition, and provide carefully edited video recordings for an imagined audience. The analyses also investigate how market participants create value by interacting with each other and how they embed technology within their marketing interaction. The interactionist studies discussed in this book, therefore, contribute to current debates in (critical) marketing (Brownlie and Tadajewski 2008; Hackley 2009; Saren et al. 2007) and consumer research (Parsons and Maclaran 2009) as well as to research in disciplines that have an interest in the cultural and symbolic aspects of marketing interaction, such as consumer cultural theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 2018) and related approaches aiming to bridge the divide between marketing and consumer research.

Notes

1 I prefer the use of the term "attitude" over "perspective" as attitude does not have the same visual connotation as "perspective". With the use of the term "attitude" to describe my orientation to the study of the everyday, I align with Harold Garfinkel's (2006) proposal for the study of human action and interaction without always undertaking ethnomethodological research.
2 For an earlier expansion of the marketing mix, see Kotler and Levy (1969).
3 Ballantyne and Varey (2006) highlight that the "service logic of Vargo and Lusch (2004) is 'service dominant' because they seek to show that service is the undeniable core of every marketing interaction". They argue that "marketing interaction" and "communicative interaction" enable exchange and improve "value-in-use". Yet, rather than offering analyses of how value is created through marketing interaction, they develop a classification of modes of communication and interaction.
4 Various interactionist scholars have highlighted the divide between interactionism and organization studies (Dingwall and Strong 1985; McGinty 2014, 2021).
5 There is also research in management and organization studies, partly addressed in later chapters, that adopts an interactionist attitude when exploring issues related to work practice, organization, and institutions (Neyland and Whittle 2018; Whittle and Mueller 2019; Whittle, Vaara, and Maitlis 2023). Most research findings in these fields, however, surprisingly ignore a century of interactionist sociology.
6 Recently, for example, the social media platform Twitter has been purchased by the entrepreneur Elon Musk who has changed not only the name of the platform to X but also had the algorithm underlying the display of information for the platforms' users modified.

2 Interactionism and Marketing

Interaction underpins institutions. Art and culture, education, healthcare, markets, and other institutions arise in, and through, interaction. Works of art are created and appreciated, teaching and learning are accomplished, healthcare is provided, and markets are made as people act and interact with each other (Gibson and Lehn 2017). In marketing and consumer research, few studies examine interaction in market relationships. There are, of course, the famous studies of the "Consumer Odyssey" (Belk 1975; Belk, Sherry, Jr., and Wallendorf 1988; Sherry 1990) that provide socio-cultural analyses of markets, yet without being interested much in the processes of action and interaction accomplished by market participants. Related studies, for example, those by Herrmann (2003, 2004) and Herrmann and Soiffer (1984) who explore garage sales are not concerned with the interaction between market participants but, primarily, with identifying variables that can explain market behavior. This neglect of interaction, even in socio-cultural studies of markets, reflects the wider ignorance of interaction by marketing and consumer researchers. Instead in marketing the term "interaction" is often deployed to describe the relationship between larger entities, such as companies or organizations (Kotler et al. 2019). And in consumer research, scholars often study interaction using approaches drawn from behavioral psychology rather than from sociology (Harris and Baron 2004; Harris, Davies, and Baron 1997).[1]

The focus of this book is on marketing interaction. In this chapter, I briefly introduce the interactionist attitude that underpins the analyses undertaken in the subsequent chapters. This attitude has been derived from the works of Herbert Blumer (1969) and symbolic interactionism (Meltzer, Petras, and Reynolds 1975; Rose 1971) as well as Harold Garfinkel's (1967b, 2006) development of ethnomethodology. As recent publications on interactionism show, the interactionist attitude has been further developed, in terms of theory and method (Brekhus et al. 2022; Gibson and vom Lehn 2017; vom Lehn et al. 2021; Reynolds and Herman-Kinney 2003).

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Interactionist studies that focus on "interaction" have arisen alongside other approaches using "scientific" research methods to measure aspects of social relationships. For example, Bales (1976; Bales and Isenberg 1982) has developed "Interaction Process Analysis" as a common framework that can be deployed to produce objective, scientific descriptions of interaction. This and related concepts of interaction coupled with the research methods they use to measure social relationships fundamentally differ from the participants' experience of interaction. Bales' contemporary, Chicago-based sociologist Edward Shils argued that interaction process analysis is suited to learn about relationships in small groups in general, yet, it is not appropriate to find out about those aspects of interaction through which relationships between people gain a particular quality that differentiates groups from each other. So, when Harold Garfinkel and his colleague Saul Mendlovitz approached Shils with their idea to study jury deliberations, Shils said,

> "By using Bales Interaction Process Analysis I'm sure we'll learn what about a jury's deliberations makes them a small group. But we want to know what about their deliberations makes them a jury" (Shils in Garfinkel, Lynch, and Livingston 1981: 133).

While interactionists share an interest in participants' experience of the social world, over the past century different interactionist approaches have developed that, as we will see below, vary in how they work to gain access to participants' perspective and how they describe their observations. In the following, I introduce "interactionism" as a sociological attitude that shifts the orientation from researchers' to participants' perspective. Thereby, I focus on the two interactionist attitudes I draw on in this book: symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology (Section 2.1). In Section 2.2, I briefly consider the interactionist study of institutions, organization, and interaction. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion (Section 2.3) that situates interactionist studies within relevant debates in marketing and consumer research.

2.1 The Interactionist Family

Interactionism encompasses a "family" (Dingwall et al. 2012) of sociological perspectives and methods. It includes symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (EMCA) that both will be discussed in more detail below as well as dramaturgical sociology, phenomenological sociology, and others. Here, I will briefly discuss the commonalities and differences of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology as far as relevant for the subsequent chapters. I will begin with a short history of

interactionism (Section 2.1.1) before describing in more detail, first, symbolic interactionism (Section 2.1.2), and second, EMCA (Section 2.1.3).

2.1.1 Short History of Interactionism

Interactionism can be seen as sociology's answer to the success of behaviorism in psychology. Behaviorists are primarily concerned with organisms' – that is, people's and animals' – behavioral response to stimuli in their environment. In simplified terms, behaviorism as a psychological perspective and an approach to study people's engagement with the world arose in rejection of introspective psychology. Wilhelm Wundt and later his student Edward Titchener were concerned with uncovering the structure of the mind by eliciting introspective accounts from research subjects (Titchener 1912, 1914; Wundt 2018[1862]). Behaviorists, in turn, criticized introspective approaches and developed a different theoretical and methodological approach in psychology. "Psychology as the behaviorist views it" (Watson 1913) shifts the focus from studying consciousness to exploring only observable behavior. Behaviorists often conduct experiments to examine how organisms respond behaviorally to particular stimuli and draw conclusions about the relationship between particular stimuli and an organism's behavioral reaction. A well-known example here is "Pavlov's Dog". Having explored how a dog secretes saliva when given meat Pavlov rang a bell before feeding the dog and again measured the dog's saliva secretion. He then noticed that the dog also produced saliva on the ring of the bell without being presented with the taste and odor of the meat. Based on his observations Pavlov argued that "[t]he sound of the bell actually acted as a stimulus in place of the smell of the meat itself" (Mead 1967b[1931]: 391). The idea of the "conditioned reflex" was born. In a similar way, fear of rats is instilled in a young child by associating a loud sound with the rat. "If the white rat was presented to the child when this sound was produced, the child became frightened; and afterward, when the rat was brought to the child and the sound not made, the child was still frightened of the rat. That is, this particular reflex of the fright of the child was conditioned by the sight and feel of the white rat" (Mead 1967b[1931]: 391). By showing how behavioral and emotional responses could be conditioned in people, behaviorist research has aimed to predict and control behavior.

While the debate about introspection and behaviorism developed in psychology, William James and John Dewey pursued cognate questions about the relationship between people and situations in philosophy, calling their perspective "pragmatism" (James 1995[1906]). The pragmatists criticized theories arguing that experience is comprised of impressions external stimuli leave in consciousness. James (1904) provocatively asked "Does consciousness exist?" and proposed that consciousness does not represent the outer world facilitated by the senses, but rather, it emerges from the

dynamic relationship between human beings (or animals) and the outer world (James 1957). This relationship arises through practical action. The world is not entering human consciousness through the senses but perception itself involves action. With regard to the sense of seeing Dewey (1896: 359) argued that it is not the passive perception of light but seeing arises through "the movement of body, head and eye muscles determining the quality of what is experienced. In other words, the real beginning is with the act of seeing; it is looking and not a sensation of light". Dewey further suggests that action and experience are continually intertwined; "in reality they [sensory stimulus and motor response] are always inside a co-ordination and have their significance purely from the part played in maintaining or reconstituting the co-ordination" (Dewey 1896: 360). In Dewey's view, therefore, stimuli are not distinct from sensory perception and action, but they are the result of the complex of sensory-motor co-ordination.

Pragmatists, therefore, worked to annul the distinction between an external, physical, and an internal, cognitive reality that was so pervasive in the contemporary scientific discourse. Instead, they argued that practical action facilitates perception and produces a "reflexive" relationship between objects and their experience. For any organism, the world exists as it experiences it in a particular moment, and the possibility of the experience relies on the existence of the world (Dewey and Bentley 1976). In this sense, for example, grass only becomes edible because there is an organism, that is, cows, that can digest it (Mead 1967a[1934]). The perception of objects therefore relies on practical action, and the way in which action is carried out determines how the objects are perceived and experienced. This argument about the relationship between objects and perception led Mead (1932b) to describe the constitution of objects as a process made up of coordinated action and perception. He (1932b), for example, argues that the properties of a book lying on a table are progressively constituted as an actor approaches it from a distance and step-by-step adjusts their action in light of the "resistance" the object poses them in each moment.[2] Therefore, neither an object's intrinsic properties nor an individual's cognitive processes determine how it is experienced. Experiences arise in and through actions, including, for instance, seeing, walking toward, grasping, and so on. As actions are produced, possibilities for the constitution of objects are progressively eliminated; that is, the properties of objects as experienced by the actor come to the fore through the actions they produce toward them while other possible experiences of the objects' properties disappear. As the book lying on a table is grasped and manipulated in particular ways, action and experience merge into one. Mead (1932b) suggests that each experience as it emerges in and through action builds on prior experiences and provides the basis for future experiences. As people act in recurring situations,

they develop habits and therefore are able to act by and large without thinking (Cook 1977, 2011).

This smooth, gradual constitution of the world, however, sometimes is disrupted when actors encounter unanticipated obstacles raising doubt and encourage the actor to think and reflect about the situation (Emirbayer and Maynard 2011). In situations of crisis, therefore, action based on habit is insufficient, but thinking and reflection become necessary. One example of doubt arising is reported by Jane Addams (1899) who observed how young, middle-class women responded to the misery and distress of the poor they encountered when working as social workers in Chicago. Addams noticed that these women displayed their helplessness and perplexity when confronted with such situational crises. One charity worker, for example, said, "[I]t broke me heart to leave the place, but what could I do?" expressing her helplessness when finding out that a neighbor of the family she was looking after had been taken ill leaving their children without care.

In such situations of crisis or trouble, at least for a few moments, people experience problems with the "organization of perspectives" (Mead 1926) as they discover that they have difficulty to "take the perspective of the other". To facilitate an alignment of perspectives Mead (1926) points to the importance of language and communication and suggests that for social experiences to arise people have to render individual experiences intelligible for each other. This intelligibility of experience is achieved through communication grounded in a "universe of discourse", "a community based simply on the ability of individuals to converse with each other through use of the same significant symbols" (Mead 1934: 283). It allows people to take the perspective of another and create social experiences (Mead 1926, 1967a [1934]). Thus, people are able to align the trajectories of their actions and achieve intersubjectivity through communication.

For Mead the objective meaning structure is pregiven through the existence of a system of significant symbols that members of a community share and use when entering into interaction with others. In the spirit of behaviorism, he assumes that the use of significant symbols arouses the same response in all participants. Therefore, his theory prioritizes the social over the individual. A different proposal is made by the phenomenologist Alfred Schutz who as a Jewish man had to leave Vienna to move to the United States as the Nazis increasingly took hold in 1930s Germany and Austria. While working as an international lawyer in a bank at night Schutz was a philosopher who critically examined the phenomenology developed by Edmund Husserl (2012[1913]) and developed an approach that sometimes is described as "social phenomenology" (Barber 2004; Eberle 1984; Grathoff 1978; Luckmann 1980). In contrast to Mead, Schutz starts with the individual and works to answer the question of the

possibility of intersubjectivity (Etzrodt 2008). He develops the concept of intersubjectivity and describes it as the ideal of the "reciprocity of perspectives" (Schutz 1967), made up, first, of the assumption that in theory participants are able to exchange their standpoints and see the world from the standpoint of others, and, second, of the assumption that participants entering a situation deploy the same "system of relevances". Mead and Schutz, therefore, provide two ways of addressing the question for the possibility of sociality that underpin the emergence of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, I will discuss in the following two sections.

2.1.2 Symbolic Interactionism

The origin of "symbolic interactionism" (SI) as a perspective and method is generally ascribed to Herbert Blumer (1969) who coined this "somewhat barbaric neologism" "in an offhand way" in 1937 (Blumer 1969: 1). In his work, Blumer critically examined and advanced Mead's social behaviorist account of human behavior and positioned it in the context of contemporary sociological theory, that is, Talcott Parsons' structural functionalism. At the heart of Blumer's development of SI are three premises: first, "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them" (Blumer 1969: 1); second, "the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows" (ibid.); and third, "these meanings are handled in, and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he [sic!] encounters" (ibid.). With these premises, Blumer positions SI against, both cultural determinism and behaviorism (Huebner 2014).

For SI, people generate meaning of situations through their actions, and by aligning the trajectories of their actions they create shared interpretations of the situation they act in and upon (Blumer 1969). The focus of symbolic interactionist research, therefore, is on social action and people's interpretation of the world. Hence, when scholars adopting SI study larger social arrangements like social classes, institutions, or organizations, they do not consider them as societal actors but explore how these "molar units" (Blumer 1969: 58) are created when people produce "joint action" (Blumer 1969: 17), that is, when they align their actions with each other. Thus, scholars in SI are concerned with the organization of action rather than "accounting for the activity of the organization and its parts in terms of organizational principles or system principles" (Blumer 1969: 58) (for an overview see, Dennis, Philburn, and Smith 2013).

Because of its apparent lack of interest in larger social formations, symbolic interactionism has often been criticized for being a mere

microsociology that has nothing to contribute to major sociological debates. This critique is unfounded, as David Maines (2001) has argued with regard to the relevance of face-to-face interaction for societal level decision-making; Jeffrey Ulmer (2023: 9) writes that when faced with such critiques of symbolic interactionism, Maines used to ask, "When Ronald Reagan met with Mikhail Gorbachev, was that a micro or a macro event?" Already in the 1980s, Maines (1982) criticized the argument that the concept of "mesostructure" could explain social structures that are between face-to-face interaction (microstructure) and society (macrostructure). These structures, Maines proposes, are always underpinned by social action and interaction. Thus, he affirms Collins' (1981) suggestion that macrosociology is underpinned by microsociology. Yet, it has also been shown that "macrosociology undergirds an adequate microsociology" (Fine 1991: 172).

These arguments align with Blumer's (1990) investigation of "industrialization", a process that in sociology is traditionally considered to be a macro-process. He argues for a reflexive relationship between micro- and macro-processes proposing that not only does the emergence of new technologies shape social processes but also that in turn people's interpretations of new technologies influence how they have been adopted (see also Chapter 4). In a related way, Carl Couch (1996) argues that changes to the social structure provide a basis for emerging digital technologies, while the properties of digital technologies enable the development of new social relationships (cf. Chen 1995).

In their studies, interactionists like Blumer and Couch consider institutions not as essences, but they always highlight that concerted actions underpin the emergence of larger social formations. This area of research has been taken up by Everett C. Hughes (1984; 2016) at the University of Chicago whose intellectual orientation is in close alignment with that of SI. Since the 1930s Hughes explored the relationships between institution, office, and careers primarily by conducting ethnographic fieldwork (Hughes 1937). These studies allowed him and his colleagues to compare and contrast observations on how people manage to organize their work in a wide range of settings, including urban environments, hospitals, doctors' practices, and many others (Salaman and Thompson 1973). Although Hughes did not clearly differentiate between the terms "institution" and "organization" he promoted the study of institutions as emerging form of social organization. Thereby, he considered institutions and organizations as "going concerns" (Hughes 1984) and highlighted their dynamic nature, in contrast to sociological theories that viewed institutions as stable entities. Going concerns are produced when people cooperate with each other toward a common goal, that is, when they align the trajectories of their actions with each other.

This dynamic concept of institutions and organizations has influenced symbolic interactionists who in their research aim to unpack the practical production of these going concerns. It therefore is key for institutional research using the symbolic interactionist attitude to put the organization of social actions at its center (Grills and Prus 2019). Important studies of work and occupations have been concerned with the work in medical and health service settings; examples for such research are Becker and colleagues' (1976) studies of work in hospitals, Sudnow's (1967) investigation of the organization of dying on hospital wards, Emerson's (1972) study of the interaction between gynecologists and their patients, Becker's (1951) study of dance musicians and their audiences, Manning's (1982) study of police work, Whyte's (1973) study of restaurants, and others (Salaman and Thompson 1973). Over the past years, some of this research has continued and thereby often focused on the symbolic interactionist concern with "identity".[3]

Despite this early interest in work and occupation within symbolic interactionism, over the past decades, the focus of research using this approach has shifted away from exploring the dynamics of social settings to studying the relationship between identity and race, sex and gender, health, etc. Since the 1980s, this shift in focus away from examining the organization of work has been criticized within symbolic interactionism (Dingwall and Strong 1985). Over recent years, a growing number of symbolic interactionists have argued for a return to studying work, organization, and institutions (Dingwall and Strong 1985; Gibson and vom Lehn 2017; Grills and Prus 2019; McGinty 2014, 2021). This shift in orientation has led to the development of institutional theories that in an interactionist tradition develop new concepts of institution (Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Thornton et al. 2012). An important development in this regard is the concept of "inhabited institutionalism" (Hallett and Hawbaker 2021). These scholars highlight the role of people and interaction for the constitution of institutions and explore, for example, how institutions change and develop based on the practical negotiation of perspectives on policy making (Everitt 2013, 2017; Hallett and Meanwell 2016).

In a related way, Grills and Prus (2019) adopt symbolic interactionism to investigate the work of managers. They consider management as an accomplishment and suggest studying how through continuous work managers generate and maintain an "aura" or "charisma" as well as a public figure for themselves and their team. Moreover, they investigate how managers form "teams" (Goffman 1959) by aligning team members' work activities toward a shared objective and how they manage to sustain teams and their ventures (Grills 2022). Grills and Prus' research relates to earlier studies by Prus (1989a & 1989b) exploring the work of marketing

personnel and Lien's (1997) poststructuralist ethnography of the work within the marketing department of a Norwegian food producer.[4]

Technology features only little in these symbolic interactionist discussions of work and organization. There is, however, an early symbolic interactionist concern with the material environment as we have seen when, above, touching on Mead's (1932b) investigation of the constitution of objects through action. In light of this discussion symbolic interactionist explore the interweaving of selves and objects with social interaction. People develop a sense of things and bodies/selves through their engagement with the material environment (Mead 1932, 1967a[1934]). This physical engagement with the material environment is fundamentally social because people construct social identities only in and through their engagement with objects whose resistance provides them with a sense of stability and familiarity (McCarthy 1984).

This brief discussion of SI highlights that scholars taking this approach and using methods associated with it are concerned with how people socially organize their lives and their experience of the everyday. Through a wide range of studies, they have shown that to be meaningful sociological analysis has to be based in people's real-world experiences. And they have demonstrated that the organization of work is not determined by institutional arrangements, but institutions are achieved through the social organization of actions. Of particular importance for the social organization of action is communication. Despite this interest in social organization symbolic interactionists have undertaken little detailed studies of communication practices, such as investigations of how participants organize their talk, bodily and material action with each other.[5] Such research is at the center of EMCA that I turn to now.

2.1.3 Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis

Despite their common heritage in pragmatism and phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism differ profoundly from each other (Turowetz and Rawls 2021). Garfinkel (2006) developed ethnomethodology as a distinct "sociological attitude" since the 1940s. From its inception, he had great interest in the question of how people bring their subjective viewpoints into alignment by virtue of practical action. The development of this sociological attitude is based on Garfinkel's intensive engagement with the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz. This social phenomenology resulted from the Austrian-American scholar's analysis of Husserl's phenomenology that in his view overemphasized actor's egocentric perspective and did not allow for explanations of how people manage to experience a world in common. One concept Schutz (1967) developed is the concept of the "reciprocity of perspectives" comprised of

two key "idealizations" that actors who are in each other's presence take for granted: (1) the idealization of the interchangeability of standpoints: when switching geographical positions Actor A in principle can access the world in the same way as Actor B; and (2) the idealization of the congruency of the system of relevances: people assume that for all practical purposes they interpret common objects and their features in the same way as others.

Garfinkel (2006) agreed with Schutz about the problem of intersubjectivity but was not satisfied with Schutz's solution that lodged the assumption of the idealizations within people's heads. He instead proposed that in social situations participants achieve intersubjectivity in, and through, social practices. In his view, therefore, intersubjectivity is a practical achievement, and as such is "fleeting" (Bergmann 1985) or ephemeral and has to be generated from moment to moment, again and again. Meaning, therefore, is not stable for the duration of a situation (or even longer, as argued, for example, by Denzin (1969) but "indexical" (Garfinkel 1967b) and therefore needs to be ongoingly constituted through each next action. Although the meaning of objects is fleeting and contingent the social world is not disorganized but there is "order at all points" (Sacks 1992: 484). Social order is generated in and through the production and design of actions. For all those in perceptual range the production and design of action is observable, and action becomes intelligible by virtue of how it is retrospectively oriented to each prior action and prospectively oriented to each next action (Cicourel 1973; Heritage 1984). Garfinkel (1967b) calls this relationship between actions "reflexive". The concepts of indexicality and reflexivity point to a particular understanding of the notion of "context" used by ethnomethodologists. Rather than considering situations the context in which action takes place, he conceives actions as part of the context in that each action is shaped by the context and renews the context in which it is produced (Garfinkel 2006; Heritage 1984).

This understanding of context coupled with the concepts of indexicality and reflexivity is reflected in the development of conversation analysis (CA) as a distinct approach to the study of talk-in-interaction (Sacks 1992). CA has been developed from Garfinkel's (2006) original analogy between actions and experiments in that he suggests that each action is an "experiment in miniature" that tests if one's orientation to the situation is in alignment with that of another. Only through the next action it becomes apparent if the other is in alignment with the orientation of the first action. Thus, action sequences progressively develop, action by action, and over time create a larger context that remains being renewed and reshaped through each next action Heritage 1984; (vom Lehn 2019a). This original idea of Garfinkel's has provided the basis for the development of the systematic analysis of talk by Harvey Sacks.

In his doctoral research under Garfinkel's supervision and later in his lectures Sacks (1992) examined the organization of everyday talk (Schegloff 1992; Silverman 1998). Thereby, he used recording equipment allowing him to replay talk multiple times and transcribe minute details of the production and design of utterances. With the help of detailed transcripts of participants' talk Sacks was able to reveal the sequential organization of talk and show that despite the contingency in the production and design of utterances talk is an orderly activity. Through the creation of collections of fragments of talk conversation analysts are able to compare and contrast phenomena across cases and uncover the "methods" participants use to produce utterances that are intelligible to others. CA therefore is concerned with examining the methods that participants themselves use to analyze each other's talk while it is produced in order to be able to fit in their own actions (Psathas 2018). The methods conversation analysts are using are the same methods used by participants themselves. Thus, CA as well as the ethnomethodological interaction analysis closely align with the perspective adopted by the participants in the situation under study.

In his lectures Sacks (1992) has shown that talk is made up of "units" whose production entails procedural rules leading to the production of certain responses. And the meaning of each unit is not inherent in the talk, but it is constituted within the interactional context in which the unit is produced. Thus, consider briefly transcript 2.1. It shows a snippet of the talk between a customer (C) and a vendor (V) on a street-market.

Transcript 2.1 Customer and Vendor on Street-Market

1 C: How much could you do it for?
2 V: erm:: (.) you could have that for fifty
3 (3.3)
4 C: Okay (.) Ill take that
5 V: Ill give you a bag for that (.9) you could always give me acheque if you want to
[
C: yes please

In line 2, the vendor provides the customer with a price for an item, "you could have that for fifty". His utterance turns the utterance produced immediately after the customer's utterance, "how much could you do it for?" (line 1) treating it as a question for the price of an item. After a

noticeably long pause of over three seconds (line 3) the customer agrees to purchase the item, "okay (.) Ill take that" (line 4), turning the vendor's previous utterance as an offer she can accept. We, thus, can see how through the production and design of their action the two market participants accomplish an exchange of goods for money and co-create value, an issue we will pursue in more detail in the subsequent chapters. Because the analysis relies on recordings of the participants' talk only, it is unable to explore the participants' material and visual actions. Hence, we do not know what the item is the participants are referring to with the pronoun "it" (line 1) and the demonstrative pronoun "that" (line 2, 4, and 5), and have no access to the actions produced in the lengthy pause of more than three seconds (line 3).

Since the 1970s, as video-recording equipment became increasingly affordable and sociologists developed an interest in the body and materiality, ethnomethodologists advanced the methodological techniques originating in conversation analysis to examine video-recorded fragments of interaction, including talk, bodily, visual, and material action (Goodwin 1981; Heath 1986). As in conversation analysis the ethnomethodological interaction analysis using video recordings as principal data transcribes participants' actions by relying on the transcription system for talk developed in CA (Hepburn and Bolden 2017; Jefferson 1984) and by exploring various techniques for the transcription of bodily action (Gibson, Webb, and vom Lehn 2014; Heath, Hindmarsh, and Luff 2010; Mondada 2018). The ethnomethodological interaction analysis provides the basis for the emergence of Workplace Studies, a field of research concerned with the organization of work and interaction in technology-rich environments such as rapid urban transport systems, operating theaters, air traffic control centers, and others (Engeström and Middleton 1998; Llewellyn and Hindmarsh 2010; Luff et al. 2000; Szymanski and Whalen 2011).[6]

This interest in work and organization relates to early studies Garfinkel (2019) undertook in the 1940s when investigating the training of soldiers or when studying the practices of participants through which, for example, decisions are made in courtrooms (Garfinkel 1949; cf. Bittner 1965; Carlin and Slack 2013). This interest in processes of organizing pervades studies in EMCA that reveal the "seen-but-unnoticed" (Garfinkel 1967b) organization of action as an interactive process. With this interest in organizing (rather than organization), Garfinkel and those pursuing EMCA are developing a body of research concerned with institutional talk (Drew and Heritage 1992) that includes studies of medical interaction (Heath 1986), law (Travers 1997), science (Lynch 1985; 1993), the media (Jalbert 1999), and many others. Over recent years, ethnomethodological research has increasingly been interested in the design of technology and its embedding within the organization of work (Button, Crabtree, and Rouncefield 2015;

Dourish and Button 1998; Harper 1997; Hindmarsh and Heath 2000b; Luff et al. 2000).

2.2 Interactionism, Organization, and Institutions

This brief discussion of SI and EMCA reveals that while the two members of the family of interactionism differ in the ways in which researchers approach the study of interaction, they apply a closely related attitude to their research of interaction (Dingwall et al. 2012). At the heart of both approaches is the study of social action and interaction. Scholars adopting the sociological attitudes of SI or EMCA view institutions and organizations not as pregiven frames of action but as practical accomplishments. In that, they differ from much of the institutional scholarship in management and organizational research but closely relate to Hallett and Hawbaker (2021) notion of "inhabited institutions", and they call for bringing people and actions back into organizational research (Barley and Kunda 2001; Hallett et al. 2009).[7]

Symbolic interactionists draw on Hughes' (1984) work and research at the Chicago School of Sociology when discussing how people produce "joint action", a term introduced by Herbert Blumer (1966) to capture the organization of shared projects (Grills and Prus 2019). The purpose of symbolic interactionists research is the investigation of the practice of organizing common projects and therefore prefers the term "institution" to denote activities that are normatively organized with regard to a shared goal. As people develop a common-sense understanding and social definition of shared goals, they connect together local action thus producing larger acts or institutions, such as markets or the art world. While in these cases there is rarely a single person who understands the intricacies of the entire institution, the institution comes to life through the alignment of participants' actions (Gibson and vom Lehn 2017).

Garfinkel and ethnomethodology pursue similar interests as symbolic interactionists. Ethnomethodologists' research, however, differs in important ways from them. First, ethnomethodologists shift the perspective of their research further toward the participants' perspective with Garfinkel (2002; Garfinkel and Wieder 1992) demanding that researchers acquire at least "vulgar competence" in the practices and competencies of their research subjects. Therefore, a body of ethnomethodological studies has emerged involving researchers literally in "taking the role of others" and practically acquiring the skills and competencies of those they have been studying. For example, Livingston (1986) has become a mathematician, Burns (2005) has trained to become a lawyer, and Liberman (2004) immersed himself in the world of Tibetan monks. This strong version of the ethnomethodological "unique

adequacy" requirement (Garfinkel and Wieder 1992), however, is not applicable to all forms of ethnomethodological research. In ethnographic and video-based ethnomethodological studies, people use a weak version of the unique adequacy requirement (Rooke and Kagioglou 2007). They, for example, may acquire some knowledge and skills relevant to their field of study that help them to understand the organization of the setting under study from the participants' perspective. Sometimes, they use meetings and discussions with participants in the setting to discuss data and their interpretations as well as to obtain a better understanding of technical processes and procedures they have not conducted themselves. As a result, they produce descriptions of the social world that are aligned with and intelligible by participants in the situations under study. Unlike Schutz (1967), therefore, ethnomethodologists relinquish the distinction between first-order constructions, produced by the participants, and second-order constructions, produced by social scientists. Instead, they describe "the world as it happens" (Boden 1990).

A second point of difference between symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology is how both study social organization. Ethnomethodologists firmly focus their research on the organizing of action (Bittner 1965; Garfinkel 1956). Their interest is apparent, for example, in Garfinkel and colleagues' (1981) study of the work of astronomers involved in the discovery of a pulsar and in related studies undertaken more recently on the work undertaken by biologists (Lynch 1985) and within the laboratory of experimental physicists (Sormani 2014). In this research as well as in ethnomethodological conversation analysis researchers use audio-/visual recordings of naturally occurring situations as principal data, often coupled with ethnographic observations. They examine the interaction by examining the recordings, often drawing on detailed transcripts of the participants' vocal and bodily action. Thus, they uncover the fine-grained organization of action. Resulting from the detailed analysis of actions are detailed descriptions of complex actions or activities that often involve tools and technologies.

The theories and methods as well as the findings from symbolic interactionist and ethnomethodological research provide me with important resources for the study of marketing interaction. In the final section of this chapter, I briefly discuss how the different methods and methodologies of interactionism are relevant for the study of marketing interaction.

2.3 Discussion: Interactionism and Marketing

Marketing as taught at most business schools is pervaded by abstract models and concepts that are of such a generic quality that students can apply them on a wide range of case studies without ever having to

consider the circumstances in which managers make decisions. This approach to teaching marketing at university has been criticized, also from within the discipline itself. Hackley (2009; 2013), for example, suggests that many textbook authors have developed concepts and models as well as case studies that mutually reify each other; the theories are used to analyze the case studies, and the analysis of the case studies in turn shows the validity of the theories. This book adds to the critique of generic marketing concepts by offering interactionism as a theoretical and methodological attitude to study managers' decision-making and the emergence of concrete market relationships before pursuing studies of market relationships.

The reliance of marketing and marketing research on theoretical concepts and models and on scientific approaches that aim to generalize concrete action and interaction results in a "un-peopled"[8] approach to the study of market relationships. Past theory and research in marketing has attempted to link symbolic interactionism to link product symbolism, a quality of products that Sidney Levy (1959) elaborated on in the 1950s, to consumer behavior (Solomon 1983). This view of symbols and meaning appears to be grounded more in semiotics than in interactionism and largely ignores how meaning is produced in, and through, interaction between market participants. Despite the shortcomings of Solomon's (1983) approach to using symbolic interactionist concepts for the study of market relationships it has to be recognized that his pioneering work has contributed to the more recent developments in service marketing and consumer cultural theory. For example, together with colleagues he (1985) has been at the forefront of those marketing scholars arguing that the true outcome of service interaction is the "service experience" (Grönroos 1984; Grönroos and Gummesson 2012:198; Solomon 2004; Solomon et al. 1985). However, despite grounding his argument in the interactionist attitude he aligns with other marketing scholars and consumer researchers who consider experience to be subjective and egocentric and use phenomenological approaches to studying experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman 1993).

In this book, I contribute to these discussions about the "co-creation of value" whereby "value" has been related to and likened to "experience", that have been particularly prominent in service- and relationship-marketing as well as in experiential marketing. I will argue that interactionism provides theories and methods to unpack how market participants (co-)create value in interaction with each other. Thus, the discussions in this book bring people (and their actions) back into marketing that for long have been obscured by concepts and models pervading textbooks and research in the discipline. Thus, interactionism "peoples" marketing. Related interactionist research has studied concrete marketing activities as observed, for example, on marketplaces (vom Lehn 2014; Pradelle 2006), on city streets (Duneier 1999),

at service counters (Llewellyn 2011), in exhibitions (vom Lehn 2006; vom Lehn and Heath 2016), and in many other places. By adopting the interactionist attitude to the study of marketing interaction allows us also to address recent developments in our disciplines that work to close the gap between marketing and consumer research by showing the bearing cultures of consumption have on marketing theory and practice (Arnould and Thompson 2005; McCracken 1990, 2005). These discussions within marketing highlight, for example, various imbalances of scholarly attention (Giesler and Fischer 2017) that research undertaken with an interactionist attitude can reconcile. In the various chapters in this book, I will not ignore or dismiss concepts and models like the marketing mix but like Constantinides (2006) treat them as analytic tools that can help structure arguments. In fact, as we will see in Chapter 5 authors of marketing textbooks are not the only ones using generic models that can be applied to the analysis of a wide range of settings and environments. In the following Chapter 3, however, I will turn to marketing interaction on street-markets to give a flavor of how interactionist studies can help reveal the practical and social organization of marketing activities, such as promotion, distribution, and pricing.

Notes

1 Underlying these studies, therefore, often is a stimulus-response model.
2 The interactionist, Meadian argument for a "non-dualist" concept of the relationship between action and technology has been discussed in some detail by Tony Puddephatt (2005). See also, the recently published edited volume "People, Technology, and Social Organization" (vom Lehn, Gibson, and Ruiz-Junco 2024).
3 See for example Zhou and colleagues (2011) study of how Chinese-educated nurses who migrated to Australia interpret "difference" when making sense of their experience of boundaries to their career progression or Dawn R. Norris' (2016) research on the experience of job loss and the impact on mental health.
4 It is surprising how little recent discussions on strategy-as-practice draw on this (symbolic) interactionist work (Mueller 2018; Whittington 2007, 2011).
5 For an interesting exception see (Hintz and Miller 1995) and other work at the New Iowa School (Katovich and Chen 2021; Miller 2011).
6 A different but related approach to adopting the ethnomethodological attitude has been adopted by Whittle and colleagues, who, however, are concerned more with the analysis of discourse than with interaction (Whittle and Mueller 2019; Whittle and Wilson 2015).
7 A different, language-focused framework related to the interactionist attitude has been developed by Whittle, Vaara, and Maitlis (Whittle et al. 2023).
8 With regard to "un-peopled" perspective of research and the "peopled" perspective offered by interactionism see Tim Hallett and colleagues' (Hallett, Shulman, and Fine 2009; Hallett and Ventresca 2006; Hallett and Hawbaker 2021) arguments in relationship to organizational sociology.

3 Marketing Interaction on Street-Markets

In this chapter and in large parts of this book I follow scholars in service- and relationship marketing who argue that value is co-created in interaction between market participants (cf. Grönroos 1984; Grönroos and Gummerus 2014; Vargo and Lusch 2004). I, however, divert from them in two ways: first, I argue that while scholars in marketing and consumer research highlight the importance of interaction for the co-creation of value they often overlook the study of the organization of action and interaction. And second, these scholars point out that the product of marketing interaction is the "service experience", implying it is lodged in people's heads. In this book, I pursue the argument that marketing scholars can learn a lot about the co-creation of value by unpacking the organization of action through which market participants produce and orient to value in concrete marketing interaction. When acknowledging that market participants create value in, and through, interaction with each other, it becomes important to accept also that value is not lodged in participant's cognition and stable overtime. But, it is ephemeral and ongoingly produced, moment-by-moment.

In this chapter, I examine interaction on street-markets to reveal how a detailed analysis of market participants' action and interaction can be instructive to learn about the organization of marketing interaction through which value is co-created. Street-markets provide immediate access to the organization of marketing interaction as all those "in perceptual range" (Goffman 1981: 3), including marketing scholars, can observe the events as they arise at market stalls.

The markets where I gathered my data are popular with tourists and locals alike. They are places people frequent to socialize, and where community is made as they interact not only with vendors but also with others (Pradelle 2006; Watson and Studdert 2006). In interaction with vendors people traversing these markets are turned into customers who browse and inspect wares laid out at stalls. They, for example, attend to vendors' promotional activities, discuss the value of the wares, and negotiate prices

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with vendors. Thus, through marketing interaction participants produce "memorable experiences" (Pine and Gilmore 1999) that may encourage them to return to this or visit other markets.

Discussing observations of the organization of action and interaction on street-markets allows me to begin to explore marketing interaction and to reveal how people produce experiences, promote, distribute, and price goods in interaction with others. These studies bring to life the notion of "peopling marketing" by showing how marketing is done in, and through, action and interaction. This chapter, therefore, contributes to the growing interest in "marketing as practice" (Skålén et al. 2022; Skålén and Hackley 2011) but with a slightly different focus. While the aim of practice-based research often is to overcome the difference between theory and practice (Brownlie 2010; Reckwitz 2002; Schäfer 2016; Schmidt 2017), interactionist analyses of marketing practices unpack and describe the organization of concrete action and interaction.

Analyzing interaction requires a particular theoretical and methodological attitude. In this chapter, I will deploy an ethnomethodological attitude (Garfinkel 1967b, 2006) allowing me to explore the organization of marketing interaction through which vendors and customers engage in "joint action" (Blumer 1969) that sometimes leads to the exchange of goods for money, and thus creates value for both participants.

In the following, I will briefly discuss relevant literature (Section 3.1) before describing the data gathered for the purpose of the research (Section 3.2). The subsequent analysis, Section 3.3, will examine video-recorded interaction on street-markets to reveal the organization of marketing interaction through which goods are promoted, priced, and exchanged, and through which experiences of markets are produced. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the organization of marketing interaction on street-markets and of the relevance of such detailed studies of marketing interaction to debates about the "experience economy" (Pine and Gilmore 1999) and discussions in marketing and consumer research concerned with "marketing-as-practice" (Hackley et al. 2009; Skålén et al. 2022) and the co-creation of value (Echeverri and Salomonson 2017; Grönroos 2012).

3.1 Research of Interaction on Markets

Scholars from a wide range of disciplines have shown an interest in street-, flea-, and farmer-markets (Alexander and Alexander 1987; Herrmann 1997; Hochuli 2019; Pradelle 2006; Sekhani, Mohan, and Medipally 2019; Watson and Studdert 2006). Depending on their respective disciplinary background they have focused on issues such as the economic relevance, the cultural function, and the contribution to social cohesion of markets.

As the purpose of this chapter is to exhibit how social interaction underpins marketing activities, this short literature review explores how interaction features in current marketing theory and research (Section 3.1.1), how interaction on markets has been discussed by anthropologists and sociologists (Section 3.1.2), and how the organization of action and interaction has featured in recent interactionist and ethnomethodological studies of markets and retail settings (Section 3.1.3).

3.1.1 Markets, Marketing, and Interaction

Marketing and consumer research has shown little interest in studying interaction and communication in retail- and shopping environments. Yet, they have developed concepts of the relationship between market participants (cf. Sheth 1967). Sheth (1975), for example, has been at the forefront of the development of a "conceptual framework" for buyer-seller interaction. His framework differentiates the content and style of communication between buyer and seller. The "content of communication" relates to "the substantive aspects of the purposes for which the two parties have got together" (Sheth 1975: 3); "the style of communication … represents the format, ritual or mannerism which the buyer and the seller adopt in their interaction" (Sheth 1975: 5). Both style and content of communication are influenced by "exogenous factors", such as personal factors (demographic and socio-economic characteristics), organizational factors (organization objectives, style, and structure), and product-related factors (market motivations, buyer and seller plans, market position of seller). Sheth's (1975) framework has been influential in consumer research and has been used to develop concepts and theories of the interaction between buyer and seller. Solomon and colleagues (1985), for example, use Sheth's framework coupled with parallel discussions in (social) psychology. They argue that market participants adopt particular roles, and their actions are predefined by scripts, that is, "a learned sequence of causal chains" (Solomon et al. 1985: 105). According to their analysis these scripts underpin the organization of market participants' actions and experiences.

A different strand of research is concerned with how service quality arises from interaction between personnel and customers (Berry, Zeithaml, and Parasuraman 1985; Dagger and Sweeney 2007; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1988; Zeithaml et al. 2020). In a similar vein, the Nordic School of (Service) Marketing has been leading the development of a framework capturing the complex relationship between those participating in service interaction and the various factors impacting participants' experience of the service (Grönroos and Gummesson 2012). Scholars contributing to these debates argue that the

experienced service quality results from a combination of the expectations set for a service, the service delivery process, and the actual quality of the service provided (Grönroos 1984). This model therefore involves a prospective view toward the service delivery and a retrospective view toward the past experiences of a service. It shifts the focus from the firm that has been at the center of the managerial approach to marketing (cf. Kotler and Armstrong 2017) to the relationship between those providing and those experiencing a service delivery. At the end of the past millennium, the relationship marketing approach developed by members of the Nordic School took hold within marketing more widely (Grönroos 1984, 2007a; Grönroos and Gummesson 2012) leading Vargo and Lusch's (2004) to claim that we were facing the emergence of a "new dominant logic" in marketing that has the potential to replace the managerial approach. Scholars pursuing this perspective have often argued that service marketing's concept of value co-creation reflects how value is produced in all kinds of market relationships (Gummerus and Koskull 2015). They suggest that the ways in which value creation is conceived in service marketing apply to all market situations. And they propose that value creation in market relationships is underpinned by interaction between market participants (Gummerus and Koskull 2015; Lusch and Vargo 2006). They, however, did not develop a framework or methods to study this interaction.

This is not to say that no attempts have been undertaken to investigate communication and interaction between personnel and customers as well as among consumers. The research undertaken, however, principally relies on models of communication that separate sender and receiver (cf. Ballantyne and Varey 2006; Soldow and Thomas 1984). Studies investigating marketing interaction are concerned with the impact of interaction and communication on trade and the consumer experience rather than with the organization of participants' action and interaction (cf. Baron, Harris, and Davies 1996; Harris and Baron 2004). They explore how consumer behavior is influenced by the conduct of other market participants, and "oral participation" from service staff and customers influences the service delivery and experience (Baron et al. 1996; Davies, Baron, and Harris 1998; Harris and Baron 2004). Scholars also investigate how the use of particular utterances – "language" – leads to specific outcomes in terms of customers' experiences (Otnes, Ilhan, and Kulkarni 2012). Their focus is on types of utterance rather than on exploring the organization of action in which such utterances are deployed. Moreover, these studies differentiate action and experience as if the former generates the latter, while the ways in which experience influences action are largely ignored.

Related research has studied buying and selling on street-, flea-, and farmers-markets, as well as at car boot and garage sales. They highlight that these markets are often characterized by interpersonal relationships between vendors and customers that may influence what is being bought and sold and for how much (Herrmann 1997). They are also concerned with who frequents these markets and what motivates people to attend them (Stone, Horne, and Hibbert 1996). Their studies reveal that participation in bargaining cannot be ascribed to particular variables such as gender, age, or class alone but is occasioned by a complex variety of reasons, motivations, and dispositions (Herrmann 2004). This research is primarily based on interviews with market participants.

There is, however, a body of ethnographic research concerned with markets as locales where, as mundane part of their lives, people come to buy and sell a wide variety of goods and artifacts and socialize with others. Some of this research falls within the domain of Consumer Cultural Theory (CCT), an area of consumer research that is devoted to the "sociocultural, experiential, symbolic, and ideological aspects of consumption" (Arnould and Thompson 2005). Studies by CCT scholars conceive "(consumer) culture" not as straight-jacket defining people's actions and move away from behaviorist concepts of action. By using a wide range of research methods these scholars explore "the heterogeneous distribution of meanings and the multiplicity of overlapping cultural groupings that exist within the broader socio-historic frame of globalization and market capitalism" (Arnould and Thompson 2005: 869). They investigate how consumers assemble a sense of self by drawing on physical, textual, and multisensorial material produced by other market participants (Belk 1988, 2013; McCracken 1990, 2005), question the distinction of production and consumption by considering the contribution of consumers to the production and distribution of goods and services (Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody 2008), investigate the relationship between consumers' values and choices and wider society (Holmwood et al. 1997), and explore how consumers interpret advertisements and embed products in their lives in ways often not anticipated by designers and producers (Deighton and Kornfeld 2009).[1]

Although consumer cultural theorists are interested in consumption practices (Holt 1995), few studies actually explore in much detail how consumption of goods and services is accomplished and how the accomplishing of consumption arises in interaction between people (Llewellyn 2021; Woermann and Rokka 2015). To find research interested in the practical organization of market relationships, it is worthwhile turning to other disciplines that have a long-standing interest in processes of interaction between participants in market and sales situations as well as elsewhere.

3.1.2 Exploring Market Interaction

Anthropologists have explored interaction on markets and bazaars for a long time. They have revealed that bargaining is commonplace in bazaars, even when the expected price reduction is only "to the right of the decimal" (Geertz 1978: 32). Alexander and Alexander (1987) pursue the question of the commonplaceness of bargaining on bazaars and show that in Java bazaars are an environment where prices become negotiated as a technique market participants use to test information about price. They also reveal that some bargaining processes become rather lengthy because participants' knowledge about the value of products differs a lot. Other bargaining processes are short because participants either assume that others have similar knowledge about the price of the products or because customers display through their appearance that they do not often frequent the bazaar (Alexander and Alexander 1991; Black 2012).

Maybe surprisingly, sociologists have long neglected economic action and left this part of social life for economists to investigate. A rare exception in this regard is Maisel's (1974) article describing flea markets as an "action scene". He suggests that on flea markets "[P]eople play the entrepreneurial game for all it is worth, share in the excitement of trying to outguess the market and outwit one's neighbor" (ibid., 503). It took until the 1980s before sociologists returned to issues and questions that Max Weber had posed in the early 20th century when investigating the relationship between "Economy and Society" (Weber 1978). With the exception of Parsons' and Smelser's (2005/1956) "Economy and Society: A Study in the Integration of Economic and Social Theory" and occasional articles (e.g. Davis 1959) for long sociology largely excluded economic aspects of social life from its analyses. Only in the 1980s the "new economic sociology" revived the "Sociology of Economic Life" (Swedberg and Granovetter 2001/1992). This program of investigations has now turned into a burgeoning field of studies exploring the "embeddedness" (Polanyi 2002/1944) of economic action within social structure (Granovetter 1985, 1990ab; Krippner and Alvarez 2007; Swedberg 2007). Studies in this field, for example, pursue the question "how markets are made" (Abolafia 2001; Ahrne, Aspers, and Brunsson 2014; Aspers 2009, 2011), and how market relationships emerge (Granovetter 2001; Swedberg and Granovetter 2001; White 1981). They also examine economic concepts like "price" and "value" from a sociological perspective. This research reveals, for example, social and cultural aspects of prices (Velthuis, 2003; Zelizer, 1981) and "money" (Zelizer 1989) as well as the formation of prices (Uzzi and Lancaster 2004). Yet, they show little interest in action and interaction markets.

3.1.3 Markets as (Inter-)Action Scene

Maisel's (1974) aforementioned article nicely links to studies in consumer research that, since the 1970s, have begun to explore markets as urban areas where people engage in leisure activities supporting their sense of identity and place in the world (Belk et al. 1988; Holbrook 1991; Watson and Studdert 2006). The "consumer behavior odyssey" (Belk 1975) that has been central to the transformation of consumer research over the past 50 years reveals how market activities are embedded within society. These studies suggest that vendors' economic success on the market is reliant on their interaction with members of the community. Over time, they build and sustain long-lasting relationships that support community cohesion as well as unpin their economic achievement (Abolafia 1998; Pradelle 2006). Thus, these ethnographies of markets unpack the notion of "embeddedness" (Granovetter 1985; Krippner and Alvarez 2007) that is central to the new economic sociology program. They explore, for example, how trust and trustworthiness among market participants and other members of the local community arise in interaction between them (Cook et al. 2007; Venkatesh 2008). Through sometimes only fleeting encounters between market participants a social atmosphere arises that might underpin the pervasiveness of street- and flea markets that sometimes are considered to be economically inefficient.

Despite the observation that interaction is important for market success and community relationships, interactionist research has long ignored market and marketing activities. There are, of course, a few notable exceptions, such as the classic studies by Bigus (1972) "The Milkman and His Customer" and Davis' (1959) "The Cabdriver and His Fare" as well as Prus' (1989a & 1989b) studies of marketing in action. Yet, these studies largely gloss the accomplishment of people's market actions and fail to offer detailed descriptions of how promoting, pricing, and selling is accomplished in interaction. This lack of concern with the details of market action and interaction has been noticed also by Preda (2009b: 27) who highlights that "[I]nteractions are constitutive of transactions: the particular sequences in which interactions unfold shape the reciprocal expectations and understandings of participants, their perceptions and definitions of the process and, with that, the outcomes of transactions".

Only in the past couple of decades, a few studies using the analytic attitude of ethnomethodology have undertaken detailed, video-based studies of market interaction in sales and service encounters. These studies are concerned with the co-creation of value in interaction between market participants. By adopting a perspective grounded in practice theory, Echeverri and Skålén (2011) examine interviews with tram/bus drivers and travelers differentiating five types of practice through which

value is co-created or co-destructed in interaction between the participants: informing, greeting, delivering, charging, and helping. There are various studies that also examine qualitative interviews with participants in service encounters to reveal the co-creation (and co-destruction[2]) of value (Aarikka-Stenroos and Jaakkola 2012; Echeverri 2021; Rihova et al. 2018) and the embeddedness of street-markets in the wider urban economy (Sekhani, Mohan, and Medipally 2019). Because this body of research is largely based on interviews, its findings are made up of post-hoc reports of experiences of the value creation process. In recent years, Echeverri and Salomonson (2017) have begun to shift the focus toward the sequential organization of value creation in interaction between market participants. This research dovetails with related ethnomethodological and conversation analytic studies exploring value creation in market relationships. For example, Heath (2013) investigates how by creating competition between bidders, auctioneers facilitate the escalation of price. By carefully observing the audience they discriminate the audience and identify potential bidders in the room who they then encourage to enter the competition for a lot through their talk and bodily actions. Related studies of marketing interaction on street-markets explore how statements of price or requests for price information are produced and designed when goods are promoted (vom Lehn 2014). Studies of street vendors are concerned with the methods and techniques they deploy to persuade passersby to stop and then accept or decline offers for products (Llewellyn and Burrow 2008). It transpires that in sales interaction, it is critical that vendors and other sales personnel are able to identify actions through which people display a potential interest in making a purchase (Clark, Drew, and Pinch 1994; Clark and Pinch 2010). The research also reveals sales personnel's techniques to deal with and overcome customers' resistance to making purchases (Clark and Pinch 1995).

These ethnomethodological analyses of marketing interaction suggest that participants deploy vocal, bodily, and material actions to accomplish the exchange of goods on markets as well as in other retail settings. They have begun to contribute to discussions about "marketing-as-practice" (Skålén et al. 2022; Skålén and Hackley 2011) by demonstrating how market participants accomplish marketing in, and through, interaction with each other. Rather than identifying types of practices undertaken by market participants (Echeverri and Skålén 2011), these studies reveal the organization of action through which value is created. Thus, they help to unpack what the marketing literature often glosses as "value co-creation". In the following, after briefly describing the methods of data collection and analysis (Section 3.2), I will turn to examine how market participants promote, price, and exchange objects at street-market stalls in interaction with each other.

3.2 Methods and Data

My research began with ethnographic observations on various street-markets in London and Berlin. The markets I have included in my research are flower markets, fruit- and vegetable markets, as well as markets where vendors offer jewelry, clothes, books, records, and other second-hand goods. On these markets, stalls stand next to each other separated by symbolic markers, such as a visible gap between them or buckets placed on the edge of stalls. On some markets where primarily jewelry, books, and other small items are offered, stalls are more clearly demarcated from each other. Each vendor will have set up a table underneath a rain or sun cover separating their merchandise physically and visibly from that of others. Other than in Pradelle's (2006) ethnography where the market is frequented by "regulars" and participation in market activities contributes to community life, in my study the customers attending the market are often tourists who are not expected to return to the market and become regulars. Vendors and customers, therefore, rarely met before the encounter I observed, and the vendors show little interest in encouraging customers to come to their stall again.

After a few days of ethnographic fieldwork, I[3] asked various market vendors for permission to video-record action and interaction at their stall. Permission was not only required for ethical reasons but also to attain the vendors' cooperation. Subsequently, I set up video-cameras mounted on tripods near the stalls. The cameras were not hidden, and in agreement with the vendors and the market management signage was placed near them to inform market participants about the ongoing research. Overall, I gathered about 60 hours of recordings at six market stalls in London and at one stall in Berlin.[4] While recording a few people approached me about the camera; nobody voiced any concerns or asked me to stop the recording. A few people showed a professional interest in the use of video for market and consumer research.

As with studies in other domains I have ensured that the cameras were used in an unobtrusive way to avoid drawing people's attention to them. The cameras were set up on tripods and then left alone for the duration of the recording. I only returned to the camera to ensure its functioning and to change batteries. Due to the noise level of public places, I used a radio microphone with the receiver being connected to the camera and the sender being carried by the vendors who had a lapel microphone attached to their jackets. Neither vendors nor customers showed a response to the camera.[5]

Video recordings produce a complex and vast body of data. Therefore, an analytic and methodological attitude is required to manage the complexity of the data. Ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967b) and conversation analysis (Sacks 1992) offer such a theoretical orientation and attitude as

well as techniques to operationalize this attitude. Over the past 40 years or so, the use of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis has been developed to examine interaction in a wide range of settings, including medical practice (Heath 1986), market pitchers (Clark and Pinch 1995), street vending (Llewellyn and Burrow 2008), interactive service work (Llewellyn and Hindmarsh 2013; Yamauchi and Hiramoto 2016), and many more. With the analysis of the recordings that is coupled with field observations that I continued to undertake alongside the recordings, I aim to reveal the "seen but unnoticed" (Garfinkel 1967b) organization of actions at market stalls. Thus, I hope to contribute to the unpacking of the constitution of markets that has been discussed by interactionist scholars (Prus 1989a & 1989b) and is an important topic in the new economic sociology (Aspers 2007, 2011; Swedberg and Granovetter 2001) as well as in those parts of marketing that are interested in marketing-as-practice (cf. Brownlie 2010; Hackley 2013; Skålén and Hackley 2011). I also wish to contribute observations about interaction on markets to related ethnographic studies concerned with the cultural context and the influence of social norms on participants' actions (cf. Varman and Costa 2008).[6]

3.3 Examining Marketing Interaction

People frequent street-markets not only to purchase goods but also to experience the sales interaction and the presence of community members. Social interaction with others on markets, therefore, is one of the principal motivations for people to travel to and explore markets (Watson and Studdert 2006). During my fieldwork, I observed many people browsing the wares offered at stalls but buying very little, if anything. They also engage in sales interaction, sometimes including brief sequences of "haggling" (Ayoola 2009; Herrmann 2004; Marchi 1994), that may or may not lead to a purchase. In the analysis, I will investigate the organization of sales interaction and how it might contribute to people's market experience. The analysis is comprised of three parts: first, I analyze vendors' engaging in promotional activities (Section 3.3.1), second, I examine a particular activity, that is, recommending, arises in marketing interaction (Section 3.3.2), and third, I investigate the organization of action when an exchange of goods for money is accomplished (Section 3.3.3).

3.3.1 Announcing Goods in Interaction

As people explore street-markets, in particular those selling fruit and vegetables or plants, they often encounter similar kinds of goods at different stalls. These goods, that is, shrubs, small trees, and flowers, are displayed for customers to see, examine, and buy. In setting up their stalls and

through their vocal and bodily actions vendors work to differentiate their offering from that of competing vendors nearby. One technique vendors use to promote their goods is "market cries", an action that appears to have been explored rarely by sociological and cognate research (Clark and Pinch 1995; Sherry 1988). In this part of the analysis, I will explore how market cries as a promotional activity are related to events on the market. Let us turn to the first video-recordedfragment (Transcript 3.1.)[7] recorded on a flower market at a stall that sells heathers, shrubs, and similar kinds of plants.

The fragment begins when the vendor, Tony, standing at his stall observes the street in front and then produces a market cry, "eight lovely heathers in a tray" (T3.1, line 2, Figure 3.1.2). By virtue of the market cry the vendor, first, refers to particular kinds of shrub, "heathers in a tray", he sells at his stall, before naming their price, "dozen quid (.) twelve pou:nd" (T3.1, line 3, Figure 3.1.3). He begins the market cry when in some distance two ladies, Margret on the left and Peggy, slowly walk parallel to the stalls on his side of the road (T3.1, line 1, Figure 3.1.1). When Tony brings the market cry including the price announcement to a close, "twelve pou:nd", he has turned his head to his right where he notices the two ladies approaching (T3.1, line 3, Figure 3.1.3).

Transcript 3.1 Tony (vendor), Margaret and Peggy (customers): eight lovely heathers

1 

Figure 3.1.1

2T : Eight lovely heathers in a tray (.3)

Figure 3.1.2

3 dozen quid (.) twelve pou:nd

Figure 3.1.3

4 (11.3)

Figure 3.1.4

5 Eight lovely heathers in a tray

Figure 3.1.5

6 for twelve pound (.6) two:
shrubs a fi:ver

Figure 3.1.6

7 (.) sold he:re today: two large ro:ses a fiver

While Margret and Peggy shuffle toward a position where they come to stand at the stall and look at the plants spread out on the floor Tony observes them for considerable time, 11.3 seconds (T3.1, line 4, Figure 3.1.4), without saying anything. He then turns his head away from them to his left before beginning to again produce a market cry, "Eight lovely heathers in a tray for twelve pound" (T3.1, line 5, Figure 3.1.5). As he produces this market cry, he first remains visually oriented to his left before shifting his visual orientation to the shrubs when he comes to mention them in his announcement (T3.1, line 6, Figure 3.1.6).

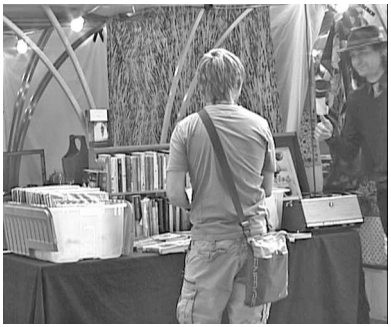
The analysis suggests that market cries promote goods on offer at a stall. They contain information about offers at a stall and thus mark a stall as distinctive from neighboring stalls where similar products are on offer. The examination of the fragment also implies that when vendors produce market cries they orient to customers as potential audience for the promotional activity. The vendor in fragment 3.1, for example, produces his market cries in orientation to the trajectory of the two ladies' movement across the market. His opening market cry arises when the ladies arrive near his stall and may occasion them to approach it.

Throughout the fragment the vendor monitors the customers' actions. When the two ladies have stood at the stall and looked at the heathers on the floor in front of them for a few seconds he vocalizes another offer of plants he sells at his stall, "two shrubs a fiver" (Figure 3.1.6). While he produced his previous market cries in orientation to where the customers stood and looked, his reference of the shrubs renders noticeable for them a type of plant that in this moment is not in their line of sight. Yet, if they would be interested in shrubs, they now could look for them or ask him where they are. As Margret and Peggy do not respond to his market cry, the vendor continues his market cries without, however, being able to hold the two ladies' interest much longer with the plants at his stall. A short moment later, they move on to a different part of the market.

The analysis suggests that vendors use market cries as a promotional technique that is not generically deployed but is used in orientation to particular customers in the vendor's sight. The cries might occasion the customers to approach and examine goods offered at the stall. For customers, market cries are a source of information they can draw on to make decisions about their engagement with a stall. It may tell them about items they have not yet seen but could possibly be interested in. On other markets, where vendors sell a variety of goods such as books, clothes, jewelry, and other items market cries are rarely used to attract customers. Instead, vendors either wait behind their stall for customers to approach or they linger in the aisles between stalls and approach customers when they show an interest in their wares. The following fragment (Transcript 3.2.) has been recorded on one of these markets. It begins when a customer, Pete, arrives at Tom's stall where, among others, vinyls, and books are being sold.

Transcript 3.2 Tom (vendor) and Pete (customer)

1 T: (if) you need any help there mate just give me a shout yah?



2 P: alright thanks

Figure 3.2.1

3 T: paperbacks are just three pounds each or two for a fiver
4 P: yah
5 T: if you want a recommendation I can do my best and obviously with the
6 vinyls if you want to listen to any you are more than welcome

Figure 3.2.2

As the customer approaches the stall and picks up a book from the table, Tom arrives to his right and greets him by offering him "help" if he needs it (T3.2, line 1) which Pete acknowledges, "alright thanks". Tom then walks behind the customer and produces an offer for paperback books, "paperbacks are just three pounds each or two for a fiver" (T3.2, line 3).

A few moments later, after the customer has acknowledged the offer for the paperbacks, "yah", (T3.2, line 4), Tom offers to help him with a recommendation and then says that "obviously with the vinyls if you want to listen to any you are more than welcome" (T3.2, lines 5–6). Having observed and recorded the actions at this vendor's stall for two weeks I noticed that Tom produces similar utterances in the openings of his interaction with customers. He, however, tailors the production and design of these opening utterances to the customer's actions at the stall. For example, in case of Pete's orientation to the goods offered at his stall Tom, first, produces utterances related to books as the customer has picked up a book from the table (Figure 3.2.1). When a few moments later Tom has walked around Pete and sees him pull a vinyl out of the plastic box, he offers him the opportunity to listen to any of the records (Figure 3.2.2). We can see how when promoting items at his stall, the vendor carefully aligns the vocal production of the promotion with the interest customers display in the goods offered at the stall. How customers orient to the objects on display, whether they look at them or whether they grasp and inspect them with their hands provides the vendor with valuable information about the customer's "state of interest" in particular wares, information he can use to further tailor his promotional activities with customers' orientation and actions.

Through the analysis of the two fragments, we have seen how on markets promotional activities are embedded within the interactional context emerging at and around stalls. Vendors produce market cries and sales talk in orientation to the interest customers display to the goods on offer at their stalls and in their vicinity. Thus, vendors initiate engagement and build rapport with customers by showing that they care for them (Prus 1988, 1989a & 1989b). Customers in turn use their display of interest in wares offered at a stall as a technique to withdraw from an interaction with a vendor. In some cases, they browse the offers at a stall without displaying an interest in making a purchase. As Tom said in an informal interview, he can identify such "time-wasters" and does not spend much effort in trying to enhance their interest in the goods.

3.3.2 Recommending in Interaction

Customers show an interest in goods offered at a market stall by approaching and examining the offers. As they arrive at a stall, vendors sometimes first allow them to browse independently before talking to them. The analysis of fragment 3.2. suggests that vendors use their observation of customers' browsing as information about the customer's interests that they use when later they engage them in marketing interaction and, for example, recommend them wares spread out at the stall. To pursue this observation further consider fragment 3.3. again recorded at Tom's stall.

After customers have arrived at his stall, the vendor greets and then provides them with a recommendation. In this fragment, a young man, Ben, browses vinyls stocked in a plastic box on the table. From a distance, Tom observes Ben who flicks through the vinyls in the box, glancing briefly at some while inspecting other records for a bit longer. By observing the customer, the vendor gathers information and makes inferences about Ben's taste of music.

Transcript 3.3 Tom (vendor) and Ben (customer)

1 

Figure 3.3.1

2 T: you'd li:ke tha:t

3 B: what is it?

Figure 3.3.2

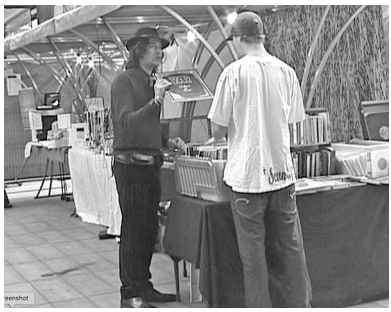
4 

Figure 3.3.3

5 T: you know war? Do you know [war?
6 B: [yah got it

For example, when Ben has browsed the vinyls for about 10 minutes (Figure 3.3.1), he briefly halts his browsing and looks at the LP "Deliver the World" by the Band War. His inspection of this record occasions the vendor to move closer toward him and say, "you'd like tha:t" (T3.3, line 2, Figure 3.3.2). Ben who has already moved to one of the next records in the stack looks up and asks, "what is it?" (T3.3, line 3, Figure 3.3.2), encouraging Tom to specify his recommendation, "do you know War?" (T3.3, line 5, Figure 3.3.3). Ben immediately displays that he knows the band and this particular record by proclaiming, "yah got it" and a moment later confirming that "it's great". While Ben does not consider purchasing this album his assessment aligns with Tom's inclination that this record would fit with his taste in music. In the continuation of the interaction at the stall, Tom can use this information to recommend Ben further records.

Vendors use their observation of customers' orientation to goods on offer as well as their responses to recommendations as resources to categorize the customers, for example, according to their taste. In their assessment of customers, vendors may also take into consideration how customers are dressed, how they speak, and other personal characteristics they can gauge from the impression they give off. They then use this categorization to tailor recommendations to the customer and thus work to pursue the customer's interest in goods offered at the stall. We, therefore, see that recommendations are a method through which vendors encourage customers to consider wares for purchase at their stall.

While in most cases in my body of data recommendations are made by vendors gauging customers' interest after having observed their engagement with the offers at their stall, in some cases customers request recommendations. Consider, for example fragment 3.4. recorded at a market stall where vendors sell T-shirts. The transcript begins when the customer, Peter, browses T-shirts displayed on the table while the vendor, Marie, makes notes in the stock list. Peter stands on the top left corner of the table, takes a shirt from the pile and looks at the shirt underneath (T3.4, Figure 3.4.1). As he returns the shirt to the top of the pile, the vendor raises her upper body, turns to her right, and makes a step toward the customer occasioning him to say, "Ohh what would you recommend me?" (T3.4, line 1, Figure 3.4.2).

Transcript 3.4 Peter (customer) and Marie (vendor): T-shirts

Figure 3.4.1

1 C: Ohh was empfieh:lst
Du mir denn?

Ohh what would you
recommend
me?

Figure 3.4.2

2 (.3)

3 V: Des find ich cool
I think this is cool

Figure 3.4.3

4 (.5)

Figure 3.4.3

5 C: Aber bei der Fa:rbe ich
weiß nicht ich
wollt wieder was buntes
tragen, aber
ich glaub
But with this color I don't
know I'd
like to wear something colorful
but I think

Figure 3.4.4

The vendor treats the utterance as a request for a recommendation, leans forward, and with the index finger points to the T-shirt the customer has picked up but not looked at for long. She taps twice on top of the shirt and recommends it to the customer while saying, "I think this is cool" (T3.4, line 2, Figure 3.4.3). By virtue of her utterance and bodily actions the vendor selects a T-shirt she may have seen the customer inspecting and provides an assessment of the item. Her utterance encourages the customer to also offer an assessment of the shirt, "But with this color I don't know I'd like to wear something colorful but I think …" (T3.4, line 3, Figure 3.4.4). By virtue of his utterance, Peter aligns with the vendor in that he has an interest in colorful shirts but is unsure if the color of this particular one will suit him.

The analysis suggests that the recommendation arises from the interaction between the customer and the vendor. Here, Peter uses the recommendation as a technique to open the interaction with the vendor. His request for a recommendation is generic and does not, for example, ask for help with the selection of a shirt from those he has looked at before. The design of the request implies that Peter presumes the vendor knows her stock and will be able to help him with the selection of a shirt. The vendor, however, does not draw on her wider knowledge of the stock but selects an item for the recommendation that is on the table right in front of Peter and that he might have looked a few moments earlier. We, therefore, can see again that also when recommendations are requested by the customer vendors deploy them in alignment with customers' orientation at their stall. What objects they show and recommend is often based on customers' actions as well as on their visual and material orientation to the wares on offer. Thereby, vendors differentiate not only what objects customers look at but also differentiates states of interest depending on, for example, if customers look at objects or if they closely inspect them, maybe through manual action.

3.3.3 Turning Browsers into Buyers

When customers show an interest in goods vendors conduct actions to turn them into buyers. In the previous section, I have discussed how vendors use recommendations to enhance customers' interest in sales items. I now turn to situations in which customers display an interest in an item, and vendors can turn them into buyers, maybe not only of that one item but of other items as well. My discussion of fragment 3.5 begins when Tom interacts with a woman who I call Susan.

Transcript 3.5 Vendor (Tom) and customer (Susan): browsing

1 T: Hi how are you doing?
2 S: ( )
3 T: (if) you wanna listen to any=youre mo:re than welcome love
4 (3.6)
5 T: Ive got a Smiths LP, if=youre=into Smiths
6 (.6)

Figure 3.5.1

7 S: I already got that one hehehe
8 T: That ones only four quid (.) for the compilation
9 S: it's (swee:t)
10 (4.8)

Figure 3.5.2

11 T: (or have ya?)
12 S: (well I have but my boyfriend left it on the window sill (it)

13 T: ah: its in beautiful nick absolute like the day it was bor:n
14 (8.3)

Figure 3.5.3

15 T: I had the other day I had you know the Hand in Glove Sandy Shaw version on fourty-five?
16 (4.3)
17 T: I do: take cards if it helps

Susan has arrived at the stall and shows an interest in the records stacked in the box on the edge of the table. After a few moments, Tom approaches the stall from the right, turns the volume down on the record player that is playing a Depeche Mode record, greets her, and offers that she can have played any of the LPs on sale at the stall, "if you want to listen to any you are more than welcome" (T3.5, line 3). Susan now browses the vinyls in the box while Tom stands to her right glancing over to the other side of the stall where a man looks at some of the crockery on offer. A moment later, Susan pulls out a compilation album by The Smiths occasioning the vendor to advertise an LP by The Smiths by saying, "if you are into Smiths" while pulling it just far enough out of the stack that Susan can identify the album (T3.5, line 5, Figure 3.5.1). By virtue of his recommendation, Tom displays that he now has some knowledge about the customer's music taste and relates this knowledge to the items he has in stock. Susan immediately rejects the LP because, "I got it already" (T3.5, line 7), occasioning Tom to highlight the competitive price of the compilation record (T3.5, line 8). The naming of the price for the compilation album is another method vendors use to enhance customers' interest in the album. A moment later Susan returns the compilation album to the stack causing the Smiths LP to also slide back into the stack.

In the meantime, Tom has walked around the customer and now comes to stand to Susan's left by the box with the LPs. As he arrives there, Susan has taken the LP by The Smiths out of the box again and reads the back of the sleeve. Her inspection of the LP occasions Tom to question her earlier rejection of the album, "or have ya?" (Figure 3.5.2, line 11). Susan attends to Tom's question by returning the album to the box reaffirming her earlier rejection of his recommendation. She then provides an account for having had a closer look at the album, "well I have but my boyfriend left it on the windowsill" (T3.5, line 12) encouraging Tom to make a step toward her and to try to reinvigorate her interest in the LP by The Smiths. As he begins to highlight the good quality of the LP, "it's in beautiful nick absolute like the day it was bor:n" (T3.5, line 13) Susan takes it again out of the box and examines it, first the cover and then the LP itself (T3.5, line 14, Figure 3.5.3). Subsequently, the vendor again gives the customer space by walking around her to the record player where he adjusts the volume and monitors her actions (Transcript 3.6).

Transcript 3.6 Tom (vendor) and Susan (customer) – becoming a buyer

27 S: [(thats) so ni:ce

Figure 3.6.1

28 T: I tell you what Ill do it for twelve for you love (.) yeah?
29 S: What about, what about this? I mean, since[it´s just

Figure 3.6.2

30 T: [Nay
31 S: eh: [twelve inch what is that
32 T: [twelve inch but its
33 T: (that one) if its not priced its four pound so two for I do two
34 for fifteen for you love

Figure 3.6.3

35 S: really?
36 T: yeah
37 S: Ok, you got me
38 T: hehehe

A few moments later, Susan again pulls the LP by The Smiths out of the box and then slips it back into the stack saying, "that's so ni:ce" while Tom who stands closely to her right returns the 12 inch Depeche Mode record into its sleeve (T3.6, line 27, Figure 3.6.1). As Susan lets go of the LP by The Smith Tom makes her an offer, "I tell you what I'll do it for twelve for you love (.) yeah?" (T3.6, line 28). Susan does not noticeably respond to the offer but instead asks him, "what about, what about this?" (T3.6, line 29,

Figure 3.6.2), referring to the record by Depeche Mode Tom is handling at the moment. Immediately after her question, Susan alludes to the type of record, "since it's just twelve inch" (T3.6, line 29, 31) which Tom confirms (T3.6, line 32) followed first by the price for the Depeche Mode record, "it's four pound" (T3.6, line 33), and then by an offer, "for fifteen for you love" (T3.6, line 34, Figure 3.6.3), reducing the overall price by one pound. As Tom voices the offer for the two records, he grabs the LP by The Smiths and stacks it on top of the Depeche Mode record. Susan initially responds with a brief utterance displaying surprise, "really?" (T3.6, line 35), and then agrees to the purchase, "Ok, you got me" (T3.6, line 37).

The analysis suggests that vendors gather information about customers by observing their browsing behavior at the stall and use that information to produce recommendations and offers encouraging customers to buy items. Recommendations and offers are not merely vocal actions, but they are actions that are "intertwined" (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1962) with bodily and visual actions and "entangled" (Scott and Orlikowski 2014) with the material and interactional environment. The information gathered from observing customers is used to design and time recommendations and offers. The bodily actions are aligned with customers' orientation to the goods; for example, by placing the LP by The Smiths on top of the Depeche Mode record, right under the eyes of the customer, Tom encourages a multibuy that is oriented to the customer displaying what kind of music she likes.

3.4 Discussion

Street-markets provide us with the opportunity to study and unpack the co-creation of value by revealing the organization of marketing interaction. The analysis suggests that interaction not only is "constitutive of transactions" (Preda 2009: 27) but also is constitutive of the distribution, promotion, and pricing of goods. Market stalls are hubs for the distribution of goods. Vendors often acquire their wares on the formal market where prices are fixed (Roever and Skinner 2016; Sekhani, Mohan, and Medipally 2019). They then distribute them for competitive, often negotiable prices on street-markets that are considered to be part of the informal economy (Schindler 2014; Sekhani, Mohan, and Medipally 2019). In fact, they offer their wares for prices anticiapting that customers will try to negotiate price reductions. At their stalls, vendors spread out their wares on tables, hangers, and shelves for customers to see and inspect. As customers arrive near the stall, vendors sometimes promote the wares further by vocalizing market cries or recommendations and thus differentiate them from those of competitors in their vicinity. The analysis suggests that these market cries are not idiosyncratic actions conducted in isolation, but they are produced in alignment with activities in the vicinity of the stall. As customers approach and begin to examine wares at a stall

vendors observe their actions and align the content and production of market cries and recommendations with customers' displays of their (state of) interest in particular wares (Section 3.3.1). In the analysis, I have suggested that market cries are used primarily to promote fruit and vegetables, while second-hand goods are promoted primarily in direct interaction with customers. As customers arrive at a stall, they begin to examine wares and thus display their taste and interest. Customers' actions at market stalls encourage vendors to provide them with recommendations and offers, often tailored to particular customers (vom Lehn 2018a). The production and design of such personalized recommendations arise in alignment with customers' browsing behavior (cf. Clark and Pinch 2010). We also have seen that vendors not only gauge customers' interest from their browsing behavior but also make offers in accordance with their assumption about the customers' willingness or ability to spend (Section 3.3.2). This allows vendors, at least sometimes, to make customers offers and turn them into buyers. The offers vendors make in such instances are related to their assessment of customers' spending power as well as to the particular goods customers have shown an interest in (Section 3.3.3).[8]

Apart from these substantial observations on marketing interaction at street-market stalls, the analysis also contributes concepts and theories of interaction in marketing. From the analysis, we have seen that communication and interaction between vendors and customers are influenced not by "exogenous factors", such as personal factors (demographic and socio-economic characteristics), organizational factors (organization objectives, style, and structure), and product-related factors as argued within marketing (Sheth 1975). Instead, the analysis suggests that events endogenous to the situation in which vendor and customer communicate and interact with each other ongoingly produce the trajectory of marketing interaction.

Key to vendors converting customers into buyers is their ongoing observation of the market and customers' orientation to wares on offer. Vendors, therefore, are on-the-fly market researchers who have competences in differentiating potential buyers from "time wasters" who browse the goods and enjoy the banter but then leave the stall without making a purchase. Throughout the marketing interaction at the stall, they gauge information about customers' disposition and state of interest in the wares that they use to tailor recommendations and offers to them. Such "inferential labor" (Llewellyn and Hindmarsh 2013) is important for vendors to manage their work and to make decisions about who to approach and pursue to turn into a buyer.

The analysis, therefore, contributes to previous research on marketing interaction on markets. For example, Prus (1989a & 1989b) investigates marketing techniques through which sales personnel pursues customers

and makes sales. In this chapter, I have begun to reveal how marketing techniques are deployed in interaction among market participants. On markets vendors and customers act and interact within each other's "perceptual range" (Goffman, 1981: 3) and display orientation to each other's actions. Vendors, for example, display how they assess customers' orientation to and interest in wares by encouraging them to further inspect them, and customers display their alignment or dealignment with vendors' offers for wares. The detailed inspection of video-recorded marketing interaction helps to unpack the organization of action and how it is embedded within concrete marketing interaction.

While some years ago, economists and policy makers may have predicted the demise of local markets, in recent years we have seen a reinvigoration of the local economy that involves a blossoming of street- and farmers-markets (Rhys-Taylor 2013; Watson and Studdert 2006; Wu, Wall, and Pearce 2014). The popularity of these markets is at least partly underpinned by the particular atmosphere that differentiates them from other retail environments like supermarkets and shopping malls. In the past, the atmosphere of shopping and retail environment was ascribed to the features of the environment created by architects and those producing perceptible, that is, audible and smellable stimuli (Eroglu, Machleit, and Davis 2001; Greenland and McGoldrick 2005; Kotler 1973; Michon, Chebat, and Turley 2005). In recent years, the atmosphere of retail and shopping as well as of cultural environments has increasingly been conceived as being generated through the interplay of action and interaction with material and perceptible features of the environment (Biehl-Missal and Saren 2012; Biehl-Missal and vom Lehn 2015; Julmi 2022; Molli and Vecco 2021; Preece, Rodner, and Rojas-Gaviria 2022b). The analysis in this chapter adds to these discussions by suggesting how the market atmosphere is ongoingly produced in, and through, the action and interaction undertaken by those working on and visiting the market who orient to and engage with resources in the environment. We have seen that market cries vendors of fruit-, vegetables-, and plant-markets produce can be widely heard, the products they cook and grill, and the music they play, together with the form and content of the communication and interaction between vendors and customers and among customers, they all help to generate the atmosphere and the particular "action scene" (Maisel 1974) that many people find appealing in markets. The analysis further suggests that these actions are not idiosyncratically produced, but they arise in interaction with those in perceptual range. For example, I have hinted how Tom, the vendor at the market stall in London, generates a local atmosphere at his stall by playing music that fits with the taste of customers currently examining his wares and by aligning his style of talking with the particular marketing interaction he is involved in.

The observations discussed in this chapter also contribute to debates in relationship- and service marketing. These fields of marketing research lack a concern with the organization of action and interaction through which service experiences are produced (Grönroos 1984, 2007a; Grönroos and Gummesson 2012; Lusch and Vargo 2006; Schmitt 1999, 2003; Solomon 2004). Instead, they identify types of practices that market participants undertake in service of the co-creation of value (Aarikka-Stenroos and Jaakkola 2012; Echeverri and Salomonson 2017; Echeverri and Skålén 2011). By revealing the detailed organization of action and interaction produced by market participants, I have begun to unpack the marketing gloss of the "co-creation of value" (Grönroos 2012) and shown how value arises in marketing interaction and that market participants may orient to "value" in different ways; traders and customers may value wares differently, and while vendors' livelihood may depend on the sales of wares, for customers purchases resulting from tense price negotiations with a vendor may be no more than memorabilia of their visit to a London street-market.

The analysis of marketing interaction at market stalls, therefore, also implies that experiences arise from marketing interaction on street-markets. It suggests that vendors' ability to tailor recommendations for items to particular people's interest and taste may enhance the latter's experience of the market. This kind of personalizing marketing interaction is based not on abstract categories like age and gender but on concrete observations of customers' conduct at a stall. Thus, customers experience their encounters at market stalls as designed for them. And, in fact the marketing interaction is personalized, but not in a statistically generalized way but with regard to participants' concrete attitude to the market situation as displayed through their actions. As we have seen in the data vendors may use a particular tone of voice when talking with customers or change the atmosphere at the stall by choosing to play music related to customers' interest rather than based on theories about what music generates sales.

Having provided an initial analysis of marketing interaction as it can be observed on street-markets, in the following chapters I will turn to study various aspects of marketing activities and explore how technology features within them. In Chapter 4, I will investigate the deployment of technology by a supermarket chain. I will examine oral history interviews to explore how managers and staff interpret emerging technology when making decisions about the transformation of systems and processes of a supermarket's operations.

Notes

1 For an excellent compendium on CCT, see Arnould and Thompson (2018).

2 For an overview of research on value destruction, see Echeverri and Skålén (2021).
3 Thanks to René Tuma (TU Berlin) for helping with the data collection in Berlin.
4 Further information on data collection on street-markets can be found in vom Lehn (2014).
5 On reactivity and video-recording for sociological research, see Heath, Hindmarsh, and Luff (2010; Laurier and Philo (2006); Speer and Hutchby (2003).
6 For further information on the analysis of audio-video-recordings please see Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff's book on video in qualitative research (2010).
7 The fragment has previously discussed in a different way in vom Lehn (2014).
8 We will return to the issue of offers in Chapter 8.

4 Digitizing Distribution in a Supermarket Chain

In Chapter 3, I have begun to explore how participants generate value through marketing interaction. The analysis has revealed some of the organizational features of the contingently emerging marketing interaction at market stalls. In this chapter, I turn to supermarkets where wares are displayed on shelves setup in organized isles that customers navigate as they go about their shopping. Supermarkets are a technology that has emerged in the course of the "retailing revolution" (Mathias 1967) that began in the early 20th century when market vendors like Jack Cohen, the founder of the British supermarket chain Tesco, increasingly formalized the processes of promoting, distributing, and pricing of wares (Corina 1972). These developments were accompanied by a growth of governmental regulation and oversight that also involved a formalization of the processes of producing goods sold in supermarkets.

From the start of this development, those setting up and managing supermarkets had an eye on the emergence of new technologies they might be able to exploit to enhance the marketing functions; for example, novel packaging and printing technologies have facilitated new ways of promoting wares displayed on shelves (Rundh 2016; Schwarzkopf 2009). In recent years, the retailing revolution has involved the deployment of digital technology in supermarkets. For over 20 years, self-service checkouts have been deployed in supermarkets where customers scan and then pay their selection of goods, often with little or no support from supermarket staff (Meuter et al. 2000; Phillips, Alexander, and Shaw 2005). More recently, supermarkets and other retailers have experimented with electronic shelf labels that, however, often are complemented by traditional paper-based labels (Soutjis, Cochoy, and Hagberg 2017). The deployment of such technologies in supermarkets is underpinned by an invisible infrastructure installed within individual stores linked up to larger digital networks that connect stores with each other and with the management of the mother company. The store infrastructure includes, for example, barcodes printed on individual goods, computer systems at checkouts, and network servers in back offices as well as large amounts of specialist personnel.

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The deployment of digital technologies in supermarkets is sometimes described as the "digitalization of retailing" (Hagberg, Sundstrom, and Egels-Zandén 2016; Hänninen, Smedlund, and Mitronen 2018; Reinartz, Wiegand, and Imschloss 2019). Discussions about this development are often concerned with how digitalization has or will transform supermarkets and the retail sector. This chapter takes a step backward and examines the accounts managers of the British supermarket chain Tesco give for their decisions to adopt technology for deployment in the company's operations. In the analysis, I draw on interactionist studies of technological innovation developed by Herbert Blumer (1990) and Carl Couch (1996). Blumer (1990) has addressed the then-dominant argument that society has changed in light of processes related to industrialization. In a manuscript written in the 1950s but published only in 1990, Blumer recognizes the relationship between industrialization and social change but disputes that they are causally related. Instead, he suggests that industrialization "is indeterminate or neutral with regard to what happens socially in its wake" (Blumer 1990: 53; cf. Maines and Morrione 2001).

In a related way, Couch (1996) suggests that there is no causal relationship between social change and technological innovation, but both processes influence each other. While in his view information technology can provide the grounds for the emergence of particular social relationships, certain social relationships also can foster an environment for particular information technology to develop (Chen 1995).

Starting from Blumer's and Couch's arguments regarding the relationship between technological innovation and social change, I adopt the interactionist attitude proposed by Blumer (1969) to explore managers' decision-making about technological innovations of the company's operations. Through the analysis, I challenge the assumption that changes in a company's operations are driven by technological innovation. Instead, my analysis reveals that managers' decisions about if, and how, technology is adopted and deployed in a company arise in, and through, discussions they have with colleagues and technology experts, observations they make in competitors' stores, and responses to the innovation by consumers and staff. As we will see, such decisions can result also in unanticipated consequences for the organization and management of companies, the relationships among their personnel, as well as for consumers. The analysis is based on interviews conducted with Tesco personnel for an oral history project conducted by members of the British Library.

4.1 Digitalization and Technology Innovation in the Retail Sector

Before turning to the methods and data analyzed for the purpose of this chapter, I will briefly discuss how academic marketing literature considers

the relationship between changes in technology and marketing practices. Authors of marketing textbooks argue that technology is "perhaps the most dramatic force now shaping our destiny" (Kotler and Armstrong 2017: 106). They locate technology in an external environment where it impacts the social world, including marketing. This concept of a uni-directional (causal) relationship between technology and marketing is a short-cut obfuscating the complex entangling of technology with the social world in one phrase or word, such as "digital revolution" or "digitalization" (cf. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick 2022; Charlesworth 2009; Helbing 2015).

Discussions in marketing often consider "digitalization" as one of the key drivers of economic and social changes. Marketing scholars, for example, argue that digitalization as "[t]he conversion of all forms of information into a digital form makes it easy to store, transfer, process, and mix information that used to reside in separate compartments and domains" and as one of the "forces" that "are propelling the advanced emerging economies across the globe into the Information Age" (Dholakia and Dholakia 2002: 21). In light of these debates new marketing specialisms have emerged that range from the more generic "digital marketing" (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick 2022; Charlesworth 2009; Jones and Ryan 2009) to specialized areas like "social media marketing" (Charlesworth 2014; Dahl 2018) and "Facebook marketing" (Holzner 2008). The development is also reflected in chapters and examples related to digital technology that are an essential part of many general marketing textbooks (cf. Kotler and Armstrong 2013; West, Ford and Ibrahim 2015). The authors of these textbooks and chapters argue that "the digital revolution has shaken marketing to its core" (Wind and Mahajan 2002: 3). They suggest that "digital technology has had a major impact on the ways companies bring value to their customers" (Kotler and Armstrong 2013: 23).

The arguments made in marketing textbooks as well as in popular books and magazines commonly imply that digital technology is the cause for recent changes in marketing. Digital technology, their authors suggest, "has (…) brought a new wave of communication, advertising, and relationship-building-tools ranging from online advertising and video-sharing tools to online social networks and smartphone apps" (Kotler and Armstrong 2013: 23). And it is argued that with the wide diffusion of digital technology a new information economy will emerge that "will reshape markets and transform the nature of marketing" (Dholakia and Dholakia 2002).

The argument for the impact of digitalization is powerful. Evidence for the causal influence of digital technology on economic and social changes seems to be everywhere. In organizations and companies across different,

sometimes long-existing industries new positions and occupations have been created that specialize in digital activities, Internet, search, and social media marketing. Also, an increasing number of often young, computer-savvy graduates, undergraduate students, and even pupils become successful digital entrepreneurs who develop web services and mobile apps that not only compete successfully on the market but often also undermine the business prospects of established corporations.[1] As time progresses and digitalization takes hold, these new positions become established leading to the emergence of new career structures that require at least some legitimization through education. Hence, a growing number of specialist teaching and training courses in digital marketing, Internet marketing, search engine optimization and more recently social media marketing are being offered at business schools, further education colleges as well as by digital consultancies (Muro et al. 2017). These academic programs and training courses facilitate the delivery of practical skills and competencies for those striving for a career in digital marketing and help to enhance the skills of those whose managers see a need to upskill their workforce.

Since computer systems have become more widely available in the 1960s technologists and futurists have pondered their impact on retail (Salkin 1964; Toffler 1981). Today, this technological change is termed "digitalization" and considered to be "a game changer for retailing" (Grewal, Roggeveen, and Nordfält 2017: 2). It is argued that the increasing deployment of digital technology influences how retailers and consumers make decisions, how they engage with consumers, and how data about consumers are collected and used (Hagberg, Jonsson, and Egels-Zandén 2017; Hagberg et al. 2016). Moreover, it has been suggested that the "Rise of the Robots" (Ford 2015) and automation more generally will lead to a replacement of a large number of retail jobs by machines. Various authors (Brynjolfsson, Hu, and Smith 2010; Brynjolfsson and Mcafee 2016) predict that technological innovation entails fundamental changes in the supply chain and in how products reach the customer (Stephens and Pine 2017). Moreover, as predicted by Toffler (1981) in light of technological changes the relationship between producers and consumers will be transformed in that consumers themselves will become producers[2]. Some scholars suggest that these technological changes lead to a "retail-" or "shopping-revolution" (Bromley and Thomas 1993; Kahn 2018; Lichtenstein 2010) that impacts the management and operations of retail companies as well as the action and interaction on the shop-floor (du Gay and Lopdrup-Hjorth 2016; Humphery 2012).

In marketing, these discussions highlight the opportunities for the deployment of novel tools and technologies to connect retailers and consumers. In particular, in the early days of the Internet, some scholars

argued that the technology would facilitate "frictionless commerce" (Bakos 1997) as the Internet allows consumers almost instant access to information about the market. It also has been argued that recent technological developments, including big data and analytics as well as search engines and social media offer managers as well as consumers with information to make more efficient decisions (Bakos 2001; Clay et al. 2002). Moreover, new kinds of digital displays allow store managers to show product information more efficiently as changes to prices, for instance, can be made remotely (Roggeveen et al. 2015).

Much existing research on the impact of digitalization on retail conceives technological changes as a generic process. Some scholars however point out that digitalization develops differently across industries and companies. With regard to social media Rydén and colleagues (2015), for example, show that managers bring to bear different mental models when they make decisions about how to use social media for the purposes of their company. A similar argument is made by Holmlund, Strandvik, and Lähteenmäki (2017) regarding executive sensemaking in retail banking. They suggest that because such mental models are deeply embedded within managers' thinking about their company, they are difficult to change and shape business decision-making. In their study of the deployment of electronic shelf labels Soutjis, Cochoy, and Hagberg (2017), however, demonstrate that decisions about the implementation of technology in a business are (at least not) solely based on managers' mental models, but they are engrained in practice. Hence, for example, digitalization might not entail the replacement of physical by digital labels, but both can be used in the same shop for different goods, and in some cases, it might be most effective to deploy mixed forms of labels.

From this brief review of the marketing literature related to digitalization, we can see the pervasiveness of the argument that technological change drives social change. Blumer's (1990) critique of contemporary discussions about the relationship of industrialization and social change therefore applies in a similar way to current technological developments and their relationship to society and retail in particular. We have seen that for long the discourse about digitalization has been dominated by arguments ascribing technology agency and power to change society and marketing in particular ways. As we have seen, this discourse has recently turned away from generic arguments about the impact of technology on retailing and toward studies of how managers, personnel, and consumers use technology within particular settings (Fuentes and Svingstedt 2017; Soutjis, Cochoy, and Hagberg 2017). The analysis in this chapter contributes to this body of research by focusing on the deployment of digital technology within the British supermarket chain Tesco. While recent research has often drawn on developments in actor-network theory

and related approaches (Simakova 2013), this chapter will take an interactionist approach (see Chapter 2; cf. Atkinson and Housley 2003; Blumer 1969, 1990; Housley 2021; Housley and Smith 2017; Maines and Morrione 1991).

After a brief discussion of the research methods and data, I will turn to the analysis of interviews with managers and other staff of Tesco. In the analysis, I will examine three themes: (1) interpreting emerging technologies: the influence of managers' and other staff's interpretations of digital technology on the deployment and use of systems and devices in Tesco; (2) materiality and ecological arrangement: the influence of the deployment of digital technology on the geography of the company and the spatial design and layout of its stores and of Tesco House where large parts of its management are based; and (3) acquiring knowledge and skills: the training and continual learning that managers and other staff undertake in light of the deployment of new technology in offices and stores. The analysis of the data will provide the basis for a concluding discussion about the relationship between technological innovation and social changes and its relevance for discussions in marketing and marketing research.

4.2 Analyzing Oral History Data

The data gathered and analyzed for this research stem from oral history interviews that were collected for an archive housed at the British Library. In particular, I use 39 interviews, altogether about 400 hours of recordings of which 200 hours have been made publicly available.[3] The interviews were conducted between 2005 and 2007 by Niamh Dillon and Deborah Agulnik, both working at the British Library, and Sarah Ryle,[4] who, at the time of the recording, was Head of Consumer Media at Tesco.

In the interviews the participants talk about a wide range of topics, including the early history of Tesco, various aspects of the interviewees' careers and working lives, the expansion of the business and the creation of out-of-town stores, the decision to sell non-food items, and the influence of new technology on the development of the business. For the purpose of this chapter, I have selected nine interviews that are concerned with technology from the publicly available archive (see Table 4.1).

My analysis of the interviews was guided by the approach for the coding of interview and qualitative data developed by Kathy Charmaz (2006). I focused particularly on the interviewees' perspectives relating to technological changes within Tesco and the retail industry more widely. The analysis is organized around three themes: (1) interpreting emerging technologies, (2) materiality and ecological arrangement, and (3) acquiring knowledge and skills.

Table 4.1 List of Interviewees

Interview Number[5]	*Interviewee*	*Position within Tesco*	*Length of Interview*
C1087/24	Andrew Batchelder	Head of Stores Helpdesk at Tesco	Over 7 hours
C1087/10	Kevin Doherty	CEO Tesco Poland	Over 8 hours
C1087/16	Joe Doody	Store Manager at Tesco	Over 10 hours
C1087/13	Terry Leahy	CEO Tesco	Over 8 hours
C1087/22	Ian MacLaurin	Chairman and CEO Tesco	About 8 hours
C1087/21	David Malpas	Managing Director at Tesco	Over 5 hours
C1087/31	David Reid	Chairman at Tesco	Over 9 hours
C1087/18	Gary Sargeant	Senior Manager and Director at Tesco	About 7 hours
C1087/11	Victor Weeks	Technology, IT and Distribution Manager at Tesco	About 9 hours

4.3 The Practice of Digitalization in a Supermarket Chain

The interviewees provide very interesting accounts of the development of Tesco as a business over the past 50 years or so. Save for many other themes raised within the interviews, the participants talk about innovations that happened since the beginning of the 1980s. Many of these innovations are related to wider societal developments that today are often described as "digitalization". The interviews, therefore, provide us with a rich source of data to explore how digitalization has been brought about by managers and other staff at Tesco. In the following, I will focus on only three themes that have come out of the analysis. By focusing on these themes, it is possible to demonstrate that digitalization is not a process or revolution people are confronted with, but it is produced by – among others – interpretations that inform managers' decisions about the adoption of certain technologies (Theme 1). The analysis also reveals that these decisions entail "unanticipated consequences" (Merton 1936) that influence, for example, the materiality and ecological arrangement of the company (Theme 2) and career trajectories of staff that use the changes in the company to acquire knowledge and skills (Theme 3).

4.3.1 Interpreting Emerging Technologies

Senior managers at Tesco (and other supermarket chains) continually observe and evaluate the opportunities and challenges of emerging technologies for their business. When they heard about computer systems being used in North America, they set Victor Weeks, "one of Tesco's computer pioneers" (Ryle 2013: 111), the task to explore if, and how, this technology

could help them. Weeks quickly discovered that one use for computer systems was based on their ability to make large numbers of calculations in short periods of time. He suggested that computer systems could help change the ways personnel were being paid and how accounts were being managed. Until the early 1980s, with the exception of head office executives, many Tesco employees were still paid in cash or by cheque. Staff were often paid directly from the till, where money was readily available, and stores would hold a record for each employee. Once they understood the properties of computer systems, Weeks and those managing the company realized that such systems could support the expansion of stores across the United Kingdom and the management of information about staff. They therefore decided to deploy computer systems in Tesco to transform the personnel record system into a payroll system that could include an array of deductions, such as pension schemes, share purchase schemes, and union deductions.

> The payroll system was taken advantage of to hold personnel information as well. We would hold name, address, payroll record, hours of work, days of work, contractual pay arrangements. Things of that nature. (Victor Weeks)

As the process of technology adoption progressed, Tesco management interpreted the technology anew and discovered further opportunities computer systems offered the company. For example, having found that computer systems allowed management to take control of the payroll for the entire company, management explored the possibility of using the same technology to take control of both the ordering of goods and the relationship between staff and customers. The social implications of the interpretation of computer systems as systems of control, therefore, were immense, as they fundamentally changed how the company was run. Power was taken away from store managers and aggregated in the center of the company. An example of this change is how store managers lost the ability to deal with losses in their own stores by selling surplus stock they had received from sales reps. While in the 1960s, store managers and sales reps directly negotiated purchases, following the deployment of computer systems, Tesco management removed this negotiation power from store managers and sales reps.

> Suppliers used to come in and say to the managers, "If I give you five cases of crisps to help your stock results, can you put a stand here and a stand there". (Kevin Doherty)

Thus, sales reps would use their negotiation power to persuade store managers to place their brand's products at prominent locations in the

store, in exchange for providing store managers with excess stock. In the same vein, the former Tesco chairman, Ian MacLaurin, remembers that

> My first store as a manager was Neasden. It was very, very small. All the canned and packet stuff came from the Tesco warehouse and all the rest from outside suppliers. They were tiny stores. Everything had to be marked by hand. All the tickets you had to mark yourself. We had red striping down the shelves and yellow stickers. We weren't allowed any short stocks so we had something called "buncing". (MacLaurin in Ryle 2013: 43)

"Buncing" allowed store managers to balance the books. They would sell extra stock that sales reps had left them for free and use the extra income to make up for losses elsewhere in the business (Ryle 2013). Tesco's management recognized that this system of "wheeling and dealing" (Ryle 2013: 98) between store managers and sales reps was inefficient for the business as a whole. They therefore used computer systems to take control of ordering processes across the company's stores, leaving store managers and sales managers without any negotiation power.

The analysis suggests that the use of computing technology as an instrument for the monitoring and controlling their staff was not part of managers' plan when deciding on its deployment in the company. Rather, the deployment of the technology to control people, processes, and operations is an unintended consequence[6] of how managers interpreted how the technology could also be used after they saw it working in the business. For example, initially managers and other staff considered computer systems as an innovative technology that allowed them to create a novel database that would hold information about its personnel. When developing and using this database however they noticed that the system facilitated the control of the payment of the company's staff across the entire business. They then recognized, as we have seen here, that digital technology also allowed them to automate the purchasing process and eliminate the problem of "buncing". Thus, rather than seeing the potential of the technology in advance they discovered it as they used it.

The analysis highlights the importance of managers' and other staff's interpretation of computer systems for the ways in which the technology entered the business. When becoming aware of the new technology managers as well as staff working at Tesco used their interpretation of the technology's features to make decisions about the deployment of the systems in different parts of the company. As the computer systems were used, initially mainly for accounting and recording purposes, and as the technology's capabilities advanced, Tesco management progressively

reconsidered the features of such technology anew and found further ways in which it could benefit the company. Thus, we can begin to see how digitalization was not an external process that Tesco aligned with, rather it was the result of interpretive processes within the company. In the next section, we will see that the interpretation of computer systems by managers and other staff also entailed unanticipated consequences, such as implications for Tesco's material and ecological arrangement.

4.3.2 Materiality and Ecological Arrangement

The deployment of computer systems in Tesco House and in stores entailed substantial changes to the materiality and the ecological arrangement of the company. Although these changes were based on decisions taken by the company's management, they were not initially planned for or anticipated. For example, when Tesco's management first explored the deployment of computer systems, they were surprised about the space requirements of the technology. In the early 1980s, Kevin Doherty, the group controller and later chief executive for Tesco Poland, visited the computer company Nixdorf in Germany to find out more about computer systems. On arrival, he and his colleagues were asked, "What size do you want the computer room?" The group from Tesco were surprised, asking, "We need a computer room? Why do you need a computer room?". As Tesco's management progressively learned more about the requirements of the systems regarding the space required for such technology, its maintenance, and air supply, they began to change the materiality and ecological arrangement of the company. Initially, Tesco's IT department, created in 1964, comprised one computer, an ICT 1300,[7] that occupied an entire room:

> The first computer was enormous. We had an extension to the building, which was at the time Tesco House. It's now Old Tesco House because, of course, there's a new Tesco House opposite. It had a raised floor, false floor, false ceilings, a form of air conditioning. It wasn't extreme temperature tolerant. We had humidifiers at various places in the room. It was a series of connected, metal plated cupboards, part of which was a printer, another part was a punch card reader. (Kevin Doherty)

Over time, the IT department that Victor Weeks[8] led as technology manager grew and required more and more space within Tesco House. Save for the computer system itself, space was needed to house additional equipment, such as storage media:

> There was a magnetic – not magnetic tape, it was a paper tape reader, magnetic came years later or a few years later. There were a few big units

> which enclosed what were called magnetic drums, they were the main storage medium. There were the calculation units. These were all big boxes. I think these days that some of the more powerful desktop PCs are almost as powerful, if not, more than what this original computer did for us at Tesco. It was an ICT 1300. (Victor Weeks)

> The space demands for the computer facilities continued to grow. After a few years, the computer room, had to have four floors, four ceilings, not air conditioning, partly to do with wiring and partly to do with airflow. That was the way of keeping the equipment cool or keeping it at working temperature. (Victor Weeks)

As Victor Weeks said, the space in Tesco House quickly became too small to take in all the equipment:

> We put in a new computer in one area within a year or so that would be outgrown. We'd have to build another computer room adjacent to it. Put new equipment in there, that would outgrow … We were at a forever increasing number and type of computers.

The demands for space to house the IT equipment grew further in light of developments outside Tesco's influence. In a climate of growing fear of terrorist attacks and other hazards, management discussed ways in which they could ensure the operation of the company if it were subject to an attack. They then decided to distribute computer systems across different sites.

> In the '80s because of security terrorism and threats of that nature. Planes falling out of the sky. A lot of attention was given to splitting the load. We had then multiple sites again and we had what we term secure sites, where we don't divulge, where we give names to them but we don't say where the sites are for those security purposes. We have multiple sites with multiple computers. (Victor Weeks)

Over time, mainframe computers disappeared and were replaced by smaller-sized systems. However, these changes in technology did not reduce the space requirements of the IT departments. As computer systems were used for more and more processes within the company, the number of systems needed for Tesco's operations increased, as did the need for staff with knowledge and skills about IT (see next section). Furthermore, when managers also saw the potential use for computer systems in stores, spaces had to be created there to house them. These systems were not deployed as stand-alone computers, rather they were

linked via networks that required additional technology, such as servers and cables.

> If you just count desktops and laptops you've also got servers which are super PCs and whatever, they are all computers in their own right. We got hundreds if not thousands of them over networks all doing various things. (Victor Weeks)

Over the years, the deployment and use of computer systems to enhance Tesco's operations changed both the material environment and the ecological arrangement of Tesco House, as well as in stores across the country. New rooms to house computer systems were created, the systems were distributed across a number of locations, and they were linked via computer networks to facilitate communication across the company, as well as, later, between the company and its suppliers, distributors, and customers. These changes to the materiality and ecological environment of the company were the result of decisions made by Tesco's management. As we will see in the next section, decisions taken about the increasing deployment of computer systems across the company also had implications for the knowledge and skills required by staff and customers; for the social relationships across the different parts of the company; and for relationships among staff, as well as between staff and customers in stores.

4.3.3 Acquiring Knowledge and Skills

Management decisions concerning the deployment of computer systems across Tesco required staff to become knowledgeable and skilled in operating the new technology, to make it useful for the company. For example, Victor Weeks pointed out that staff learned computer programming languages like COBOL (Common Business-Oriented Language) that allowed them to write computer programs and design procedures for the ordering of stock. He also said that staff were encouraged to attend training courses to acquire these skills:

> I had to go on training courses for knowing how to program the tabulators, how to program the calculators and the collators. (Victor Weeks)

These training courses, Weeks said, conveyed detailed and in-depth knowledge that enabled staff to program new systems for Tesco-specific processes:

> When I attended a residential training course to learn how to operate it, I then progressed immediately in the same series of training sessions, progressed on to do a programming course as well. We did programming in two stages. There was a machine code which was literally working with numbers and the meaning of numbers. There was a more English text type language called MPL, mnemonic programming language it stood for, and that fascinated me. (Victor Weeks)

In addition to learning how to directly "communicate" with computer systems, staff also had to learn new practical skills. Such learning processes, for example, became necessary when Tesco decided to adopt barcodes and till scanners in their stores. Barcodes printed onto product packaging provide a link between items on supermarket shelves and the company's central database that holds information about each product. The link is activated when the cashier (or, in more recent times, the customer at self-checkouts) moves the barcode across a scanner that reads it into the system. Such "scanning", Kevin Doherty said, is followed by a "little bleep" at the till, and the price is visibly displayed to the customer. At the same time, the purchase of the item is registered by the system, changing information in the stock list of the company and triggering the order of a new batch of this item if it has sold out. For the process to work, cashiers had to learn how to move products across the scanner for it to read and register the barcode printed onto each item. Therefore, when barcodes and scanners were first deployed in stores, cashiers were given a training manual and several hours of training on the practice of scanning products.[9]

Over time, management recognized that the scanning processes could be improved by adapting the design of the scanners to the till operators' practice of scanning products. Hence, while, in the beginning, Tesco used flatbed scanners, it later exploited the advancement of scanning technology and deployed upright scanners:

> Flatbed scanners were pretty popular in the early days, but you know we use upright. They're very effective. The first scanners we had were probably about 12 inches by 10 inches in size, but now, you can get them 4 inches square – and they're really – technology moved already big time. (Kevin Doherty)

Today, Tesco, like other supermarket chains, uses a combination of upright and flatbed scanners, allowing till operators (and customers at self-checkouts) more flexibility in how they use the systems. Moreover, flatbed scanners double as scales to weigh fresh produce like fruit and vegetables. The introduction of these novel kinds of scanners that also

weigh produce necessitated further staff training. Initially, cashiers had to recognize each type of fruit and vegetable to be able to enter a "product look-up number" into the system. Later, barcodes were attached to fruit and vegetables to allow the scanner to work as both barcode readers and scales.

This change in the organization of the purchase of fruit and vegetables had implications for the relationship between sales personnel and customers. For example, whereas prior to the introduction of barcode scanning at tills, customers had to learn how to use the scales and label systems, now these tasks have been taken over by the cashiers. Hence, for these products, except when customers go through the trouble of weighing their selection of produce and checking the price in the fresh food area, price information is only known *after* the cashier has registered and weighed them with the scanner. Up to the point when customers interact with the cashier, they mostly guess the price of the produce they have selected. Therefore, it is important that cashiers' actions at the scanner, including the weighing, are publicly produced and observably displayed so that customers can trust in the generation of the price.[10]

The innovation of Tesco's processes did not stop with the deployment of mainframe computers, but continued with the emergence of new systems, for example, visual display units (VDU) – a version of desktop computers operated with a screen, mouse, and keyboard. While today, technology such as screens, mice, and keyboards appear to be trivial, when they were first introduced at Tesco in the 1970s/80s, they were a novelty that required careful deployment and training of staff who up to then knew only how to use punch cards that held information about products. Now, Victor Weeks said they had to enter data directly into the computer using a keyboard,

> Programming people would create a screen of a particular format as required for whatever the system was. The operator sitting at the screen would type in and the cursor would go to a certain part of the screen. (Victor Weeks)

> When you say easier to use, we hadn't used keyboards before. They were completely new, ground-breaking at that stage. I couldn't type or anything like that. I didn't need to type. Any memos I wanted typing, I wrote out long-hand and gave to the secretary to type up and send, or I dictated them to be typed up and said, "I've not used the keyboard before", so that was all new. There's no real comparison. It was a completely new innovation. … As the computers evolved, then more equipment for data-capture or recording, evolved with it. We had to get to understand it and exploit it to the best of our abilities at that stage. (Victor Weeks)

The innovations at Tesco that began in the 1950s with the company's expansion across the United Kingdom were underpinned not only by the deployment of computer systems but also by the acquisition of knowledge and skills by both staff and customers. Staff acquired knowledge and skills by participating in training courses and studying training manuals and customers learned to use the new systems by observing staff and other customers and by using them in stores themselves. Decisions about the deployment of computer systems in stores not only changed the distribution of knowledge within the company and in stores but also influenced social relationships within the company and within stores. Members who had acquired expertise in IT and computer experts became a new group of personnel within the company. This group has progressively grown as computer systems have become networked and sales have been facilitated over the Internet. At the same time, relationships between staff and customers in stores have changed as, over the past decade or so, self-service checkouts have been deployed at Tesco and other supermarkets. These developments underpin the emergence of new roles for staff and customers in supermarkets. Customers increasingly take over work that previously was undertaken by service personnel. And staff who previously worked as cashiers now monitor customers' actions at self-service checkouts and become technology-support staff as they intervene to help customers who, they notice, have difficulties using the systems (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Zwick et al. 2008).

4.4 Discussion

In this chapter, I have explored how marketing activities, in particular the distribution of goods in supermarkets, are impacted by the deployment of new technology. My interest has been in exploring how managers and other staff of a supermarket chain have made decisions about the deployment and adoption of emerging technologies in the company's processes and operations. The analysis reveals that rather than being confronted by technological change and adapting to it, Tesco personnel make technological change happen through their action and interaction. They interpret technology they come across when they make decisions about its deployment and use within the company, and thus turn it into marketing technology. For example, when the managers and other staff of the company discovered computer systems and related technologies, they interpreted their features with respect to the opportunities they may offer the company. Their interpretations of emerging technologies provided the basis for the decisions they make about how new digital systems and processes are deployed in the company. In so doing, managers anticipate some of the consequences of the deployment of the technology

for them and for Tesco's staff more widely. But they have been unable to anticipate the consequences the deployment of computer systems for material and ecological arrangements, for the social structure of the company, and for the relationship between managers and staff and between staff and customers.

The analysis of the oral history data suggests that decisions taken by Tesco's management about the introduction of computer systems in the company arose from their interpretation of the technology and its potential use for the company. Their decisions underpinned the emergence of new material and ecological arrangements within Tesco. These new material and ecological arrangements included the creation of new rooms within Tesco House and the company's stores, the distribution of computer systems across multiple sites, as well as the use of networks to connect different parts of the company. For the technology to work, Tesco's staff had to acquire new skills and knowledge, such as computer programming, keyboard skills, and the use of barcode scanners. The enhancement of their skill and knowledge portfolio facilitated some personnel to make extraordinary careers within the company; examples outlined here include the careers of Victor Weeks, who moved from working in data processing at Tesco to becoming its Technology, Information Technology (IT), and Distribution Manager, and Kevin Doherty, who began his career with Tesco as casual staff at the age of 14 and eventually went on to run the Tesco operation in Poland (Ryle 2013). Such career developments based on the acquisition of new knowledge and skills not only have an influence on the structure of occupations and positions within a company, but they also have an impact on the social structure of society. People from less well-off backgrounds and/or those who have relatively little formal education can make steep careers based on the IT expertise they acquire on the job. Moreover, regarding the deployment of self-service checkouts, I have suggested that the deployment of technology also implies that progressively customers acquired expertise in IT, gradually replacing some trained staff such as cashiers.

Referring again to Merton's (1936) analysis of "unanticipated consequences of purposive action", it can be argued that the consequences of managers' interpretations and decisions about the deployment of technology are based on decision-makers' having incomplete information about the technologies and their influence on social relationships in the company. Scholars, however, who have criticized management for taking decisions that are "putting consumers to work" at the cost of jobs (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Zwick et al. 2008) may argue that ignorance cannot excuse managers from accountability for decisions they have taken.

The investigation of the ways in which digitalization is interpreted by managers and other staff of a retail company is a good example to

investigate the relationship between technological change and social change more generally. These discussions often focus on online traders like Amazon, Google, and Apple and on the transformation of the retail sector in light of the emergence of digital technology (Moore and Tambini 2018). They frequently describe contemporary developments using formulations, such as "[D]igitalization has transformed several industries" (Hänninen, Smedlund, and Mitronen 2018: 152) or "[T]he industrial world is evolving into a digital one" (Kraus et al. 2022), thereby ascribing agency to emerging technologies. A different approach is suggested by Hagberg, Sundstrom, and Egels-Zandén (2016) who point to the integration of technology within existing practices implying that people are involved in the decision-making about the design and deployment of technology.

This chapter contributes to Hagberg, Sundstrom, and Egels-Zandén's (2016) argument by revealing that decisions about the deployment of technology were not taken because technological change has pressurized Tesco's managers to adopt emerging technologies or risk the failing of the business. Instead, the analysis demonstrates that decisions about the deployment of new technology have arisen from interpretive processes through which managers and other staff made sense of computer systems in relation to the particular needs of the company. It reveals the interviewees' interpretations of emerging computing technology and the consequences they observed its deployment had on the business.

In this chapter, I have examined these interpretation processes and explored how people organize their lives in light of the adoption of technology.[11] I have investigated how managers and other staff working in the supermarket chain have interpreted emerging technologies and what consequences these interpretations have had for their company. For example, we have seen how Tesco managers used their interpretations of the properties of computing technology to make decisions about its deployment in various parts of the company and about the geographical layout of shops and the wider organization. Thus, the analysis reveals that managers of the supermarket chain have interpreted available computing technology in a way that has allowed them to make it useful for their practical purposes. In this sense, the properties of the technology has not determined the innovation of the company, but the managers' interpretive processes have turned computing technology into marketing technology of use to the company.

It would be interesting to conduct related research in other retail companies to understand if the deployment of computing technology in their business was based on similar or different interpretations of the technology. Some scholars suggest that different trajectories in the deployment of technology are the result of specific "mental models" deployed by

managers (Rydén, Ringberg, and Wilke 2015). My interactionist study, however, suggests that the deployment of technology is based on managers' decision-making and, in some cases, on the decision-making of store managers on the shop floor. The question of how these changes are implemented locally, in particular situations in the company's offices or stores, would require a different analytic approach and data other than post-hoc interviews with staff.[12]

The examination of the oral history interviews with managers and staff who were involved in the innovation at Tesco's operations suggests that interpretations of digitalization and the digital revolution as external "forces" (Kotler and Armstrong 2013) are shortcuts that overlook the interpretive processes through which digitalization is implemented within businesses and organizations. This observation is in alignment with Blumer's (1990) and Couch's (1996; cf. Chen 1995) arguments calling for detailed studies of the interpretive processes that underlie social changes. In a similar vein, Blumer (1969:89) observed also that those suggesting that particular changes in economic or industrial organization also shape or determine social changes, "ignore the role of the interpretative behavior of acting units in the given instance of change, or else regard the interpretative behavior as coerced by the factor of change". The analysis in this chapter reveals how, in a particular case, interpretive processes have shaped the deployment and use of technology. It also shows that interpretive processes may lead to unanticipated and costly results that require an organization to change its materiality and ecological arrangement.

Oral history interviews from the archive of the British Library have been the principal source of my analysis. The use of such data for social scientific analysis has recently become an important source for the investigation of business history (Jones and Comunale 2019; Kroeze and Vervloet 2019). This kind of data provides unprecedented access to information about a company's history and business decisions, information that goes beyond what is included in official documents like business reports (Mitchell 1996; Ryant 1988). For this to happen, interviewers need to overcome confidentiality issues in discussion with the company and the interviewees. Oral history interviews, then, offer individual perspectives on the development of a business that can be compared with the official story of the company told in commissioned biographies (Dillon 2015).[13]

When using oral history interviews as data, it is important to recognize that interviewees' answers about their interpretation of emerging technologies are post-hoc accounts of their thinking at the time. For the purpose of my analysis, I have assumed that the evidence that interviewees give is not false but that it reflects the decisions as they materialized in the business. I recognize that alternative perspectives, opinions, and debates may

have informed interpretations and decision-making at the time but could be forgotten or reconstrued as interviewees recall past experiences.

Apart from the substantial and methodological contribution, this chapter also adds to discussions about digitalization in the social sciences more generally. The analysis indicates that the casual logic set forth by Blumer pertains to debates about technological innovation in sociology that investigate the social shaping of large technological systems, such as the power grid (Hughes 1987) and a wide range of everyday technologies, from the bicycle to plastics (Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch 1987). It shows that with the help of the conceptual distinctions developed by Blumer (1990) regarding industrialization and Couch's (1996) analysis of emerging digital technologies, researchers of digitalization can take a wider perspective and systematically explore how today's emerging technologies enter society and organizations, and, consequently, everyday life. As we have seen in the case of the supermarket chain Tesco, concrete observations of social change can bring Blumer's and Couch's concepts to life and could provide the basis for comparable research exploring the adoption of emerging technologies in other supermarket chains, both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

For instance, future research could explore how managers and staff of other supermarket chains have interpreted and deployed – or chose not to deploy – computer systems in their businesses. Relatedly, it could examine why German supermarket chains only recently have begun to deploy self-service checkouts that have been implemented in supermarkets in the United Kingdom already in the early 2000s. Further questions that could be asked are, if the interpretation of technology and the deployment of these systems in supermarkets other than Tesco has also led to unanticipated needs for space and adjustment in the ecological arrangement of the company, and how such companies have ensured that they acquired the knowledge and skills needed to make the technology work for their specific purposes. Can we observe a kind of "isomorphism" (Powell and DiMaggio 1991) in the adoption of novel technology across companies, and, if so, what actions and interactions have achieved this isomorphism in the organization of processes? Concrete observations of interpretive processes in different companies may help us understand the basis for the organization of decision-making processes in businesses.

Like industrialization about a century ago, today digitalization is often described as a technological process that changes social relationships and disrupts or subjects business to revolutionary changes (Jackson and Carruthers 2019; Kahn 2018; Nowinski and Kozma 2017). Blumer (1990) highlights the importance of human action and interaction for any such changes to take place. The analysis of the interviews with Tesco managers

and other staff reaffirms Blumer's argument, revealing the relevance of his work for the present day. With this chapter, I hope to have shown the importance of Blumer's analysis of industrialization, and explained how, today, with a focus on "digitalization as an agent of social change", we can use Blumer's insights and foresight to bring people back into the study of decision-making in marketing environments.

The chapter contributes to discussions in critical marketing (Brownlie and Tadajewski 2008; Hackley 2009; Maclaran et al. 2007; Tadajewski 2010) and marketing-as-practice (Skålén et al. 2022; Skålén and Hackley 2011). Scholars working in these areas have criticized the traditional managerial approach to marketing as exhibited in numerous textbooks of the disciplines (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick 2016; Kotler and Armstrong 2017) among others for ignoring how marketing is done in practice. While the managerial approach to marketing suggests that such decisions are driven by technological developments, here we have gained a glimpse into how managers make decisions on the basis of their interpretation of the opportunities offered by novel technologies. The analysis, therefore, adds to studies like Brownlie's (1996, 2010) investigation of the practice of the marketing audit or Hackley's (2002) exploration of work in an advertising agency as it provides us with accounts managers of Tesco give for decisions they have made about the deployment of emerging technologies in its operations. Further research is required, for example, to investigate managers' "professional theories" (vom Lehn et al. 2019b) about consumers' conduct in shops when they deploy digital technology and to explore further the unanticipated consequences of innovation on the shop-floor. In the following Chapter 5, I turn to explore such professional theories by investigating how a design team imagines the audience of an exhibition they have been contracted to develop. Based on field observation and participation in design meetings I reveal an exhibition design team's theories about audiences that inform their decision-making about the development and deployment of exhibits in a new interactive science center.

Notes

1 Examples for the contributions adolescents make to technological innovation pervade public discourse. Most well-known maybe are the discussions of the work of "hackers" (Conti 2006; Flowers 2008; Söderberg and Delfanti 2015).
2 Toffler (1981) introduced the concept of the "prosumer" at this point that has been critically examined by Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010) as well as by Zwick and colleagues (2008).
3 "Tesco: An Oral History", a National Life Stories project funded by Tesco, recorded 39 life story interviews with employees of Tesco between 2003 and 2007. It charts the rise of the supermarket retailer from an East End market stall to multinational giant. The interviews were conducted by Sarah Ryle who used

the recordings in her book *The Making of Tesco: A Story of British Shopping* (Ryle 2013) and by Niamh Dillon (2015). The permission to use the interviews for research purposes is given in this document: https://sounds.bl.uk/Information/Legal-And-Ethical-Usage.

4 Ryle (2013) has extensively drawn on these recordings when writing her fascinating book on the history of Tesco. It was Ryle's book that motivated me to examine the oral history interviews made available by the British Library.

5 The interview number corresponds to the number in the British Library's oral history archive. Not all interviewees listed in the table feature in this chapter.

6 Merton (1936: 897) highlights the difficulties in ascertaining "the extent to which 'consequences' may justifiably be attributed to certain actions" and "the actual purposes of a given action".

7 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ICT_1301

8 "Weeks' love of computers and systems matched Tesco's will to invest in new technology. His contribution to the Tesco: An Oral History archive provides a wealth of detail about IT innovation and his career at Tesco, including transformational technological change such as bar-code scanning. He eventually retired in January 2006" (Ryle 2013: 113).

9 Customers have been able to learn how to scan by repeatedly observing cashiers doing it when checking out their shopping. Thus, when self-service checkouts began to be deployed in supermarkets, customers already had some knowledge of how scanning works. For example, they knew to only scan one item at a time and that each scanned item had to be removed from the scanner into the packing area before scanning the next one.

10 It may be worthwhile exploring whether customers make use of scales in stores to weigh their fresh produce before approaching a till, or whether shops benefit financially from this organization change in the purchase of fresh fruit and vegetables because customers rely on guesswork.

11 A related example is Miller and colleagues' (2016) study of the adoption of social media across the world. It reveals not only that people in different countries develop their own idiosyncratic ways in adopting social media for their practical purposes.

12 Workplace studies concerned with the interplay of technology and social interaction on the "shop floor" offer one analytic approach for examining the local use of technology (cf. Heath and Luff 2000; Luff, Hindmarsh, and Heath 2000; Szymanski and Whalen 2011).

13 With regard to Tesco, see, for example, MacLaurin's (2000) autobiography and the biography of the founder of Tesco, Jack Cohen (Corina 1972).

5 Designing "Dramatic Experiences" in Museums

Scholars in marketing and consumer research often assume that designers and managers produce the atmosphere of these spaces and provide resources, such as glass showcases for the display of objects, interactive technologies, and so on, for people to have "memorable experiences" (Pine and Gilmore 1999). The underlying argument is that the qualities of people's experiences in shopping and retail environments or in museums are prefigured by the work of managers, designers, and curators. Once these "servicescapes" (Sherry 1998) have been opened to the public they impact people's experiences of them. Plenty of research explores how design features and the use of "stimuli" such as odor or music, influence people's behavior and experience of these environments (Bitgood 2013, 2014; Bitner 1992). Maybe surprisingly, though, little is known of the work through which designers and managers collaboratively produce experiential environments like shops and other retail outlets or museums.

In this chapter, I address this gap in research by reporting from a small study of the design of a science exhibition. For the purpose of the study, I participated in and observed meetings of a design team that had been awarded a contract to develop a new interactive exhibition in an existing interactive discovery center. In the analysis of the fieldnotes and audio-recordings of the meetings, I explore how decisions about the design of exhibits and the creation of the exhibition space are based on theories about audience members' behavior in and experience of the exhibition vocalized by those involved in the design of the exhibition. When vocalizing these "professional theories" (vom Lehn et al. 2019b) team members display how they imagine who the audience of the new exhibition will be, how they believe different kinds of exhibit will engage members of audience, what atmosphere, they think, the audience will encounter and experience within the new exhibition, or, in short, what value members of the audience will gain from visiting the exhibition.

The analysis in this chapter investigates how team members imagine the audience and audience members' behavioral and experiential response

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to the exhibition they are developing. It explores how such imaginings accomplished in interaction among the team members underpin design decisions and the creation of exhibitions. In the following, I, first, explore how members of the design team imagine the atmosphere their work will create in the new exhibition (Section 5.3.1). Second, I turn to team members' interpretation of the exhibition theme and investigate how they generate ideas for and make decisions about exhibits that will be deployed in the interactive discovery center (Section 5.3.2). And third, I reveal how members of the design team theorize the audience that they imagine will visit and experience the exhibition after its launch (Section 5.3.3). Before I turn to the analysis, I briefly discuss literature and describe the methods used to analyze the observational data and the audio recordings of design meetings.

5.1 Experiential Marketing and Exhibition Design: Brief Literature Review

In this section, I will explore recent and current research in experiential marketing and exhibition design. The review will begin with Kotler's (1973) suggestion to use "atmospherics" as a tool in marketing and the emergence of experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999) before turning to more recent discussions of experience and experiential marketing (Section 5.1.1). Subsequently, I will turn to research on exhibition design and its relationship to the audience and visitor behavior (Section 5.1.2).

5.1.1 Experience and Marketing

Since the 1970s, marketing scholars have begun to systematically explore how they could enhance the appeal of shopping and retail environments as they argued that "[O]ne of the most significant features of the total product is the place where it is bought or consumed […] the place, more specifically the atmosphere of the place, is more influential than the product itself in the purchase decision. In some cases, "the atmosphere is the primary product" (Kotler 1973: 48). Kotler's well-known essay on "atmospherics" has encouraged many marketing scholars to conduct research concerned with experiential features of marketing and consumption. They, for example, have developed theories of experience and undertook phenomenology-oriented studies of people's experience of shopping and leisure domains (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). This body of research examines people's subjective experience of consumption. Therefore, scholars often use auto-ethnographic (Hackley 2016; Holbrook 2006; Wallendorf and Brucks 1993) and phenomenology-based approaches. They conduct studies of, for instance, music consumption experiences (Holbrook 1986; O'Reilly et al. 2017; Shankar 2000) or the

experience of film consumption (Hart, Kerrigan, and vom Lehn 2016; Holbrook and Addis 2007). These studies have encouraged marketing scholars to develop categories of consumers according to the type of experience they seek (Hirschman 1984) and further unpack the notion of experience (cf. Husemann et al. 2016; Husemann and Eckhardt 2019).

In a related way, Schmitt (1999) differentiates five types of experience that marketers can provide customers with: sensory experiences (SENSE), affective experiences (FEEL), creative cognitive experiences (THINK), physical experiences, behaviors and lifestyles (ACT), and social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture (RELATE) (Schmitt 1999, 2003). Each of these types of strategic experiential modules has its own structures and principles marketers draw on to engage customers. In drawing on Schmitt's and others' research Smilansky (2009) has developed a practical guide for experiential marketers. She suggests that marketers can use an experiential orientation to raise customers' awareness, stimulate their interest, create desire, and encourage them to make purchases. Smilansky and other practitioners argue that by applying experiential marketing techniques companies can gain a competitive advantage through relatively inexpensive means (Tynan and McKechnie 2009). One way in which people's multisensory experiences of shopping-, retail-, and service environments can be supported or enhanced is by the deployment of a wide variety of techniques and technologies that engage people in novel ways.

Research concerned with the impact of material and sensory aspects of retail-, shopping-, and service environments on people's behavior and experience has been undertaken also in the philosophy of perception. This body of work provides a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between space and experience. Gernot Böhme (2017), for example, draws attention to the aestheticization of market relationships. He introduces the concept of "staging value" (Inszenierungswert) and suggests that commodities not only have "use value" and "exchange value" but today also are given esthetic qualities that for customers are relevant when purchasing and using them (Böhme 2003). These esthetic qualities do not fulfill customers' needs and wants, but they "create and heighten an insatiable desire for ever more consumption" (Biehl-Missal and vom Lehn 2015: 237). Böhme's (2003, 2017) analyses and cognate work suggest that the experience of these esthetic qualities is not predefined by the designers and managers of environments, but people's interaction within these environments contributes to their experience (Biehl-Missal and Saren 2012; Biehl-Missal and vom Lehn 2015; Biehl and vom Lehn 2016). Yet, few studies explore how the audience features in the work of those involved in the development and deployment of experiential environments.

5.1.2 Exhibition Design

Exhibitions are experiential environments created for people to have "memorable experiences" (cf. Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons 1998; Pine and Gilmore 1999). While little research has been undertaken to explore the work of exhibition designers, scholars, both academic and practitioners, have developed design principles and theories about the spatial organization of exhibitions and their influence on visitors' navigation of galleries (Hall 1987; Tzortzi 2014, 2016). Related studies have been undertaken informing the design of hands-on and interactive exhibits turning visitors into users (Bradburne 1998; Caulton 1998). These publications are largely theoretical and conceptual and have the purpose to provide managers, designers, and curators with guidance on how to design and spatially arrange exhibits to influence visitor navigation through museums.

Some of these theories and design principles draw on a body of research that has emerged within visitor studies, a largely applied field where academics and practitioners investigate people's behavioral, cognitive, and social responses to the design of exhibits and the layout of exhibitions (Bitgood 2013, 2014; Leinhardt and Crowley 1998). These studies again are undertaken with the aim to inform design work. Despite the proposition that design work draws on and uses knowledge about visitor behavior and audiences, little is known of how those involved in the design of exhibitions use observations and findings from visitor and audience studies (Davies and Heath 2014).

This lack of knowledge about the relationship between design work and audience studies reflects the general dearth of research on the work of exhibition designers and curators (Dean 1994; Hall 1987; Lewi et al. 2019). This lack is based on the long domination of cultural sociology as well as arts marketing by Bourdieusian (Bourdieu 1993, 2010) approaches to studying the arts. These studies have been concerned primarily with the societal influence on artistic production (cf. Peterson and Anand 2004) rather than with the social and material processes through which artistic work is produced. In recent years, cultural sociologists and scholars in arts marketing have increasingly shifted the focus of research toward the arts production processes. In cultural sociology, for example, Rubio (2012) uses a genealogical approach (Mukerji 2007) to study the material and social process in the production of Robert Smithson's The Spiral Jetty and thus opened "the black box of artistic production to study culture in the making" (ibid.: 156). Rubio argues that by focusing on the material practice of artistic production sociologists can gain an understanding of the emergence of new cultural forms. The genealogical approach he adopts, however, does not provide him (or us) with insights into the interactions between multiple participants involved in the process of artistic production.

In a related way, scholars have recently studied the work of curators that for long has been considered "as tacitly structured by 'conventions,' 'internalized dialogs,' and artistic 'codes'" (Acord 2010: 448). Over the past decade or so, sociologists have increasingly become interested in artistic practices and in how art exhibitions are curated (Acord and DeNora 2008; Kreplak 2018). This research sometimes adopts concepts from actor-network theory (Latour 2007) to move away from the view that works of art are "passive intermediaries transmitting knowledge between artists, viewers/audiences and the world but rather should be seen as active 'mediators'" (Sutherland and Acord 2007: 133). Curators therefore display works of art not to communicate a particular message, but they use "environmental and semiotic resources in the production of culture" (Acord 2010: 460) and thereupon generate meaning and knowledge. As curators display works in exhibitions, they take into account practicalities and technical constraints as well as semiotic relationships between different pieces (Acord 2010, 2014).

In arts marketing, there also has been an interest in countering the long dominance of Bourdieusian approaches to studying the arts and artistic production. Studies increasingly argue that participation in the arts and arts consumption are influenced not only by people's socio-economic and demographic background but also by material aspects of art works (Larsen 2014). Therefore, it is important to investigate the material circumstances of arts production. Borgblad (2022), for example, studies the social and material actions through which street art and murals are produced. Yet, as in Acord's (2010) and Rubio's (2012) research Borgblad shows little interest in the organization of action and interaction through which murals are produced as works of art. Moreover, this research largely ignores exploring the relationship between artistic and curatorial work and the audience.

The relationship between artistic production and the audience has been addressed by Dicks (2004), who suggests that now it is important to consider this relationship because over the past few decades curation has changed and become more visitor-oriented. "The word 'experience' has become central to today's museum and, in this, exhibition-designers using the traditional indoor gallery-spaces of museums have learnt lessons from the open air 'living history' museums'" (Dicks 2004: 165). This concern with the development of visitor-oriented museums has encouraged attempts to include visitors more within the exhibition design process and explore the possibility of "The Participatory Museum" (cf. Crilly et al. 2008; Rahaman and Tan 2011; Simon 2010).

These developments are reflected in the growing importance of arts marketing (Kerrigan, Özbilgin, and Fraser 2004; Kerrigan and Preece 2022; O'Reilly and Kerrigan 2010) and museum marketing (Fillis 2004;

Fillis and Rentschler 2005; Rentschler and Hede 2007). Here, scholars consider museums as service organizations (McLean 1994; Rentschler and Gilmore 2002a & 2002b) and discuss the relationship between museums and their audiences (Goulding 1999, 2000; Passebois and Aurier 2004; Passebois-Ducros 2019). In museum practice, these developments have led to a growing concern with including visitors in the development of new exhibitions origins in demands by private and public funding bodies to be more marketed-oriented and inclusive of parts of the population that often do not choose to visit exhibitions. Little is known of how visitor-orientedness is reflected in the work of exhibition managers, designers, and curators. A rare study exploring this question is Macdonald's (2002) investigation of the exhibition "Food for Thought: The Sainsbury Gallery" that opened at the Science Museum in London in 1989. Macdonald introduces the notion of the "imagined audience" from communications and journalism studies to explore how those involved in the development of exhibits and exhibitions anticipate or hope the audience to behaviorally, cognitively, and socially respond to "Food for Thought". The exhibition developers anticipated that visitors would have "fun" in the exhibition and "learn" about food consumption and other food-related matters. Yet, it turned out that after the opening of the exhibition those involved in its developments experienced the atmosphere of the galleries as "flat" and "not as lively" as expected (Macdonald 2002: 93).

The review of these two bodies of research, experiential marketing and exhibition design, suggests that thus far research on design work has shown little interest in how managers, curators, and designers involve the audience in the design process. We have found hints to the audience and of what people may do in exhibitions, in theories about a "grammar" of display (Hall 1987) and "space syntax" (2016) but only few studies (Macdonald 2002) exploring how the audience has been imagined by exhibition designers. Macdonald's study is a rare exception in that it investigates the work of exhibition designers and its relationship to the (imagined) audience. In this chapter, I add to this small body of research by exploring the work of a design team and how it arrives at decisions about the contents of an exhibition by imagining how particular design decisions will create an atmosphere in the galleries, by generating ideas for exhibits, and by theorizing the "imagined audience" and its responses to the exhibits.

5.2 Methods and Data

For the purpose of the research, I conducted what with Fine (2003) might be described as a "peopled ethnography". The analysis is based on participant observations, interviews with members of the design team and

museum managers as well as other material participants have produced in the course of the project. The data were collected between 2004 and 2005 while the design team was employed to develop an exhibition. At the time, the project team, here called Interactive Design, had won a contract with a local authority to redevelop a local "discovery park" that had been opened years earlier in the area of a colliery. Interactive Design is managed by the lead designer who speaks on behalf of the team to the client, a local authority in England, and is accountable for decisions made about the content, interpretation, and design of the exhibition. For the purpose of the project, the lead designer (Robert) buys in practical expertise from other companies that specialize, for example, in lighting (Igor), special effects and interactivity (Pete), computing, and audience research.

Interactive Design was given the contract for the project by a local authority after a competitive tender process. Having won the tender the team was asked to create an interactive exhibition concerned with "technology in everyday life" that should be appealing to members of the local community. Interactive exhibitions are a type of exhibition that has evolved from the science center movement since the 1960s (Hein 2000; Whit et al. 1998). Their exhibitions are comprised of so-called interactive exhibits. These exhibits involve visitors in activities through which they create experiences of scientific phenomena for themselves and sometimes also for onlookers nearby. The activities include series of "hands-on" actions, like pulling leavers and interacting with computer systems as well as bodily movements that are reflected by (funny) mirrors or captured by a sensor and leading to responses by a computer system (Bradburne 1998; Caulton 1998; Schiele and Koster 2000).

The exhibition under scrutiny in this chapter was deployed in an area of the United Kingdom that previously was dominated by the coal mining industry. It was to be housed in a large hall standing in an area that used to be occupied by a mining shaft, railway tracks, and other industrial machinery. When the designers began their work, an older exhibition was still set up in the hall and open to the public. I joined Interactive Design as an ethnographer after they had won the tender for the redesign of the exhibition and when they began to discuss the content of the exhibition among each other and with members of the local council. Over the course of the project, I attended, observed, and audio recorded six design meetings while observing and making notes. The design meetings took place in the lead designer's office as well as in workshops where some of the exhibits were developed. Altogether, I produced approximately 10 hours of audio-recordings that were transcribed making up a document of about 130,000 words.

All members of the project team were fully aware of my participation as a sociologist and researcher in and of the recordings I made of the meetings. As the project progressed, they became increasingly interested in the

research because they saw it as an opportunity to reflect on the design process and their work. They volunteered their time for informal meetings and interviews and provided me with additional material, such as various sketches and diagrams.

Similar to Chapter 4, in the analysis of the data I draw on the techniques developed by Kathy Charmaz (2006) that help me to derive theories and concepts from the systematic inspection of the data. I examine the data to investigate how the members of Interactive Design interpret the design brief, that is, the framework for the new exhibition given to them by the local council. The analysis of Interactive Design's discussions about the development of the exhibitions will explore how members of the team discuss the creation of an atmospheric exhibition, how they generate ideas for exhibits that in a meaningful way relate to the design brief they have been given by the local council as principal funding institution, and how they theorize the audience and its response to the exhibition.

5.3 Deploying the "Design Approach"

When I began my research on Interactive Design and their project on the development of an interactive exhibition, the lead designer, Robert, had worked in exhibition development for more than two decades. Over the course of his career, he has developed an analytic scheme he calls "Design Approach". The lead designer uses this schematic to organize his thinking and the discussions among team members. Without being specific, the Design Approach differentiates between the (Exhibition) Content, the Interpretation of the content, and the Audience, and it highlights the key features of these three design areas. The Design Approach is a generic technology that can be deployed across projects and referred to by all people involved, including the lead designer, exhibition and museum managers, fabricators and educationalists, the funders, and clients (Figure 5.1).

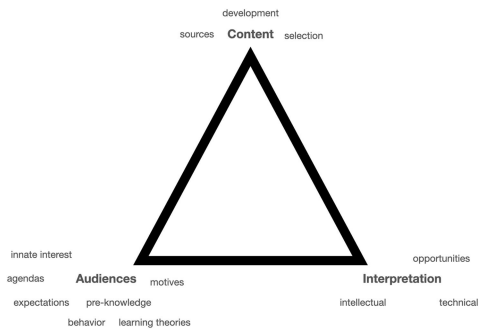

Figure 5.1 Design approach.

In design meetings and other discussions about particular projects, participants specify Content, Interpretation, and Audience with regard to the information that emerges as the work progresses. From the analysis below it will transpire that in the early design meetings under scrutiny here, team members focus on the relationship between Content and Interpretation while there is relatively little consideration of the Audience. During these meetings, the team discusses (1) how to create an atmosphere (Section 5.3.1), (2) how they generate ideas for exhibits to interpret the content of the exhibition (Section 5.3.2), and (3) how they theorize about the audience's response to exhibits and exhibit features (Section 5.3.3). In the following, I will pursue these three lines of discussion. It will transpire that technology features prominently in the discussions because the team members consider technology as pivotal tool to interpret the content of the exhibition and to engage the audience with it.

5.3.1 Imagining Atmosphere

The design process begins with an exhibition brief that is "the culmination of the first stage of work on an exhibition, the outcome of the dialogue between curator and the designer, of the consideration, discussion and agreement between all the parties involved" (Hall 1987: 42). In the case discussed here, the brief describes the theme of the exhibition as "Technology in Everyday Life" and the exhibition type as "interactive". The client has decided to give the job of developing the exhibition to Interactive Design because the lead designer and his team have proven experience in creating successful interactive exhibitions all over the United Kingdom and abroad.

With the decision of the theme and type of the exhibition, client and project team have set the broad framework for the project. As the team works on the project, its members interpret the exhibition theme "Technology in Everyday Life" and progressively decide on the content of the exhibition. From the start it is important for the lead designer to ensure that although many of the exhibits will be interactive, the exhibition will be different from those deployed in science centers. He wants to create an environment allowing visitors to have an experience that is not made up of individual engagements with discrete exhibits but that encompasses the entire discovery park.

> I'm calling it 'the environment', which includes the set works and structures, large Figures, lighting and flooring. The exhibits – which are the stars of the show in a sense – although it would be nice if it's not like the traditional science center environment where it's, 'Sod the environment. It's the exhibits. It doesn't matter what they look like.' We're going beyond that. (Robert, Lead Designer)

One way in which Robert plans to go beyond science centers is by asking the local museum for original objects from its collection to display alongside the interactive exhibits. Objects, he says, can show the connection between the exhibition and "real life".

> I'm beginning to put some pressure on the museum as to how we go about getting things from their accessioned collection that we can use, so it s got constant reference to real life. (Robert, Lead Designer)

These opening remarks by the lead designer make some aspects of the experience he plans to create for visitors apparent. Some of the features he mentions in the beginning of the meeting also speak to the diverse expertise the members of the team bring to the project: the lead designer, Robert, has expertise in developing interactive exhibits, Igor has a background in lighting for theater productions, and Pete specializes in lighting and special effects.[1]

The meetings conducted early in the project are largely concerned with interpreting the exhibition theme and how the expertise of individual team members will contribute to the development of the exhibition. For example, for the creation of a particular atmosphere, lighting of the space and exhibits is of particular importance. The exhibition space needs to be illuminated in a way that creates a "theatrical" atmosphere, and explanatory and informative labels associated with exhibits require lighting at a "microscale".

> Igor [lighting designer], we've got two requirements in here which maybe are contradictory from the lighting point of view if we're expecting the lighting to contribute, as I would like it to do at a theatrical level within the space, but also if you've got condensed text information you need to be able to read it and that needs lighting as well. And indeed, the objects and labels … so there's a sort of microscale requirement for lighting and a macroscale requirement. (Robert, Lead Designer)

Moreover, different exhibition areas require particular kinds of lighting in order to contribute to the atmosphere of the space. The creation of an atmosphere in the museums goes hand in hand with the interpretation of the exhibition theme. For example, in their discussions members of the team put forward various "top contenders" (Robert, Lead Designer) of exhibition subthemes, such as "an urban area" or "the street", "work", "home", and "play", that will be shown in different areas of the discovery park. Each of these areas will have its own atmosphere created by using materials and lighting. In addressing Igor, the lighting expert, the lead designer says that,

> "[T]here're these long walls which we'll need to consider the lighting on. There's no point in producing graphics and then not lighting it. […] And I think an urban kind of environment" (Robert, Lead Designer).

The team members agree that the lighting will be important to generate a particular atmosphere in the exhibition. By referring to "film" as a technology to possibly include in the exhibition the project team explore the impact lighting can have on the atmosphere of an exhibition further. Igor, for example, refers to examples from well-known movies to illustrate how light can be used in interesting ways that generate a particular atmosphere:

> It's like when you click on Saving Private Ryan how they changed the shutter angle, so the light was captured more severely, which is a classic old film product, because the light it wasn't subtle. So it gives you that aged look. And that's nice when you see it in Private Ryan. … It was just absolutely shattering, how much light came in. (Igor, Light)

The lead designer agrees with Igor's suggestions that light can be used to generate an emotional atmosphere, which will be appealing to visitors:

> And the other thing when we were working on the [name of exhibition] is that it needs to have a nice crossover between technology and art, and that broadens your market, your audience interest a lot because you can ask questions. It's not just playing with light. It's playing with light for emotional reasons rather than technical reasons, so certainly it's of interest to people who wouldn't otherwise have become interested. (Robert, Lead Designer)

When introducing particular design features like lighting members of the project team often refer to their experience of other settings, in particular the Science Museum and the EMI music exhibition in the O2 (both in London). With such comparisons, the members of the project team reveal what they consider to be good design elsewhere and what kind of atmosphere they would like to create in this exhibition:

> And I know I certainly feel the same in Launch Pad at the Science Museum since it moved from that lovely airy space upstairs into the basement and dark with dramatic, not very good lighting – appalling lighting actually, but it's a very tense feel. And that's I think here I'd like there to be a level of stimulation and excitement but in a relaxed way rather than a sort of slightly … (Robert, Lead Designer)

> And just thinking of lighting actually, the area which always stays in my mind as being lovely and moody was the entrance part of the EMI thing. (Igor, Light)

Comparisons with other exhibitions serve the members of the project team as resources to inform design decisions for the creation of a particular atmosphere in the exhibition space. In the view of the members of the project team, in particular of the lead designer and the lighting expert, Igor, the atmosphere of the different parts of the exhibition provides the basis for the overall experience visitors will have in the discovery park. The atmosphere will be a critical feature of the exhibition differentiating it from science centers where visitors engage with individual exhibits one at a time without experiencing the space a coherent whole. To create this atmosphere the team members consider "lighting" as a technology that is a pivotal tool to engender emotional responses to the exhibition. Save for the atmosphere that the design team hopes to create in the exhibition the meetings are concerned with the interpretation of the exhibition theme by selecting topics to cover by the exhibits.

5.3.2 Interpreting the Exhibition Theme: Generating Exhibition Ideas

From the beginning of the meetings, the project team's discussions are concerned with the interpretation of the theme of the exhibition, "Technology in Everyday Life". The interpretation of the theme involves discussions about possible technologies to include in the exhibition and how they are related to the exhibition theme. Over the course of the project, team members introduce and discuss selected technologies as candidates to be included in the exhibition. Exploring such discussions about particular technologies helps to reveal how the team interprets the exhibition theme and progressively generates ideas for exhibits to be deployed in the discovery park.

The project meetings do not provide a complete picture of the development of the exhibition. Between these meetings team members work on the project in their own offices or workshops, and the lead designer discusses progress with the project and ideas for the development of the exhibition with the client. "To update everyone" (Lead Designer) the lead designer often uses the beginning of each project meeting to summarize decisions that have been taken since the last meeting. These decisions are based on discussions Robert has had with the client between team meetings. For example, early in the project the lead designer and client have specified the exhibition theme and decided to structure the exhibition by three "technology walls", with each wall covering a different topic.

As the lead designer gives his report team members sometimes question decisions and propose technologies to be included in the exhibition. For example, when Robert talks about the topic of the first technology wall and the statement, "'Technology shapes lives, or changes lives, makes lives whatever – at home, at work, at play'", displayed on that wall, Igor interjects and in view of earlier discussions asks, "Sport was there, wasn't it?". Robert uses Igor's interjection to explain the difficulty he and the client encountered when working to specify the exhibition theme. He says that "sport was never one of mine […] but one of their original ones" and elaborates why on this wall they decided on three rather than four or more topics:

> all of the sort of more academic categorizations if you like, that were coming from the content that we were trying to deal with had problems. We were forcing things: does it belong here, does it belong there? And there weren't enough. And I felt that four would have been okay. Three would be better. Any more than four is too much. And it was just very difficult to accommodate some of the obvious technologies in four categories. (Robert, Lead Designer)

The other two technology walls will include a "timeline of inventions and discoveries" (Robert, Lead Designer) as well as "objects and figures and stories" (Robert, Lead Designer) about technologies. Robert highlights that from the start they will have to make clear that the exhibition can show only a selection of technologies. He also suggests that on the third technology wall stories of technologies should feature that people will remember because they are unusual or unexpected. An example the lead designer gives here is the mobile phone that,

> "became the telephone of choice for deaf people because of texting. Previously, telephones had been useless to deaf people. Suddenly they have that kind of connectivity" (Robert, Lead Designer).

In the following, I take a technology that the project team discusses throughout the meetings as an example to explore how a technology is entered into the team's discussions and eventually agreed on as one that should be included in the exhibition. After having talked about cameras and the technical possibilities offered by digital technology, Robert highlights that "film" offers a great range of "interactivity" for the exhibition:

> "Film, photography and TV, just fantastic potential for interactivity" (Robert, Lead Designer).

As the discussion about film continues team members' interest shifts from talking about "film" to exploring how "film" could be made relevant to the exhibition theme and shown to visitors. Their attention then shifts from "film" as a technology to the phenomenon of "moving Figures". The lead designer, for example, says that,

> "I've got one idea here for the … you know the principle behind moving figures is assistance of vision, and the usual way of showing that is things like flip books and zoetropes" (Robert, Lead Designer).

and then offers a way in which "film" could be shown as "moving Figures"; "flip books and zoetropes". These older forms of displays that people might know are not further pursued, yet the discussion remains on the phenomenon of "moving Figures" when Igor introduces a particular effect that is generated through the combination of moving Figures and light, that is, "the strobe effect". He introduces the effect by referring to "TV" or "film" "because that's where most people see it". TV and film are where people experience the effect that they will discover in the exhibition. The exhibition thus could explain the phenomenon "as well as actually showing the technology" at the same time. As in other parts of the discussion, the team members then use examples from films and TV shows to illustrate and bring to life the point they want to make. Here, Igor brings up the example of "cowboy films":

Igor: "Oh blimey. That's why that is". I've seen that on cowboy films so many times, never knew why that was.'
LD: Yes. Well presumably to get …
Igor: It's always a cowboy film.
LD: It's always a cowboy film. And there's a very long shot, I think it's in one of the Leone films. And presumably because I think it's when it's slowing down isn't it? The spoke hasn't quite come back to … it's a strobe effect. If it was absolutely in synch, it would just be still, but it would slow down and starts to go backwards.

The lead designer displays his agreement with Igor by also taking the example of the cowboy film and then gives a concrete example from "one of the Leone films". For the lead designer the discussion about the "strobe effect" shows that "film" and "moving Figures" as a technology should be included in the exhibition because it is suited to engage visitors with an interesting everyday phenomenon that relates to technology, a view that Igor agrees with.

LD: That's interesting. Well it just reinforces my view that film has to be

Igor: The film thing. You can start to do all sorts of … play with the light, all sorts of stuff and just in front you you see, "Blimey You take the car out. Wow!" All those things that we muck about with.

This brief analysis of "film" as a technology that the team eventually decided to include in the exhibition reveals how ideas for the exhibition emerge and evolve in, and through, the project team's discussions. Although project meetings are often arranged to update team members about discussions the lead designer had with the client the discussions among them are the basis for the team members' interpretation of the exhibition theme, their negotiations about what technology to include the exhibition, and their discussions of the advancement of the exhibition content. With few exceptions such as the team members' touching on the emotional response of light these discussions remain focused on the exhibition theme and content but largely exclude the audience and visitors' possible response to selected technologies and the atmosphere of the exhibition.

5.3.3 Theorizing the Audience

While the members of the project team continue to interpret the theme of the exhibition by selecting technologies and developing exhibition content, they rarely refer to the "audience". The lead designer knows from his meetings with the client that they expect mainly local people to visit the discovery park, in particular school groups and families with children. He, however, has little specific knowledge about the audience and, for example, does not know the "visitor agendas" (Falk, Moussouri, and Coulson 1998), people's expectations and motivations for visiting the discovery park, or what understanding of technology they bring to the exhibition. Hence, Robert and the team develop the exhibition for an "imagined audience" (Macdonald 2002) that they construct in and through their discussions. While in their work on another project the team members had been able to draw on information about the audience received from audience studies conducted by a consultant (vom Lehn et al. 2019a), in this project the audience consultant was brought in only later. Therefore, when proposing ideas or accounting for their decisions team members often refer to their "intuition" that is informed by their own personal experiences, by experiences with previous projects, and by reports of exhibition experiences by friends and family members.

For instance, early in the first meeting the lead designer articulates a theory he has about visitors to discovery parks: he describes them as curious and motivated to learn something about the themes covered in exhibitions but assumes that they do not like to be confronted with a lot of text; "people … just don't read stuff in a doing environment"

(Robert, Lead Designer). Instead, these audiences like to engage in activities through which they find something out.

> But I'm wondering whether there's mileage, and it's something which would be very easy to test, in having that more dense graphical content, text base and diagrams and things like that, in a sort of 'on demand' like glorified lift up flaps. So instead of pasting the environment and making the environment look heavy with a whole lot of text information, which puts some people off – young people particularly if there's things to do, never read anything anyway. (Robert, Lead Designer)

Pete, whose expertise is in special effects, agrees with this assessment of people visiting discovery parks and adds that such audiences enjoy "making visible information rather than just seeing and showing something". Team members agreement in their skepticism about the use of text in the exhibition leads to their decision to reduce the amount of text in the galleries and, if text is used, to have "big, big text. Big headings, good. Labels – good. But large text panels, I do question whether they work" (Lead Designer).

Having decided on the exhibition theme, "Technology in Everyday Life", the team members interpret the theme with regard to their theory of the audience. They work with the "assumption, hunch, anecdotal observation, … that there's a degree of taking technology for granted" (Lead Designer). It is this taken-for-grantedness of technology the team wants to reveal to the audience. They plan to display exhibits that get people to "recognising what constitutes technology and pondering about the way it affects and enables their lives" (Robert, Lead Designer).

The lead designer, Robert, introduces textiles and fabrics as an example to illustrate his assumption that people take the impact of technology on their everyday life for granted:

> "I think clothing and fabric will be one of the technologies that people would not even have recognised that it's a technology" (Robert, Lead Designer).

Save for the relevance of the team's theory about what the "imagined audience" (Macdonald 2002) knows about technology, they also have theories about how people learn and what kinds of activities they enjoy. Above, I had already suggested that the team members consider "reading" as an "intimate activity" that is not liked by people while being in an interactive exhibition. As experts in "interactivity" they therefore consider

technologies as exhibition content whose principles can be revealed through activities other than reading. For example, when discussing various technologies Robert mentions how the telegraph was invented by a school teacher who demonstrated its underlying principles by building a miniaturized version of an electromagnet "to entertain" the children:

> the way he demonstrated it was that he had apparently quite a small electromagnet connected to a battery, and he would hoist I think it was in the region of six hundred and fifty kilos up this big gantry and then switch the battery off. (Robert, Lead Designer)

> how memorable is it to lift a hoist up, a huge weight, and push a switch and see it crash down. (Robert, Lead Designer)

Thus, the idea for an exhibit emerges that the audience may not only consider appealing but also visitors may learn from it because such a "crashing down" generates a memorable experience. Yet, as Robert suggests in a further development of the idea, the noise of the exhibit may also be experienced as annoying, especially if the crashing down happens repeatedly. Pete agrees with the lead designer that although the idea of providing visitors with a dramatic experience by virtue of a surprising event in the gallery is interesting, the noise will have to be dealt with. Drawing on his expertise in creating special effects Pete suggests using an "airbag" that will soften the drop of the magnet:

Pete: Just as a thought so you don't go off that idea because of noise, if it was dropping onto an airbag, something which is just inflated underneath it, and we've done that, we've done that with TVs, dropping a TV from ten foot that still works …
LD: Yeah.
Pete: Onto an airbag. And it's the TV we've got …
LD: It's creating a bit of drama somehow.

Throughout their meetings, members of the project team refer to the drama created by particular effects, like fire, surprising events, and lighting. In their view, these kinds of exhibition elements create a dramatic atmosphere and memorable experiences. Light, for example, can turn what is quite a plain wall into "a massive drama" (Igor, Light). And some exhibits, for example, an exhibit that uses "fire" "will generate its own drama and illumination" (Robert, Lead Designer). In their discussions, team members do not go beyond general descriptions of the experience people will have when confronted with the exhibition. The general nature of these

descriptions is owed to the team's reliance on their theories of the audience rather than on knowledge of the composition of the audience or of visitors' agenda and expectations.

5.4 Discussion

In this chapter, I have discussed how a project team conceives an imagined audience's relationship and response to an exhibition it has been contracted to develop. The analysis suggests that the team's concept of this relationship is relatively general because its knowledge of the composition of the audience and of the visitors' agenda and expectations is limited. It transpires that team members use the ideas of "dramatic experience" and "dramatic atmosphere" as generic descriptors for the relationship between the audience and the exhibition they hope to create. The team's focus on visitors' experience as an outcome of the visit to the exhibition shows their aim to develop an environment where through their engagement with exhibits members of the audience will spend valuable time. It also suggests that the team orients to contemporary debates about the importance of experiences for social relationships and the social structure of society, debates held in sociology, marketing, consumer research, philosophy, and other disciplines (Biehl-Missal and Saren 2012; Bitner 1992; Böhme 2017; Dicks 2004; Schulze 1992; Sherry 1998).

The analysis in this chapter has focused on the discussions members of the project team had about the "atmosphere" they were hoping to generate for an imagined audience to the exhibition. Thereby, "atmosphere" as a concept relates to the "look-and-feel" of the exhibition generated by virtue of exhibition features such as the lighting within the space. It rarely includes discussions of the audience of which team members know very little. Occasionally, however, team members share their theories of the audience when in their discussions they provide accounts for experiences a particular exhibition feature will generate. Studies with an interest in "occupational aesthetics" (Fine 1985, 1996), artistic production like those by Borgblad (2022) in arts marketing, or by Rubio (2012) in cultural sociology rarely investigate how the work of those involved in the artistic process orient to an imagined audience. Acord's (2015) investigation of curatorial work touches on the relationship between the work of curators and the audience when she notices that curators move works of art around in galleries to experiment with the impact of hanging arrangements on the (imagined) spectators. And in his study of kitchens Fine (1985) notices that "[C]ooks derive satisfaction from more than seeing their customers fat and/or healthy" as they orient more to meeting their own and their peers' standards in the preparation of food than the standards of restaurants' patrons.

In marketing and consumer research, studies are concerned with the impact of products on consumers and their experience. For example, investigations in experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999; Smilansky 2009) and on the creation of retail spaces and other servicescapes suggest that design decisions are often informed by experimental research that explores how particular product features, such as odor or music, impact consumer behavior (De Luca and Botelho 2020; Hwang and Oh 2020). In this chapter, I have argued that decisions members of the design team make are not based on experiments with exhibits in the galleries. Instead, they spur on their imagination about the audience by virtue of discussions about ideas for the exhibits that they bring to life by referring to their own experiences of exhibits in other galleries or observations they have made elsewhere.

Finally, the analysis argues that exhibition design is accomplished through the "peopled organization" (Hallett and Ventresca 2006; cf. Hallett and Hawbaker 2021) of activities. Throughout the design meetings, team members discuss and negotiate their professional theories about the audience and visitors' responses to possible exhibits and exhibit features that eventually lead to decisions about the design and deployment of objects and artifacts in the exhibition. From the analysis we have seen how members of the design team orient to and use the Design Approach, a conceptual model capturing the relationships between theories of the audience, exhibition content, and the interpretation of the design brief. As a "boundary object" (Star and Griesemer 1989) the graphical representation is used to facilitate the translation of information about the project for different stakeholders, including team members, museums, and funding bodies like the local council, who have different agendas and are socialized into different occupational and professional cultures.

In this chapter, I have explored how members of a design team theorize the imagined audience of an exhibition they collaboratively develop. Their professional theories of the imagined audience include concepts of what is or might be valuable for visitors to experience when engaging with exhibits. In interviews and discussions with designers, it transpires that they rarely visit exhibitions they have developed with an eye on how actual audiences interact with, and around, the exhibits. This work of "evaluating" exhibitions tends to be undertaken by experts and companies specializing in exhibition evaluations. The impact of such evaluations on the tendering for and development of future exhibitions, however, is unclear (Davies 2014). In Chapter 7, I will discuss how visitors engage with interactive exhibits deployed in an exhibition developed by Interactive Design. Before I turn to exploring the actual audience though in Chapter 6, I will further investigate how professional

theories of the imagined audience materialize in content developed by museum managers, curators, and, in this case, video editors.

Note

1 The team also includes people with expertise in computing, in audience research, and others, but they do not feature in this chapter.

6 Editing Museum Experiences
Online Gallery Talks

Gallery talks engage visitors of art museums with their collections through a presentation an art expert, such as a curator, gives to a standing or seated audience in front of one or a small number of co-located exhibits. In a sense, they are a modification of guided tours[1] where a curator walks with a group of visitors through a museum. While there is some sociological research concerned with guided tours (Holloway 1981; Wynn 2011) and the practical work of tour guides (Best and Hindmarsh 2019; Wohlfeil 2018), I was unable to find social scientific studies of gallery talks.

In this chapter, I analyze gallery talks that museums film and publish online, often on social media sites like YouTube and Vimeo. Over the past decade the publication of such videos of gallery talks on social media sites has become commonplace (Drotner et al. 2020; Henning 2020; Lewi et al. 2019). The use of social media for the publication of online content produced by museums has sometimes been discussed in the context of attempts by museums to increase participation in their cultural offering and to democratize art (Arnaboldi and Coget 2016; Black 2018; Simon 2010). During the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) museums' uploading of content to social media and video-sharing sites immensely increased (Addis and Rurale 2020; Agostino, Arnaboldi, and Lampis 2020; Tranta, Alexandri, and Kyprianos 2021). It, however, is doubtful if these activities encouraged people who prior to the pandemic did not visit museums, now engage with the institutions' online content. Scholars found that social media activities increased the number of followers and subscribers, but if these people now engage (regularly) with online content is not known (Agostino et al. 2020). Yet, it has been argued that content can be designed to attract particular groups of people, for example, men, to engage with content published by art museums that previously was predominantly watched by female audiences (Thelwall 2018). Such studies imply that those developing and editing arts content to be published on video-sharing sites have "professional theories" (vom Lehn et al. 2019b) about the audience and about people's behavioral and cognitive responses to video content viewed on social media.

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In this chapter, I therefore return to study the ways in which professional theories of an imagined audience are used by editors when developing video content for art museums. For the purpose of this chapter, I examine a gallery talk recorded in an exhibition displayed at the National Gallery in London. The talk titled "Caravaggio: His Life and Style in Three Paintings" has been given live to a seated audience, professionally recorded and edited, and published by the museum on YouTube on 3 March 2016. The analysis aims to reconstruct the editors' professional theories from the video published on YouTube. I examine the gallery talk, first, by exploring how the editors capture and make intelligible how the curator relates to the work of art and its features (Section 6.3.1). And second, I explore the methods the editors use to engage and mobilize members of the online audience with the work of art (Section 6.3.2). In the conclusion of the chapter, I discuss how the analysis adds to discussions in marketing, in particular experiential marketing, where marketers and teams of creatives develop and deploy theories about the relationship between experiential environments and consumers, including online audiences. The chapter also contributes to investigations of the relationship between "professional theories" and the "imagined audience", a concept originating in journalism and communications (cf. Ferrucci, Nelson, and Davis 2020; Nelson 2021), that previously has been used to discuss the work of those involved in the design of exhibitions (Macdonald 2002).

6.1 Investigating Guided Tours and Gallery Talks

While there is a dearth of research on gallery talks, scholars have been interested in guided tours as a technique museums often use to engage audiences with their collections. Some studies are concerned with guided tours more generally exploring the work of tourist guides and why people choose to take part in them (Holloway 1981). They also investigate the social control guides exert over tourists by selecting the route and what objects to constitute as "sights" (Schmidt 1979; Wynn 2011). Marketing and tourism research use ethnographic observations of tours and interviews with guides to identify different roles guides can play in front of the audience (Cohen 1985; Howard, Thwaites, and Smith 2001). Related investigations consider the content of guides' talk, reveal different structural phases in guides' talks (Fine and Speer 1985), explore how guides construct stories (Bryon 2012; Nilsson and Zillinger 2020), and evaluate guides' communication competence (Jahwari, Sirakaya-Turk, and Altintas 2016). Research on tour guides also reveals some of the techniques guides use to arrange tourists in space to give them a good view of the sight they talk about and to avoid the tour blocking pathways for other visitors (Best 2012). They also reveal how guides categorize audience members, for example, by

differentiating the audience members according to their social and ethnic backgrounds, and how they respond to different types of audience member (Pearce 1984). These studies of tour guides and their work suggest that audiences are not passive receivers of guides' talks, but their engagements with guided talks arises in social interaction with guides. They imply that the audience is not a collective but that guides differentiate types of participants and interact with them in different ways. Yet, this research does not explore how guides' categorization of audience members influence the delivery of their talks. For example, they ignore how the spatial arrangement of audiences impacts the content and production of guides' talks (e.g. Cohen 1985; Wynn, 2011).

Such detailed observations have recently been provided by ethnomethodological studies that examine video recordings of guided tours. They consider guided tours as "mobile formations" (de Stefani and Mondada 2014) and reveal how bodily formations are achieved in tours facilitating a concerted looking at the objects featuring in the guide's talks (Best and Hindmarsh 2019). They also show how guides render aspects of the environment visible for audiences by virtue of "contextual configurations" (Goodwin 2000), that is, by deploying a particular combination of vocal, bodily, material, and visual actions (de Stefani 2013). Moreover, these studies point to the difficulty guides have to maintain the audience as a collective because as they move through the environment or museum the large mobile formation of the audience often breaks up into small "subunits" (de Stefani and Mondada 2014). Guides, therefore, undertake interactional work to establish a shared focus for all participants (ibid.). These studies using ethnomethodology and conversation analysis as their analytic attitude and methodological technique reveal guides' sensitivity to audience members' talk and bodily actions. They suggest that guides not only manage audience members' orientation to the exhibits but also adjust their own orientation to the exhibits and the audience in response to visitors' actions (Best and Hindmarsh 2019).

In light of the emergence of social media, video-sharing sites, and more advanced technologies, museums have developed techniques to engage with online audiences. For more than two decades computer scientists have developed systems facilitating the engagement of live audiences with, for example, an archeological site (Tanikawa et al. 2004), a poetry performance (Benford et al. 1997), and other live virtual performances (Benford and Giannachi 2011). Sociological studies accompanying these technical developments are concerned with the ways in which people are socialized into participating with often highly complex technology, and how artists manage and orchestrate the participation in virtual performances (Koleva et al. 2001).

While some of these technical developments are experimental in nature, the global pandemic in 2020–2022 forced museums to rethink their online offerings in order to be able to sustain their operations when visits to their exhibitions were not possible. For example, museums have used the video-communications platform Zoom to hold regular live virtual arts events where people discuss works of art with each other and with curators and other museum staff. Research on the organization of these events shows how through talk and bodily action, that is, the use of the mouse cursor by a docent and embodied action in front of the webcam, museum staff, and participants are able to constitute objects to look at and examine and, thus, to share each other's experience of these objects (Nguyen, vom Lehn, and Preece 2023).

Such live virtual arts events still are rarely produced as they require technical expertise and resources not accessible to many (smaller) museums. More commonly used techniques to engage online audiences with art are websites and social media. Museums, for example, carefully prepare, edit, and publish videos on websites and social media channels. Some of these videos that have been produced in broadcast quality show simulations of virtual museums or a curator talking to an online audience (Drotner et al. 2020; Drotner and Schrøder 2013; Hindmarch, Terras, and Robson 2019). These videos published on online video-sharing platforms like Vimeo or YouTube show highlights from museum collections, give behind-the-scenes tours, and publicize talks about works of art given by curators (Drotner et al. 2020; Lewi et al. 2019; Stewart, Allen-Greil, and Tench 2012). Over the past decade or so, a small body of studies has emerged that explores such online content, often published on museums' social media sites. Kidd (2011, 2017), for example, has investigated the increased social media use by museums. She reveals the impact the viewing of museums' online posts has on audiences and how audience members themselves contribute content to museums' social media sites (cf. Giaccardi 2012). It transpires that despite the hopes for a democratization of access to the arts (Black 2018) and an increase in participation with the arts (Simon 2010), there is little evidence that participation is actually widened by these online activities. Instead, those who already are interested and take part in activities offered by museums, now also engage with the institutions' online content.

There is some debate about why people do not participate in online events as they provide relatively easy access to arts content that for some due to geographical locations or personal circumstances are not accessible. O'Hagan (2021) suggests that the publications of figures on social media sites, like Instagram, "cannot replace the real-life experience of a physical exhibition". Similarly, Tranta, Alexandri, and Kyprianos (2021) argue that people consider social interaction as important feature of the

museum experience, a feature that cannot easily be replicated online (Fillis et al. 2023). These arguments explaining the resistance against the adoption of online content published by museums suggest professionals developing online exhibitions, virtual tours, and virtual gallery talks incorporate professional theories of how the audience will engage with the content they are creating.

I have derived the notion of the "imagined audience" from Macdonald (2002) who suggests that, "[A]ny museum or exhibition – and indeed any museum or exhibition plan – is inevitably also an implicit statement about its imagined audience" (Macdonald 2002: 79–80). Drawing on Macdonald's study, I treat the video recordings of a gallery talk published on YouTube as a document revealing museums' and editors' theories of the imagined audience. In the analysis, I will be interested in how the editor[2] of the recordings provides the online audience with resources to experience the talk at their computers in a similar way as experienced by the live audience in the museum.

6.2 Methods and Data

The analysis considers the gallery talk as a "form of talk" (Goffman 1981) such as "the lecture" (ibid.: 162–196) or "radio talk" (ibid.: 197–330). I examine how the recordings of the gallery talk have been edited to generate an experience that is valuable for people watching it on their computers. My interest in the analysis is to reveal how the features of the recordings of the gallery talk manifest museum managers', curators', and video editors' "professional theories" (vom Lehn et al. 2019b) of the audience they imagine will watch it. Thereby, I am not so much interested in their theories about who the audience is but more in how they imagine the audience will experience the video.

The data analyzed for the purpose of this chapter is the recordings of the gallery talk given by the National Gallery's curator, Letizia Treves, to a live audience near the exhibit covered in the talk. As we will see, the talk focuses on three paintings by the Italian painter Carvaggio (1571–1610) that the curator uses to discuss the artist's biography both in relationship to events in his life and to the development of his art. The talk was professionally recorded and edited before being published on the museum's YouTube channel.[3] By the time of writing, 15 July 2022, the video has been watched about 1.5 million times and received a large number of very positive comments, such as "this is a perfect example of how YouTube can be an absolute treasure" and "I never appreciated Caravaggio so much until I came across your lecture". By examining this gallery talk, I hope to reveal some of the reasons underlying the popularity of this video, reasons

that not only are related to the content of the talk but also to the editing of the video.

In the video, we see the curator, Letizia Treves, who barely moves from her position between two of Caravaggio's paintings featuring in the talk that lasts about 30 minutes. In front of the curator, a seated audience can be seen although many members of the audience are not in view of the camera. The talk begins with an account by the curator for the selection of Caravaggio's art and these three paintings in particular.[4] She then explains the rationale for the organization of the talk before turning to her subject matter, that is, Caravaggio's biography and artistic work.

Throughout the talk, the focus of the camera changes between the curator and the works of art hanging on the wall behind her. In the analysis I focus on the coordination of the curator's talk with the perspectives offered by the camera. The video has been produced for an audience watching it online, after the live talk has been given to the audience in the museum. In the analysis, I will use ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967b) as an analytic attitude and conversation analysis as methodological technique (Have 1998; Sacks 1992) to examine the video-recorded action and interaction (cf. Heath et al. 2010). While the ethnomethodological analysis of interaction conventionally examines naturally occurring social situations, often observed by the researchers, in this case for the analysis I rely on recordings produced and published by another body, that is, the National Gallery London. I, therefore, had no influence on the camera position or changes in focus but have taken and inspected the recordings as published on YouTube. My analysis is concerned with uncovering the organization of the talk and the camera action. For the purpose of the analysis, I have transcribed the gallery talk, the curator's bodily conduct, and changes in the camera's focus.

The analysis of video recordings of people's action and interaction published on YouTube still is a relatively novel research method. Longhurst (2009), a geographer, who examined YouTube videos of women giving birth is sometimes cited as one of the pioneers using recordings published on social media sites for social scientific analysis. Interestingly, her article does not include any images of the inspected events. In his discussion of the use of YouTube videos for social scientific analysis, Laurier (2013) highlights that those using methods derived from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis ideally rely on uncut and unedited recordings as their research is concerned with the uncovering of the organization of the "in-vivo", naturally occurring actions produced

by the participants. However, he argues that video-sharing sites should be taken "seriously as an easy to access repository of historical, cultural and social recordings" (Laurier 2013: 10). In this chapter, I am not concerned with the editing process examined, for example, by Broth and colleagues (Broth 2008; Laurier et al. 2004), but with the edited version of the video published on YouTube. I, therefore, treat this video as a document[5] about the audience imagined by those involved in its production. In the analysis, I inspect the recordings to reveal how the video has been edited to create a particular experience for the imagined online audience.

6.3 Analysis

Before turning to the analysis of the recordings of the gallery talk, it is worthwhile to briefly describe the circumstances of the original talk given to a live audience in the museum. The talk focuses on three paintings created by Caravaggio (1561–1610), "Boy Bitten by a Lizard" (1593/4, middle), "The Supper at Emmaus" (1606, right from our perspective), and "Salome receiving the Head of John the Baptist" (1607/10, left). For the duration of the talk, the curator moves between the painting in the middle and the one to her right.[6] The seated audience faces the curator and the paintings.

Figure 6.0 Gallery talk.

Over the course of the gallery talk that lasts 30 minutes and 51 seconds the perspective of the camera changes 71 times. Within each of the 71 perspectives, the respective image is dynamic in that either the curator talks, gestures, changes her facial expressions, and moves her body, or the focus on the selected painting changes by zooming in and out or by

shifting between different aspects of the same painting. Some of these perspectives are kept for just a split of a second while others are held for several minutes. The curator does not orient to the camera or the online audience but only talks to the live audience sitting in front of her. The members of the audience attend to the curator's talk and bodily action as well as to the paintings featured by the talk. The viewer(s) at their computers see only what the camera shows them on their computer screens.

The analysis of the video is concerned with the curator's vocal and bodily action as well as with moments in which the perspective offered by the camera changes. First, I examine how in the recorded version of the talk relationships are made visible between the gallery talk and the exhibits covered by the talk (Section 6.3.1). And second, I turn to moments in which the camera perspective shows only images of the paintings while the curator's talk is audible (Section 6.3.2). Thus, the analysis uses the moments in which the editors of the video change the perspective to the curator and the works of art as evidence for their professional theories about the online audience's experience of the video.

6.3.1 Capturing the Curator-Painting Relationship

Gallery talks often begin with the curator providing an account for the selection of the exhibits included in the talk. Curators, for example, may ascribe the reason for the selection of an exhibit to the inherent attractiveness of the piece and report their own personal encounter with and experience of the piece (vom Lehn and Nguyen 2023). We now turn to a part of the gallery talk that starts after the curator has accounted for the works' inclusion. The curator still stands near the left edge of "The Supper at Emmaus". While standing in this position, she talks about Caravaggio's life and through gestures and changes in visual orientation refers to the paintings to either side of her as they feature in her talk. Both the curator's gestures and visual conduct are visible to the live and online audience. For the most part of the talk, the camera focuses on the curator as she delivers the talk. Yet, there are moments when the perspective of the camera changes from showing the curator to showing the works of art and aspects thereof, that I am interested in here. In these moments, the online audience hears the curator talking while seeing only an image selected by the editor. The curator's gestures and changes in her visual orientation in these moments are visible to the live audience only who in turn have no access to the images produced by the camera. Sometimes, the editor focuses on the curator and zooms in showing the upper body and head of the curator but not the works of art near her. At other times, they zoom out and show the curator in front of the three

Transcript 6.1 Curator's talk: rationale for selection of artworks

C: So, he produces works for the o-pen market and manages to
catch the ey:e: (.) of eh influential pa:trons that way:
ehm and we know that one of these pictures that he produced
was the 'Bo:y bitten by a Lizard' which we have here in
the National Gallery. There's another version of this
picture in the Fondazione Longhi:: which is generallee:
attributed to Caravaggio, but is not unanimously accepted.
And, as you can see remember what I said before about his
Formative years. (.) So, here there's the combination of
a beautiful still life eh: with the:se sort of, half-
length figures, and you can see how those formative
experiences might have led to this kind of picture.

works of art as well as the seated audience from behind. Let us turn to moments when the camera view changes from showing the the curator to showing the works of art.

The curator begins with an account of her reasoning for choosing Caravaggio and three of his paintings for this talk without naming the title of either of the pieces (Transcript 6.1). It is only after more than 4 minutes into her talk that the "Boy Bitten by a Lizard" is named as a painting Caravaggio produced early in his career when he was trying to earn money on the open market. Just as the curator says "we know one of these pictures he produced was the 'Bo:y bitten by a Lizard'" (Transcript 6.1, lines 75–76) the editor shows the painting to the online audience. They do not turn the camera or zoom in on the painting but show a preproduced photograph of the painting. The curator, therefore, who continues to talk about the painting saying that "there's another version this painting in the Fondazione Longhi::" (Transcript 6.1, lines 77–78) is out of view for about 9 seconds. A few moments after the camera returns to the curator, she slightly turns to her right and begins to gesture with her right hand – she holds a notebook in her left – toward "The Boy Bitten by a Lizard" (Figure 6.1.1). As she then talks about the particular features of the painting, that is, "the combination of a beautiful still life, with these, sort of, half-length figures" (Transcript 6.1, lines 80–81), and how they relate to Caravaggio's "formative years" (Transcript 6.1, lines 79–80) the camera zooms to show the still life at the bottom of the painting (Figure 6.1.2).

Transcript 6.1.1 Selecting the boy bitten by a lizard

Figure 6.1.1

Figure 6.1.2

72 C: the combination of a beautiful still life

From this short analysis, we can see how the work of the editor of the video carefully organizes what they show to the online audience in alignment with the curator's talk. They appear to know the content of the gallery talk as the camera perspective anticipates exhibit features discussed a moment later by the curator. The showing of exhibit features in the video, however, is not decoupled from the curator's bodily actions. As we can see in this fragment,, the curator first is shown gesturing to the painting before the camera view turns to the still life captured by the talk and oriented to by the gestures.

The curator not only points out – to the live audience – features of the painting in relationship to Caravaggio's biography but also is shown producing bodily actions, including gestures, through which she embodies her theory of how Caravaggio conceived the viewer's perspective. When the curator talks about "The Supper of Emmaus", the painting hung to the right of "The Boy Bitten by a Lizard" (Figure 6.1.3), for example, the camera shows the curator while talking about the "theatrical" way in which Caravaggio has cropped the image producing bodily comportments and gestures in front of her that embody Caravaggio's cropping of the image and the way in which the figures appear within the painting (Figures 6.1.4 and 6.1.5).

Transcript 6.1.2 Embodying technique

Figure 6.1.3

Figure 6.1.4

Figure 6.1.5

The analysis of these two parts of the gallery talk reveals some of the ways in which the relationship between the talk and the work of art is shown to the online audience. It suggests that the editor of the video ensures the viewers at their computers can see the relationship not only between the curator's talk and the painting but also between the curator's bodily conduct and her visual and bodily orientation to the painting. The video shows how the curator bodily and visually turns to the painting before the camera zooms in to show the exhibit features captured by the talk and zooms in on the curator when she produces gestures and bodily comportments through which she embodies the aspects of the painting for the live and online audiences to see. Thus, through the design of the video edits and perspectives the online audience is put in a position where they can experience the gallery talk as if it were produced for them, when in fact it is only the video that has been created for them.

6.3.2 Engaging the Online Audience

From studies of guided tours, we know that guides exert interactional work to maintain people's engagement with their talk. They manage people's spatial orientation to the objects they talk about and ask questions to enhance their engagement (Best 2012; Best and Hindmarsh 2019; de Stefani and Mondada 2014). Curators giving gallery talks may invest in similar interactional work to maintain their live audience's engagement. Yet, neither the curators nor the editors are able to easily anticipate the online audience's response.

The analysis suggests that the curator orients exclusively to the live audience in front of them without observably attending to the online audience that will watch the edited video of their talk after it has been uploaded to YouTube. The edited version of the video, however, suggests that those involved in the production and publication of the video use professional theories about the audience and their response to various aspects of the video when editing it. For example, we see that once the camera's perspective shifts from the curator to one of the paintings, the focus often changes as the camera zooms in on features of the work or slowly moves across the canvas showing different aspects of the piece. While the camera's perspective changes the curator can still be heard talking, but the viewers on their computers are unable to see her. In the following part of the talk, the curator mentions the extraordinary realism in the depiction of fruit within Caravaggio's painting "The Boy Bitten by a Lizard" when the camera perspectives zooms in on the bottom part of the painting where the bowl of fruit is located.

Transcript 6.2 Curator's talk about realism

96 C: He couldn't afford to pay (.) models. And this picture has also been
97 read: as a self port>rai<t although, generally, now (.) that's
98 discounted. I personally don't think it is a self por:trait. I mean
99 Im sure you know this picture and if not do come and look at it more
100 clo:sely. The really stri:king element of these early works is the
101 quality of the still life. This fruit you can just pick these
102 cherries up it's good enough to ea:t eh:m and the combination of
103 that with these sort of sensual youths quite androgynous looking
…

As the curator begins to talk about "this painting" (Transcript 6.2, line 96), she turns her upper body slightly toward her right and produces a gesture with her right hand to the right pointing to the "Boy Bitten by a Lizard" (Transcript 6.2.1, Figure 6.2.1). A moment later, when the curator points out that the argument that this painting was a

self-portrait has been "discounted" (Transcript 6.2, line 98) the video shows a picture of it (Transcript 6.2.1, Figure 6.2.2). It is when the curator turns to the realistic details of the painting, "The really stri:king element … " (line 100) that the video switches to focusing on the fruit Caravaggio has painted in the bottom of the piece (Transcript 6.2.1, Figure 6.2.3). While the curator further describes the realism of the painting by referring to "the quality of the still life" (Transcript 6.2, lines 100–101) and saying, "you can just pick these cherries up, it's good enough to ea:t" (Transcript 6.2, lines 101–102), the camera zooms further in on the cherries until they are clearly in view. Here, the camera view comes to rest for a little more than a second (Figure 6.2.3). Then, the perspective again switches to the curator who continues to talk to the live audience, "the combination of that …" (Figure 6.2.4; lines 102–103), about further aspects of the painting.

Transcript 6.2.1 Making visible the still life

Figure 6.2.1

Figure 6.2.2

Figure 6.2.3

96: And this picture … 97 self portrait … 102 it's good enough to eat …

Figure 6.2.4

102 … and the combination of …

The brief analysis of this part of the gallery talk reveals the close coordination of the editor's action with the content of the talk. The editor anticipates the content of the gallery talk by showing an image of the "Boy Bitten by a Lizard" before the curator begins to talk about it in detail. As the talk continues, the editor not only shows different aspects of the painting in alignment with the curator's talk but also turns the camera to particular exhibit features before the curator mentions them in her talk. Thus, they direct the online audience's attention to aspects of Caravaggio's painting allowing them to view these aspects before the curator offers an account for showing them in this very moment.

Let us turn to a final fragment of the gallery talk. Here, we will see how the editor provides the online audience with an experience of Caravaggio's work as the curator describes it for the live audience. It becomes apparent that the editor uses the curator's talk as a resource to create a visual experience to the online audience that helps them to make sense of the gallery talk. The live audience can see all three works of art on the wall in front of them as well as the curator who through his talk and bodily action displays which of the three objects she is talking about. In this fragment, we join the action when the curator first talks about "Salome receives the Head of John the Baptist". She gestures to the painting on the far left and briefly introduces the story of the depicted scene (Figures 6.2.5 and 6.2.6, lines 335–337).

Transcript 6.2.2 Curator talking about Salome

Figure 6.2.5

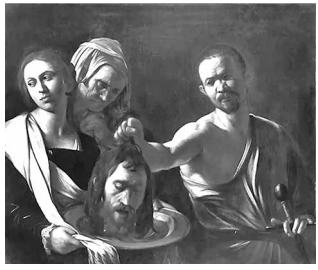

Figure 6.2.6

335 This is Salome: who Herodus said (.) what is your wish? I will grant you anything

337 And she says I want the head of John the Baptist (.)

A moment later, the video shows first Caravaggio's painting in full frame before zooming in on the head of John the Baptist while the curator talks about the facial expression and John's open mouth clearly visible to the viewer (Figure 6.2.7, line 341). Having spoken about how close the scene is to the viewer in this painting, the camera view leaves the painting and returns to an open perspective showing the painting on the left and the curator on the right talking to the live audience while embodying the depiction of the scene in the painting through bodily movements and gestures, highlighting the impression on the viewer who sees the Baptist's head on a salver with his "mouth still open" (Figures 6.2.7 and 6.2.8).

Transcript 6.2.3 Embodying the depiction of the scene

Figure 6.2.7

Figure 6.2.8

341 And the Baptist's mouth is still open

342 It's a very moving thing, and that's that's right in the front
343 of the picture

The curator then draws a comparison between the depiction of the scene in "Salome Receives the Head of John the Baptist" and the earlier painting titled "Supper at Emmaus" by showing them as a contrast pair. The online audience is shown first a full-frame image of the "Supper at Emmaus" when the curator says, "Here you have a beautiful basked of fruit" (line 343, Figure 6.2.9), and then it is shown "Salome Receiving the Head of John the Baptist" as the curator says, "There you have this decapitated head, right in front" (lines 343–344). The editor changes the images from showing the "Supper" to "Salome" when the curator begins her description of the latter painting in contrast to the former (Figure 6.2.10).

Transcript 6.2.4 Comparing paintings

Figure 6.2.9

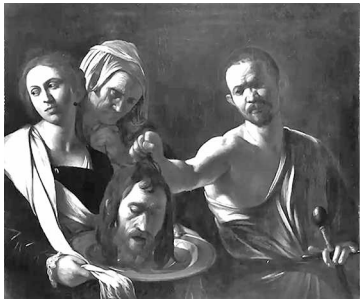

Figure 6.2.10

343 He:re you have a beautiful basket of fruit. There you have
345 this decapitated head, right in front.

Having discussed the contrast between the two paintings stemming from different periods in Caravaggio's life and work the curator talks about how the painting showing the decapitated John the Baptist impacts her, "And I find it a very moving picture" (line 345) embodying her experience by squinting her eyes and resting her right hand on her chest (Figure 6.2.11). She then continues to explain how Caravaggio achieves this effect, "(.) partly through the way:: he's applied the pai:nt. As I said, it's very broadly painted. You can feel there's more a kind of expression in the way he actually lays the paint on the canvas" (lines 344–347, Figure 6.2.12).

Transcript 6.2.5 Embodying Caravaggio's technique

344 and I find it a very
moving picture (.)

Figure 6.2.11

Figure 6.2.12

345 partly through the way::
He's applied the paint As I
said it's very broadly painted

Figure 6.2.13

346 You can feel there's more a kind
347 of expression in the way he
actually lays the paint on the
canvas

As the curator talks, the camera zooms in on her showing her from the thighs upward. She accompanies her talk by gestures with her right hand in front of her upper body, gestures that embody the way in which Caravaggio has applied the paint on the canvas to generate the artwork's expressiveness. This expressiveness is the reason for the curator feeling moved by the scene captured in the painting which the curator displays by repeating her gesture in front of her body and crouching her upper body, as if bodily empathizing with the feeling of pain depicted in the painting (Figure 6.2.13).

The analysis in this section reveals the cooperation between curator and editor in producing an experiential environment in which the viewers at their computers can see the gallery talk as produced for them as much as for the people seeing it live in the National Gallery. While the curator produces the gallery talk for the live audience, the editor makes use of the functionality of the camera and editing technology to provide the online audience with a perspective that shows the curator and the works of art she includes within her talk. The editor adopts a wide perspective when the curator gestures to paintings allowing the online viewer to relate to the curator's actions in front of the work of art. As the curator then talks about the painting the editor zooms in to show those aspects of the painting currently featuring in the talk. Indeed, they then not only show a close-up of the painting but also the camera moves across the canvas simulating the moving eyes of the viewer in the gallery. Moreover, the camera captures the curator's display of an emotional response to the artwork by zooming in on her and showing her facial and bodily expression on the screens of the online audience that simulates the cropped perspective of the people captured in Caravaggio's "The Supper at Emmaus" the curator has talked about a few moments before.

6.4 Discussion

Museums use gallery talks as a technique to engage audiences with their collections. While talking curators undertake interactional work to engage the seated audience with the selected works. In the talk examined here, the curator provides the audience with information about the artist's life as she describes features of the exhibits. Thus, she contextualized the works of art and provides people with art historical insights. Thereby, she uses the spatial proximity of the exhibits to create contrast pairs allowing her to expose the artistic development of Caravaggio over time while highlighting his skills as an artist. By reporting her personal response to the works of art, the curator is able to forge emotional connections with the audience, thus enhancing people's involvement in the talk (Radbourne et al. 2009).

The chapter, therefore, contributes to research on guided tours and gallery talks by considering them as a "form of talk" (Goffman 1981) prepared by museum personnel to generate an experiential environment for museum audiences. Studies of guided tours reveal how museum personnel manage the live audience's actions and how they encourage people's movement in space in front of exhibits allowing them to see exhibit features in light of the guide's talk (Best 2012; Best and Hindmarsh 2019). In this chapter, however, I have primarily been concerned with the ways in which the gallery talk is transformed to engage an imagined audience watching

the event later at their computers. We have seen that the editor has created a video capturing the curator's actions by interleaving them with editorial techniques, such as zooming in and out, showing still images, etc. The analysis, therefore, reveals how camera perspectives and editing techniques are used to make the curator's bodily actions as well as exhibit features visible for the online audience. Changes in the camera perspective, for example, are deployed to change from a wide to a focused perspective and show either only a work of art or the curator. Editing techniques like the roving zoom not only focus on particular exhibit features but also move across the canvas simulating the movement of viewers' eyes across the canvas, suggesting the editor attempts to enhance the experience of exhibit features for the online audience.

Social media sites like YouTube allow museums to reach wider audiences that do not have the possibility to attend exhibitions and live gallery talks. In this chapter, I have discussed a gallery talk produced to a live audience at the National Gallery, and how the recording of the talk has been edited to engage an online audience with three of Caravaggio's paintings. While the recordings show the curator talking about Caravaggio's work and life to the audience sitting in front of her, the editing has been designed for the online audience. The recordings, therefore, capture not only the curator's vocal and bodily actions, but they generate an experiential environment for the online audience by embodying the esthetic and expressive features conveyed by the curator's talk.

The analysis of the recordings, therefore, contributes to discussions in marketing about how social media can be used to enhance companies' and other organizations' relationships with their customers. In the recent past, it has been argued for the importance of integrating social media marketing in marketing communications (Valos et al. 2017) and various studies inspect comments made by audiences of video bloggers and examine interviews with influencers to understand their marketing practices (Gannon and Prothero 2016; Reinikainen et al. 2020). By examining the recording of a gallery talk, I have continued the investigation of recorded gallery talks published on social media begun a year ago with Dr Linh D. Nguyen. Then, we explored how curators account for the selection of works of art and for focusing on particular exhibit features when delivering gallery talks (vom Lehn and Nguyen 2023). Here, I have been concerned with the recordings and their relationship to the audience they have been produced for. In Chapter 5, I have already discussed the notion of the "imagined audience" as Macdonald (2002) deployed it in her study of the development of a science exhibition. In this chapter, I have treated the video uploaded to YouTube as an "implicit statement about its [the video's] imagined audience" (Macdonald 2002). The analysis suggests that when producing such videos, the editors deploy professional theories about the

audience and how it will experience the recordings of the gallery talk. The analysis of the recordings of the gallery talk, therefore, gives us a flavor of the features of the editors' professional theories. It suggests that rather than being oriented to questions about who the audience is, what demographic and educational background they have, etc., the examination of the video has revealed that the editors use theories about how members of the audience, often seated individually in front of their computers, respond to particular perspectives on the curators and the works of art. For example, the analysis suggests that the editors envision members of the online audience to be moved by seeing close-up images of works of art, such as John the Baptist's head on the platter, in close alignment with the curator's talk. It also suggests that the editors assume close-ups of the curator's facial expressions and bodily comportments and movements displaying her own emotional response to aspects of the painting will elicit a similar response in the viewers online. The analysis, therefore, contributes to discussions in "experiential marketing" (Schmitt 1999) by revealing how the editors as marketing practitioners work to create emotional or affective relationships with the audience by virtue of interweaving the curator's talk with the image of the art and the curator.

Save for these substantial and theoretical contributions to studies of gallery talks and the imagined audience, the chapter also adds to methodological debates about the analysis of videos published on YouTube. While it has recently been pointed out that social media provide social scientists with a rich source of video data, thus far relatively few studies have been undertaken that make use of this novel data source (Gibson 2022; Laurier 2013; Longhurst 2009; Weenink, Dhattiwala, and van der Duin 2022). In this chapter, I have begun to show how recordings produced for the purpose of publication on social media can be analyzed regarding the experiential environment they might generate for an online audience. Further research that examines other kinds of data, such as interviews with those involved in the production, editing, and publication of gallery talks on social media, might shed further light on the theories of the imagined audience underlying these online gallery talks and the relationship of these theories of the imagined audience to the theories of the audience deployed by museum guides and curators.

In this chapter and the previous one, I have discussed how professional theories of an imagined audience feature in the work of exhibition designers and in the development of video content by museum managers, curators, and video editors. The analysis reveals the peopled organization of activities through which personnel produce experiences for an imagined audience. Thus, the analysis shows how personnel not ascribed formal marketing roles are marketing practitioners. This personnel undertakes marketing activities and interaction to create content, in an exhibition or

online they hope will be experienced as valuable by those engaging with it. In the following Chapter 7, I turn to the consumer side and explore how visitors of exhibitions engage with an interactive exhibition.

Notes

1 In fact, authors often do not differentiate between gallery tours and gallery talks using the terms interchangeably (Fraser 1991).
2 In this chapter, I will refer to "the editor" presuming that the production, editing, and publication of the video has probably involved several personnel, including a camera person and an editor, possibly also the curator and other members of the museum staff who delivered the gallery talk herself.
3 The YouTube Channel of The National Gallery, London, and their gallery talks can be found at the link below: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrPOgNsUldOtQsTf9Kjlm_A. YouTube offers researchers with a large corpus of recordings of naturally occurring action and interaction that thus far has remained underused (Laurier 2013; Traue and Schünzel, 2019).
4 With regard to such accounts for the selection of artworks to be included in gallery talks, see vom Lehn and Nguyen (2023).
5 With this treatment of the video as a document of its producers' imagining of the audience, I relate to Macdonald's (2002) argument that every museum, exhibition plan, etc., is an "implicit statement" about its imagined audience the use of exhibitions. This treatment of the video also relates to Garfinkel's (1967a) "documentary method of interpretation in lay and professional fact finding".
6 Letizia Treves' gallery talk "Caravaggio: His Life and Style in Three Paintings can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KcdgFxmnb4.

7 Self-Service Technology and the Exhibition Experience

Museums are service organizations that provide people with spaces where they can have memorable experiences (McLean 1994; Rentschler and Gilmore 2002b; Rentschler and Hede 2007 Ruyter). Since the founding of museums as modern institutions, managers, curators, and educators have developed and experimented with techniques and technologies to augment visitors' experience of exhibits. Over the past two decades, computer-based systems operated by touch-screen and other novel interfaces have been deployed in exhibitions to engage visitors in novel ways with art, culture, and science (Drotner et al. 2020; Henning 2020; Kidd 2017; Lewi et al. 2019; Parry 2010).

Visitors engage with computer-based systems in exhibitions in a similar way as customers operate self-service technologies (SST) in supermarkets and other retail settings (Ruyter et al. 1997). In marketing and consumer research a large number of studies explore how these novel systems can help increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990; Zhu et al. 2007) and contribute to what in marketing is glossed as "co-creation of value" (Echeverri 2021; Grönroos 2012). They also investigate how the deployment of SSTs impacts concepts of service quality and the service experience (Dabholkar 1996; Ho and Ko 2008).

Marketing and consumer researchers concerned with SSTs in retail environments investigate the reasons for SSTs to fail in the delivery of the service they have been deployed to convey. Their studies suggest that SSTs might be broken or customers might be hesitant or anxious to use them (Bitner et al. 1990). Few studies explore how people cope with broken or malfunctioning SSTs. And those that do are primarily "experimental" or "scenario-based" (Koc 2019) rather than studying the ways in which people encounter and deal with "unfavorable incidents" (Bitner et al. 1990) at SSTs in situ.

Although SSTs have been deployed in museums for over 20 years, very little research is concerned with people's response to and experience of broken exhibits, that is, exhibits that do not respond as anticipated by visitors. Some scholars suggest that people may perceive exhibits as broken when in fact they are poorly designed in terms of their

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functionality and usability (Hornecker and Ciolfi 2019). In any case, when encountering broken or malfunctioning SSTs in museums, visitors often leave the exhibit and later the institution disappointed (Kollmann 2007). Sometimes, they also write bad reviews on social media sites that can entail reputational damage for the institution (Maurer 2011). Yet, investigations on how people in situ deal with broken SSTs in museums have not been undertaken.

In this chapter, I investigate how people interact with, and around, SSTs that do not respond to their actions as anticipated. The interest in such incidents is motivated by a small number of studies exploring how in service interaction, value can not only be "co-created" but also "co-destructed" (cf. Echeverri and Skålén 2021; Keeling et al. 2021). In case of visitors' experience of museums, the value created through their engagement may be diminished if they encounter difficulties in using SSTs. While much previous research has relied on experiments, scenario-based studies, or interviews, in this chapter I explore how in natural situations people act and interact with, and around, SSTs that do not respond in an anticipated way. I will investigate people's response to SSTs at the "point of experience" (vom Lehn 2006) and examine when and where people display difficulties in their interaction with an SST. The principal data examined here are field observations and video recordings produced at SSTs deployed in science centers and museums. The analysis of the interaction at interactives will (1) reveal how visitors encounter and deal with SSTs that respond to their actions in unanticipated ways, (2) provide a classification of interaction with, and around, such SSTs that managers of service organizations together with technology designers can draw on to develop and deploy SSTs in exhibitions and elsewhere, and (3) contribute to current debates about opportunities and challenges of SSTs deployed in exhibitions and other service settings.

7.1 Investigating SSTs

Before I turn to the analysis of the data it is worthwhile to briefly discuss relevant literature in marketing and consumer research concerned with the deployment of SSTs and consumers' response to them. A large number of studies are concerned with people's attitudes toward and experience of SSTs deployed in a range of settings from supermarkets to high-street banks (Dabholkar 1996; Ho and Ko 2008; Meuter et al. 2000; 2003). These studies, largely published about two decades ago, have been interested in people's inclination to use SSTs that at the time began to challenge the human-operated check-outs in retail environments. Based on surveys undertaken with consumers before and after they engaged with SSTs, these studies highlight that these novel systems can help increase the efficiency

and effectiveness of service delivery while at the same time they may generate apprehension and sometimes anxiety in consumers' use of the technology (Bitner et al. 1990; Meuter et al. 2003; Zhu et al. 2007).

While the advantages of SSTs for organizations and companies become quickly apparent it is less clear why customer should prefer the use of SSTs over face-to-face service provision. Various authors point out that SSTs improve people's service experience, for example, by reducing waiting times at counters (Collier and Kimes 2013). However, interaction with service staff remains important for customers' overall satisfaction with a retail outlet (Sharma, Ueno, and Kingshott 2021). Moreover, despite the convenience offered by SSTs people often remain resistant to using them (Dabholkar and Bagozzi 2002). This resistance is partly grounded in uncertainty about the quality of the service they will be offered from the technology, an anxiety about making mistakes in using SSTs, and in the possibility of feeling embarrassed when encountering difficulties with a system that they use in a public place (Bitner 2001; Dabholkar 1996; Gelbrich and Sattler 2014; Meuter et al. 2000; 2003). The experience of difficulties in using a system or technical failure is a critical moment in a service encounter. While it entails the danger of disappointment and a negative outcome of the service encounter it also can become a highly satisfying experience when the organization deals with the problem effectively; "[i]t appears that adverse service encounter experiences can be corrected by effective recovery efforts" (Bitner, Brown, and Meuter 2000:144). These recovery efforts are often accomplished by service personnel who are ready at hand for the customer and competently deal with the situation. Smith and Bolton (1998) have demonstrated that efficient recovery can be a way to impress customers and increase their satisfaction with the retail outlet. The result can be a "recovery paradox" (McCollough and Bharadwaj 1992) when the customer's satisfaction after the recovery is higher than it would have been if the system had functioned as designed. This outcome of higher customer satisfaction, however, is not due to the recovery itself but to the process through which the recovery was achieved (Gohary, Hamzelu, and Pourazizi 2016).

We can see that the existing body of research on SSTs is primarily concerned with customer satisfaction and recovery efforts and their impact on customer experience (Dao and Theotokis 2021; Zhu et al. 2013). These efforts tend to involve the staff of the service company or organization. In this chapter, I will explore how museum visitors engage with SSTs in exhibitions where they encounter difficulties in using them. In museums, apart from guided tours and exhibits staffed with explainers, visitors interact with interactive exhibits without the opportunity to approach a competent member of staff for help. Like SSTs in

supermarkets or railway stations interactives in museums require visitors to create their experience of exhibits by engaging with and using the technologies unaided by museum staff (vom Lehn 2010). Some have criticized that these systems turn the museum experience into entertainment and fun by simplifying complex content (Henning 2005; Hughes 2001; Sorkin 1992). Others point out that SSTs in museums curtail and undermine people's natural curiosity and drive to interact with others. The design of these systems often confuses interactivity with autonomy and user-empowerment and conceives technological interactivity as a form of social interaction and sociality (Barry 1998; Heath and vom Lehn 2008; Henning 2005). Studies of computer exhibits and "interactives" in museums suggest that they are popular with visitors but rarely facilitate social interaction and cooperation between them; and when social interaction arises then it often serves to help each other out in the operation of the system (Heath and vom Lehn 2008; vom Lehn and Heath 2005).

In this chapter, I will take these studies of people's interaction with, and around, interactives in exhibitions as starting point for the analysis of how people display difficulties in using interactives and how they independently, without the help of museum staff, work with others to understand or resolve the issue they have encountered. The analysis, therefore, is concerned with the recovery efforts that visitors undertake when interactives respond in unanticipated ways. Such an analysis requires data and methods that allow access to the fine details of the action and interaction with, and around, SSTs in museums.

7.2 Data and Methods

Museums are service organizations where we can study how people in ordinary circumstances detect and deal with problems they encounter when using self-service systems. The data analyzed and discussed in this chapter have been gathered in science centers and museums including the Science Museum in London, the Royal Observatory in Greenwich (London), and Explore-at-Bristol. These museums are technology-rich as they primarily display hands-on and computer-based interactives. While museums increasingly deploy more advanced systems involving large-scale projections and novel sensor-based interfaces touch-screen systems still pervade exhibitions because they are relatively inexpensive and easy to maintain (vom Lehn 2010).

The data discussed in this chapter consist of field observation and video recordings of "naturally" occurring action and interaction at computer-based exhibits, self-service systems primarily operated by touch screens offering visitors experiences related to science and scientific discovery. For the purpose of the video recording conventional stationary camcorders were set up on tripods near the exhibits but in an unobtrusive way to

not draw undue attention to them. I did not stand behind the camera but observed the events in the galleries, took field notes, and gathered other material such as stills of computer screens and the content of exhibit labels.

Altogether, the body of data is comprised of approximately 500 hours of video data and numerous days of fieldwork. It includes several hundred of visitors including people of different age groups, gender, and educational background, individuals as well as pairs, groups and families, and people with various degrees of technical knowledge and understanding. The visitors were informed about the research by virtue of large signage explaining to them the purpose of the study and the use of video recordings. The signage also invited visitors to approach the researcher or a member of staff at any time and ask for the camera to be switched off or tape to be wiped, if they felt unhappy about their participation in the study. While some visitors approached the researcher nobody objected to participating in the project. On the contrary, people voiced their interest in the project and were more than happy to contribute to research that might benefit the quality of the museum.

The use of video recordings for the study of consumer and visitor behavior is not new in marketing research. Indeed, there has been a long-standing interest in exploiting the opportunities offered by video recordings in particular within consumer research (Belk and Kozinets 2005; Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989; O'Guinn and Belk 1989). These studies suggest that an analytic and methodological framework is required to deal with the complexity of video data. As in previous chapters, here I draw on ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967b) and conversation analysis (Sacks 1992).

The analysis is concerned with unpacking the social organization of people's vocal, bodily, and material action as it arises at the exhibit face. The analytic attention of the research is with the resources, practices, and reasoning participants rely on and bring to bear in the production of social actions and activities and in making sense of the conduct of others. The analysis proceeds "case-by-case" and involves the transcription of participants' talk and bodily action and the detailed examination of the interactional character of particular actions and activities. By comparing and contrasting actions and activities between various fragments the analysis identifies patterns of conduct and interaction (Heath, Hindmarsh, and Luff 2010).[1]

This chapter particularly explores video-taped fragments of interaction to reveal how participants notice, detect, and display problems with SSTs, be they technical problems or practical difficulties in dealing with a task or game. Thereby, I focus on stationary touch-screen systems that are currently commonplace in all kinds of museums. People's experience of this kind of system reflects many of the events that occur when they use mobile systems and when they are involved in activities at multi-user

exhibits or ubiquitous systems (Heath and vom Lehn 2008; vom Lehn 2010; vom Lehn and Heath 2005). The fragments selected for this chapter are particularly interesting and clear examples of the more general themes that the analysis pursues. My data corpus contains numerous fragments of a similar kind.

7.3 Encouraging Response

Designers and managers of service and retail settings, including shops, airport check-in areas, and museums, deploy SSTs with the intent to facilitate service delivery. These SSTs are designed in similar ways. They consist of an interactive monitor displaying instructions on how to encourage the system to produce the desired response, for example, to deliver cash, print airport tickets, communicate information about an exhibit, or provide interactive content like computer games, quizzes, and other activities. On arrival at such an SST visitors see a screen displaying an instruction such as "press here to start" or such like. As they touch the screen the display changes and involves them in a sequence of actions through which they gradually progress through the activity. The change of the display arises in a way that the user treats it as a response to their actions; it occurs immediately after their action and encourages a next action, for example, to answer a question shown on the screen by pressing a button (Figure 7.1.1. – 7.1.3.). Thus, a two-part sequence of "user-action, system-response" develops providing the basis for the interaction with and experience of the SST. The interactive relationship arising from this two-part sequence allows the user to anticipate that the system will respond to their actions in a particular way (Transcript 7.1).

Transcript 7.1 User-action, system-response sequence

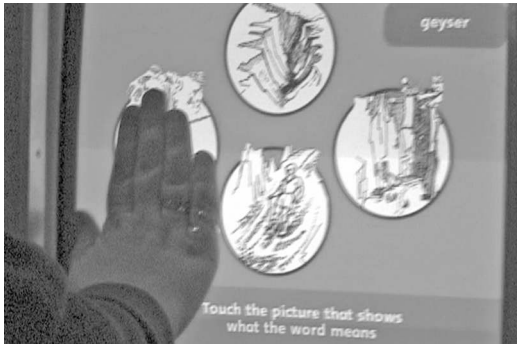

Figure 7.1.1 User action.

Figure 7.1.2 System response.

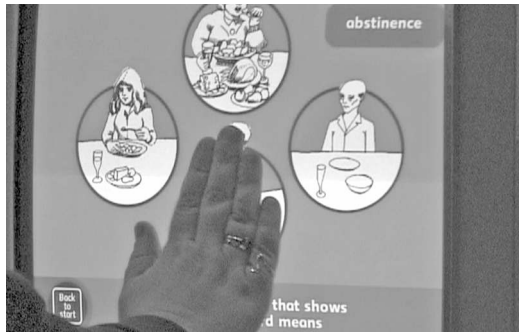

Figure 7.1.3 User action.

Problems arise when SSTs respond in unanticipated ways to the user's actions. For example, a man arrives at the exhibit entitled Model the Universe. The exhibit consists of a set of dice laid out on a small table, a Reset Button built into the table, and a screen providing information about the exhibit and displaying the results of the interaction with the system (Figure 7.2). By arranging the dice on the table and pressing the Reset Button the user starts a program that takes a photograph of the arrangement of dice simulating a planetary system on the screen in front. It transpires to the onlooker that the screen in fact is not a touch screen but is there for display purposes only. The interaction with the system is conducted with the dice and the Reset Button. A small instruction manual is on the table to the left; it shows exemplary arrangements of dice that will lead to interesting "planetary" movements displayed on the screen.

On arrival at the exhibit, the man quickly browses the pages of the book before turning to the screen in front. He presses with the forefinger of his

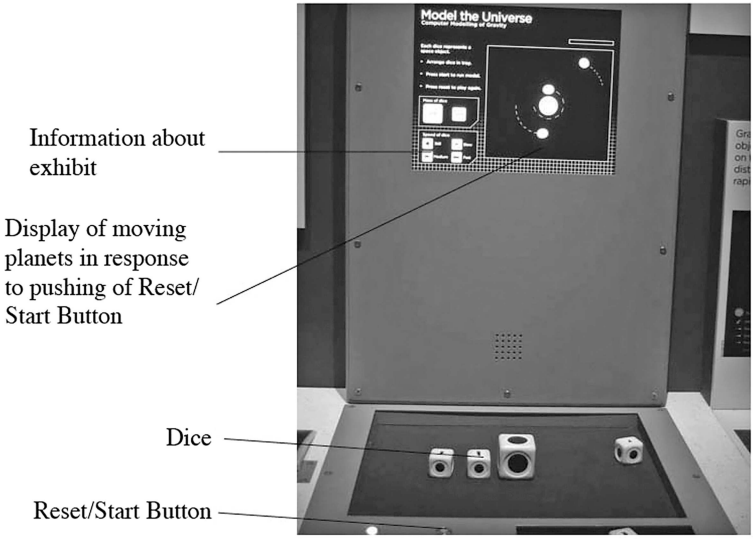

Figure 7.2 Modeling the Universe.

right hand against an object visible on the screen and then looks at the screen in anticipation of a response from the system, but nothing happens (Figure 7.2.1).

Transcript 7.2 Man at Modeling the Universe

Figure 7.2.1 User action.

Figure 7.2.2 No system response.

Figure 7.2.3 User action.

The lack of system response encourages the man to look across the table in front and glance to the instruction book before again turning to the

screen. He holds his right hand at his mouth displaying thinking and pondering, maybe about his next action or about the display in front (Figure 7.2.2). A moment later, he presses again his right forefinger on the screen, this time a little harder with his forefinger visibly showing the pressure exerted on the screen (Figure 7.2.3.). The system still does not respond to his action. He again looks across the table and a moment later leaves the exhibit.

Museum managers and designers argue that interactive exhibits facilitate a specific kind of relationship between a user and a system. They encourage a visitor to push a button or pull a lever triggering a change in the state and display of the system; for the time of the "interaction" with the system, the visitor thus is turned into a user (Bradburne 1998; 2000), a form of relationship created by the deployment of SSTs in museums that some have criticized because it leads to monotonous and repetive courses of action (Barry 1998; Henning 2005).

Such exhibits allow the visitor to anticipate a particular kind of system response upon their action on the screen and make visible an organization in the relationship between the user and the system. In the case at hand, the anticipated system response is not forthcoming upon the user action. The man experiences the lack of system response as an incongruity in the organization of his relationship with the system and looks for the organization underlying the lack of system response. When he is not able to make sense of the organization underlying his relationship with the system by looking across the table in front and touching the circles on the screen he turns and leaves the exhibit.

It is often argued that computer systems allow only for "machine-like action" (Collins 1993) because they can understand only specific actions. The design of such systems excludes actions not projected or projectable by the technology and "black boxes" the potentially capricious user (Latour 1987; Pinch 1993). As people examine SSTs they gradually learn about the actions that a system can understand and align their orientation to the technology accordingly. The case in hand suggests that when encountering an SST people often do not spend the time necessary to be "black boxed" and to establish an interactive relationship with the system. They try two, maybe three times, to stimulate a response from the system, but failing this, they move on and either consider themselves as incompetent or the system as broken or badly designed.

Incongruities in people's interaction with SSTs are experienced as breakdowns in the interactive relationship between user and system. They are noticed by the user or by other people as unanticipated user action or system response; the anticipated organization of events does not materialize although the participants accomplish actions to align with the organization of events they experience. This observation suggests that the

organization of the interactive relationship between a user and an SST is not determined by the design of the system but is ongoingly produced and enacted by the social and material actions of the user and other people participating in the events. For example, the user modifies the way in which they press a button, or other people in the locale comment on or instruct the user's actions and thus try to influence the organization of the interaction with the system. We now turn to the ways in which people's accounts for incongruities in their experiences of SSTs influence their relationship with a system.

7.4 Accounting for System Response

In marketing and consumer research there is little research on how people use SSTs. Instead, studies primarily conduct surveys with users of such systems that are exploring people's attitude toward and adoption of technological innovations in service settings. They reveal the importance of the usability and usefulness of such systems and suggest that when deploying SSTs organizations should take into consideration the possibility that customers might feel embarrassed if they encounter difficulties in using them (Blut, Wang, and Schoefer 2016; Dabholkar and Bagozzi 2002; Gelbrich and Sattler 2014; Meuter et al. 2003). Scholars also have suggested that some people are resistant to using SSTs because they are anxious to fail in operating them. Such anxiety can badly impact people's overall experience of the environment where the technology has been deployed (Kollmann 2007; Meuter et al. 2003). These studies are primarily based on interviews and surveys and consider the influence of the response to service failure by staff on people's satisfaction with the service encounter (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault, 1990). They neglect studying how customers experience and deal with technical problems and service failure when staff is unavailable to help.

In museums, visitors notice and make sense of problems and difficulties with SSTs themselves. How they perceive problems and whether they attribute them to the system's design or their ability to operate it impacts how they continue with their examination of the system and whether they leave the exhibit satisfied or disappointed. For example, in the following fragment a girl arrives at a large table equipped with cones that can be moved across its surface. The table is overlaid with moving representations of stars; in regular intervals target symbols appear encouraging the user to place their cone onto them and thus triggering a short video clip on the wall in front; the clip shows an astronomer talking about a scientific issue and posing questions designed to encourage people to think about and discuss problems in astronomy. As the girl moves the cone on the table clouds of small stars appear near the device. After a few moments, she offers an account for the system's response to her movement of the cone, "uh I'm

making stars". The girl's talk, bodily and material actions occasion her mother who has arrived behind her at the table to look down to the cone (Figure 7.3.2).

Transcript 7.3 Making sense of an interactive

Figure 7.3.1

Figure 7.3.2

Figure 7.3.3

G: oh that's a funny sensation that is

G: uh I'm making stars

The girl's utterance arises after she has moved the cone a few times back and forth across the table triggering the system to display small star clouds near the device. On her arrival at the table the mother first looks over the girl's shoulder to see her actions on the table before turning to other parts of the exhibit. The mother's shift in orientation from the table to the wall in front is produced just when Maggie begins exaggerated movements of the cone, first from the right to the left and then back to the right. As she moves the cone, she has her head turned to the right where from the corner of her eye she can notice her mother's shift in orientation. On the onset of her utterance that accounts for the effect of her actions on the system the mother turns her head, observes the actions on the table, and then describes her experience of the system's response to the girl's actions, "oh that's a funny sensation that is" (Figure 7.3.1).

Not only the girl who uses the system but also her mother who observes the events at the table likens the changes in the display generated by the movement of the cone on the table to the purpose of the exhibit. The girl provides a description of the appearance of the stars on the table, and her mother expands on her daughter's account. At this moment, the two participants treat the appearing stars on the table's surface as a response to their actions encouraging the girl to follow this "garden path" (Suchman 2007: 101) and seeing the creation of this visual effect as the purpose of the SST (Figure 7.3.3). Hence, they remain ignorant of the functionality of the targets

visible on the table that regularly appear in front of their eyes on the table and of the video clip they could start by placing the cone on one of these targets. The two visitors generate an experience that is satisfying for them, although it might diverge from the exhibition designers' and managers' intentions built into the system.

In other cases, people do not consider changes in the system as responses to their actions and raise "false alarms" (Suchman 2007: 161). For example, a man arrives at Modelling the Universe and observes his son's actions and the events on the screen in front. While the boy moves some of the dice around on the table the man looks for the "Reset Button". He presses the button embedded in the table, then touches colored-in circles displayed in the bottom left corner of the screen before indicating his disappointment with the exhibit; he looks across the panel in front of the table, opens his arms, and asks, "where's the Reset Button then?". His verbal and tactile actions on the exhibit occasion the boy to attend to his father's question. He turns from the screen to look at the panel by the table and says, "there is no Reset Button" (Figure 7.4.2) encouraging the father to again grab some of the dice and then turn to the screen.

The father displays his despair with the interface after he has pressed the button embedded in the table without noticing a response by the system. In pressing the button, he applies particular care to press it right down and then turns to look at the screen. Both father and son stand next to each other and wait for the objects on the screen to move. After a few moments, the boy moves his right arm across and grabs one of the dice that he then moves back and forth on the table. While the father looks for the Reset Button neither of them attends to the changing image on the screen; the photographs of the dice are turned into colored-in circles that move toward another. The participants do not notice the system's response to their actions (Figure 7.4.1).

Transcript 7.4 Father and son at Modelling the Universe

Figure 7.4.1

Figure 7.4.2

Figure 7.4.3

F: doesn't make a lot of sense does it?

A moment later the father looks up, touches, and presses on one of four colored-in circles on the display. As his finger begins to move up toward the screen he says, "doesn't make a lot of sense does it?" displaying disappointment in the interaction with the exhibit and occasioning his son to also look to the screen. They both wait a moment for the system to respond to their action, but when such an event still is not forthcoming the man moves his finger up to touch a different area of the screen (Figure 7.4.3). The participants' search for a button and their pressing of the colored-in circle on the screen suggest they have not noticed the objects' movement across the screen or do not see it as an appropriate response to their actions. They detect an incongruity between their actions and the system's response that they cannot resolve. A little later, the father turns away and leaves the exhibit while the boy continues the examination of Modelling the Universe for a few minutes before he also leaves the exhibit.

Having detected an incongruity in the relationship between the user action and the system response people often produce accounts through which they display whether they attribute the origin of the incongruity to the system or to the user; they talk about faulty or badly designed technology or the "dumb" user who is unable to understand the system's functioning. In the case at hand, the father invokes the notion of "bad design" as he accounts for the system's lack of response. Thus, the notions of "bad design" and the "dumb user" that for long have pervaded debates in human-computer interaction (Draper and Norman 1986; Oudshoorn and Pinch 2005) become observable as accounts through which people make sense of and render intelligible for each other the organization of interactivity as they experience it at the exhibit.

When people interact and collaborate with others while examining an SST accounting for a problem with the system may become difficult; is the system badly designed or are the participants using it in an inappropriate way? For example, the Sex Change Exhibit featured in the following fragment[2] has a relatively small touch-screen interface built into a metal casing to allow its user some privacy when s/he turns a picture of their face into the opposite sex. To take a picture that is of good enough quality to be subjected to such a process the user places her/his face in front of the exhibit. By moving their head to the right position, the face captured by a small camera built into the top of the case appears in alignment with the guides on the screen in front. Very often people arrive in a group and interact with the system in collaboration. In the case at hand, a girl sits on the lap of her father who tries to take a photograph of his daughter that later on can be manipulated. When he finds that the girl's face is not properly aligned with the guides he instructs her to bring her face into a better position to take the photograph (Figure 7.5.1); the girl moves her head but the face still is not properly aligned with the guides encouraging the father to voice further instructions

and to grab her head from behind and move it back and forth as well as up and down (Figure 7.5.2). A moment later the mother joins them and proffers further instructions as to the position and orientation of the girl's face. Both parents now simultaneously call out instructions trying to direct the position of their daughter's head. The interaction culminates in the girl's embodiment of her disappointment with the events at the exhibit; she begins to cry and in tears says, "I can't do it", when despite her best efforts to follow her parents' vocal and physical instructions her face does not align with the visual guides on the screen.

Transcript 7.5 Family at Sex Change Exhibit

Figure 7.5.1

Figure 7.5.2

Collaboration around SSTs can lead to tension between the participants who in different ways try to gain access to the interface. In the case at hand, the tension between the participants is exacerbated because the parents' physical action on the girl impacts the quality of the picture on the screen. When the picture appearing on the screen is not of sufficient quality to manipulate it in later steps of the activity, the parents ascribe the problem to the girl's actions; in their view she has not positioned her head correctly in front of the camera.

In situations where several people simultaneously interact in different ways with a system it is quite difficult to differentiate between user action and system response because several people simultaneously participate in the activity. The participants engender the system to respond to their actions while at the same time engaging in social interaction with each other. When detecting a problem, they produce an account for the origin of their difficulty in using the system and then test their account by operating the interface again and monitoring if these actions amend the problem leading to a satisfying system response. Thus, they progressively align with the requirement of the system until they detect a system response that in their view resolves

the incongruity in their anticipation of how the system should respond to the use of the interface. In the case in hand, the father eventually discovers that it is quite difficult to align one's face with the guides on the screen because the camera is built into the top of the exhibit's casing and not near the screen in front as he had assumed throughout his interaction with his daughter.

Because people examine SSTs in a public environment, user action and system responses are visible to people nearby. They can differentiate between the actions near and on the interface and the system's response to these actions. The ability to see the relationship between user and system and to discriminate between its constituents, the action, and the response allows the participants to account for the system's response and describe it as congruous or incongruous with their expectations. Either way, in the system's response or lack of response the participants detect the organization underlying the interaction with the SST and design their actions to move the interaction with the system forward. As we have seen, people are resilient with regard to unexpected system responses; they tend to presume that the system is working properly, and they fail to grasp its functioning before blaming the system. Hence, they reinterpret responses to align their expectations with the observed system response, and they look for information at the exhibit or in the locale that can help them resolve the incongruity. Such reinterpretations can lead to misconceptions of exhibits although the visitors leave the site satisfied, or to disappointment and frustration when they cannot resolve the incongruity, even when the system works fine.

7.5 Helping Others

When people notice others having difficulties in their interaction with an SST, they may become involved in the interaction with, and around, the system. Consider Fragment 7.6 recorded at Space Probe, a multi-user exhibit consisting of multiple workstations, each of which is operated by a principal user. The exhibit allows three visitors to engage in a collaborative game that requires them to simultaneously engage in different but related activities. Each visitor is assigned a different role in a team – an engineer, a scientist, and a communications officer – formed to send a space probe into outer space. For the duration of the game, the visitors each stand at a separate touch screen facing a common large screen. While engaged in the game each visitor is asked to select instruments from a larger selection that will help the space mission to succeed. If all participants pick the right instruments in time with the time displayed on the large screen, the mission will launch and be regarded as a success.

When visitors arrive at Space Probe, they distribute across the three touch-screen systems. They first individually engage with the individual systems they stand at but when learning about the shared goal of the task also monitor each other's actions and screens. The following fragment begins when three children play Space Probe. Tom, the eldest, is at the system in the

middle, and his sisters, Rosy and Josie, stand to the left and right of him. As the game progresses Tom glances to either side and monitors the selections of technical instruments his siblings are making at their systems. After a few moves in the game, he turns first to Josie's and then to Rosy's screen and at each screen selects an instrument on his sisters' behalf by touching their screens (Figure 7.6.2). Tom produces his actions on his siblings' screens when after having pressed a button on his screen he notices Rosy and Josie glancing at him while hesitating to select instruments on their respective screens. At the same time, Tom has seen that the time displayed on the large screen in front is running down (Figure 7.6.1). He treats their hesitation and glances toward him as a request for help and attends to it by briefly operating their systems. A moment later, the three children wait for the system's next instruction to act as part of the game (Figure 7.6.3.).

Transcript 7.6 Tom and his siblings at Space Probe

Figure 7.6.1

Figure 7.6.2

Figure 7.6.3

Girl on the right looks to boy's screen. Boy looks ahead to the large screen.

Problems with a system or uncertainty about the next move in an activity can encourage co-participants to help and assist with the task at hand. By orienting to co-participants who have been observing the events at an exhibit for a while the user of a system can occasion others to change their participation status and become involved in the activity. Such shifts in orientation can be indicated by virtue of changes in bodily orientation or by utterances like questions and requests. In the case at hand, Tom helps his siblings with their next move in the game before returning to his own workstation. The emergence of such momentary "help networks" (Quayle and Durrheim 2006) that jointly tackle a problem at hand is quite common. They are established when problems arise, and they often disperse when the difficulty has been dealt with.

Consider fragment 7.7[3] recorded at the Age-a-Tron, an exhibit that, similar to Sex Change, requires the user to take a photograph of her/

himself and transform it by pressing buttons on the screen. Siona and Anne arrive at the Age-a-Tron while discussing who will sit on the chair and become the principal user of the system. Siona then sits down, and Anne stands to her right being ready to observe the action. A moment later Anne changes position, moves around the chair, and then stands behind her friend while placing her left hand on her head and bowing down to have a good view of the Figures on the screen in front. Siona tries to align her face with the guides on the screen when Anne offers to help her. She places her hand on Siona's head and guides her friend's bodily movement by physically adjusting the head and verbally instructing her friend's head position, "up a bit up a bit" (Figure 7.7.2).

Siona provides her friend with help in aligning her face with the guides as Anne moves her body in front of the screen and says, "I push my head into it". The bodily movement coupled with the accompanying talk indicates that the finding of a suitable position is not straightforwardly achieved. Siona, therefore, decides that Anne's actions indicate similar kinds of difficulties (Figure 7.7.1). She moves behind Anne and applies gentle physical actions on her friend's posture to adjust the orientation of her face to the screen in front. After a few moments she voices an assessment of the picture on the screen, "that's better", that Anne aligns with by encouraging Siona to "take the photo then". Siona steps and leans forward and then presses the virtual button on the screen to save the photo on the system (Figure 7.7.3). When she then leans forward to operate the system and morph the picture of her friend into that of an older woman Anne asks her to step back and let her do it.

Transcript 7.7 Siona and Anne at Sex Change Exhibit

Figure 7.7.1

A: Sion you gonna go Sion?

Figure 7.7.2

S: u up a bit up a bit

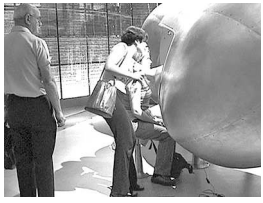

Figure 7.7.3

A: take the photo then

People observing events evolving at an SST often become involved in the action, in particular when they notice that the "principal user" appears to have difficulties in their interaction with the system. For example, when a user displays difficulty in using a system, they may solicit help from a companion who has been observing the action, or the companion may offer to assist them. In these cases, the companion attends to the request for help by making a verbal suggestion as to the user's next action or s/he may step closer to the system and by virtue of a tactile action apply the next move themself. They, thus, at least for a moment, take over the use of the system, and the roles of user and observer established and maintained in and through the participants' actions briefly change. In the case at hand, Anne asks her friend to step back and allow her to use the system and manipulate her photograph. Yet, in some cases participants have more difficulties to regain the initiative at a system after a companion has helped them. In Transcript 7.8[4], a woman sits on a stool at an SST displaying to her husband that she has difficulty using it (Figure 7.8.1). Her talk encourages the man to her left to step forward and move the interaction with the system forward by touching the screen (Figure 7.8.2). When a moment later, the man touches the screen for a second time, he says "stop that" (Figure 7.8.3), and then, as the man touches the screen for a third time regardless of her request to not interfere in her engagement with the system, slaps his hand (Figure 7.8.4), thus physically reinforcing her request.

Transcript 7.8 Couple at SST

Figure 7.8.1

Figure 7.8.2

Figure 7.8.3

Figure 7.8.4

Moira: what do you do (.) here?
Moira: Stop that
Moira: he::y

When people notice that a user has difficulties in the interaction with an SST, they often offer help and assistance. They provide comments and

instructions or briefly collaborate with the user to make sense of and align with the way in which the interaction with the system is organized. In some cases – see Transcript 7.8 – the roles of user and observer might switch when observers first become helpers and then take over the engagement with the SST. When this switch of roles was not intended by the request for help, short squabbles and unhappiness with the new situation may arise.

The social organization of action at the SST markedly differs from the order that underlies the user's relationship with the system. Interaction with SSTs is based on a two-part sequence of user actions and system responses; the next move by the system, therefore, can be anticipated based on the user's prior action (see Section 7.1). The organization of social interaction is prone to contingencies and allows for surprises; the next action may be expectable, but one can never be sure of it. When people who have been observing the engagement with SSTs turn to help a user in their interaction with an SST, the tightly coupled sequence of interaction with a system and the loosely and contingently coupled sequence of interaction between people meet without participants being able to easily align these two very different organizational forms of interaction with each other.

Collaboration at SSTs lasts for only a short while. The collaborative examination and use of SSTs that involve highly contingent forms of participation do not mesh well with the tightly coupled two-part sequences of user action and system response that characterize interactive relationships between user and system. Once the user experiences a system as working other people's actions are seen as disturbances in the periphery of the interface; the user asks the other people to stop interfering in the interaction with the system and step back. The technologically simplified organization of action produced by the successively emerging user action and system response prevails over more complex and contingent forms of interaction and collaboration between people.

7.6 Interacting with SSTs: A Classification of Events

The analysis of the ways in which visitors interact with, and around, SSTs in exhibitions and how they deal with problems and difficulties they encounter in using and making sense of them provides us with findings that we can use to systematize and classify reoccurring events at such systems. It is a common feature of these events that they begin with the detection of an unanticipated system response to the user's actions. In public places like museums or shopping centers the interaction with SSTs often arises in social situations where difficulties in using the technologies are noticed not only by the user but also by other people who monitor or observe the events. The marketing and consumer research literature has identified this

publicness of interaction with SSTs as the source of consumers' anxiety and hesitancy in using them because people might feel embarrassed when having difficulties with the technology (Gelbrich and Sattler 2014; Meuter et al. 2003). In effect, such studies argue that social relationships at SSTs impact individual attitudes to technology. My analysis suggests that such claims may be short-sighted as they ignore exploring how people may resolve difficulties in using SSTs in interaction with others. Based on my analysis, I therefore propose the following classification of interaction with, and around, SSTs, a classification that may help not only in designing SSTs but also in developing considerations for the design of the environment where they are being deployed.

7.6.1 Engaging and Observing

In museums, SSTs are deployed and used in public spaces inhabited by people who are companions and others who happen to be there at the same time. They engage with the systems by responding to instructions proffered by the displays. Thus, they begin to participate in actions that are largely pre-structured by the design-work of the exhibit designers. People's participation with the SSTs is visible to all those in the locale, companions, and strangers. Companions often stand close by the user observing the action while strangers stay a little further away. Thus, an "ecology of participation" (Heath et al. 2002) arises at SSTs that allows multiple people differential access to the system and the events around it. A small number of visitors can directly, "hands-on", touch the system, while others are secondary users, finding out about what to do at the system and what can be experienced by interacting with it, from observing others. Therefore, when it is their turn to interact with the system in light of having observed others and having experienced the exhibit from the "second row".

7.6.2 Helping, Supporting, and Interfering

By standing near the user, companions are able to closely observe the events on the screen and also respond to the events of the SST. Where they stand, they can provide the user with comments, suggestions, and instructions of what the events mean or how to attend to them. They also can point to objects visible on screen or even reach for the interface and manipulate the ongoing sequence of events. Thus, the ecology emerging around the SST facilitates the arising of local help networks that can allow for collaborative forms of participation.

However, the user often perceives certain forms of participation with an SST as intrusive and interfering. The user then asks her/his companions to "stop interfering" or even to "step back". Strangers standing further away

from the exhibit have limited access to the interface. They observe the action and may talk about the events with their companions. Yet, they do not have direct access to touch the screen until the user and their companions move on, and they rarely become involved in the interaction with the system, not even vocally, until it is their turn or that of one of their companions.

7.6.3 Private and Social Engagement

The design of SSTs deployed in exhibitions often prioritizes the individual user over collaborative forms of participation. The deployment of the systems in the public space of the museum however allows for social forms of engagement. These include asymmetric participation like monitoring and observing the user and symmetric participation like interacting at, and around, the SST in help networks and such like.

When arriving with companions at such SSTs, participants engage within the activities at the exhibits in social situations inhabited by others who not only can see what they are doing but also can contribute to and become involved in the activity. Thus, private engagement with SSTs often arises within social interaction, which can enhance or be detrimental to visitors' experience of the systems.

7.7 Discussion

Science centers and museums are technology-rich service organizations where people encounter and examine SSTs that have been designed to entice people's interest in art, culture, and science. Despite many years of experience in deploying technology in exhibitions SSTs still often crash or fail and are not always easy to use. Failing and difficult-to-use SSTs can lead to disappointment and frustration among museum visitors, and thus impact not only visitors' experience of museums but also can undermine the reputation of museums and their brand image, for example when disappointed visitors write bad reviews on social media (Kollmann 2007).

The analysis suggests that encounters with failing or difficult-to-use SSTs are experienced as incongruities in the interaction with such systems. These encounters often foster environments for spontaneous, if short-lived, forms of social interaction and collaboration. Social interaction and collaboration arise when the user asks for help or observers detect an incongruity and offer assistance. Such kinds of social relationships have been described as "help networks" (Bannon 1986; Eveland et al. 1994) that are comprised of colleagues, friends, and family members, "local experts" who know how to ask the right questions to deal with a system problem

(O'Malley 1986). However, at SSTs like ticket machines or check-outs in supermarkets users as well as their companions are often novices who encounter this specific system for the first time. They may bring to bear knowledge about the interaction with other computer systems and SSTs in their use of this SST but have to develop practical solutions in response to the system's display in the specific circumstances at hand, often quickly to avoid embarrassment.

Users asking others for help or who are seen as having problems in their interaction with a system are at risk of losing face (Goffman 1967). The potential of embarrassment and loss of face can be a barrier to people's engagement with SSTs and their preference for looking for service personnel (Meuter et al. 2003). The analysis, however, suggests that ascribing the origin of cognitive states or attitudes to experiences or anticipated experiences with SSTs ignores the social situation in which such difficulties arise. We have seen that when people notice that others encounter difficulties in their interaction with SSTs, they offer advice carefully and avoid placing the user in a compromising position. Thus, users and helpers attempt to avoid drawing undue attention to the provision of assistance. When, as in the case of the family at the Sex Change exhibit, the disappointment and frustration with the interface become publicly noticeable, actions are conducted to calm the situation and resolve the problem in the interaction with the system.

The analysis furthermore suggests that the design and deployment of systems in service organizations require more complex concepts of interactivity than those deployed by engineers and technicians when developing SSTs. Such concepts of interactivity should take into consideration the contingencies of social situations in which people encounter SSTs in service organizations. What is to be tested is neither the user nor the use of the system but the situation in which the system will be encountered, examined, and made sense of (cf. Pinch 1993). This suggestion points toward an involvement of marketing and consumer research in the design, development, and deployment of SSTs. It provides grounds to argue for "open-ended" iterations of design and evaluation, that is, toward SSTs deployed on the floor of service organizations, conducted by marketing and consumer researchers in collaboration with technology developers. This live evaluation of SSTs may be augmented by video discussions in which design teams comprised of marketing, consumer researchers, and technology designers as well as "users" collaboratively explore the emergence of interaction with and experience of SSTs in specific situations. The observations and findings from such research may be used to refine the design of the systems.

Research concerned with the quality of people's service experience suggests that when service provision fails or remains short of customer

expectation the service organization will have to provide service recovery processes to remedy the organization's short-comings (Bitner et al. 2000). If, in such cases neither the technology nor the recovery process work to visitors' (or customers') satisfaction the value that would have potentially been created in the service encounter at an SST is diminished, if not "co-destructed" (Echeverri and Skålén 2021; Keeling et al. 2021). It, however, might also turn out that the emergence of help networks at SSTs in museums (or retail environments) enhances people's satisfaction as an environment for social interaction and cooperation has emerged around the "broken exhibit" through which the difficulty in using the system was resolved. Therefore, further research on interaction among customers arising at SSTs not working in an anticipated way may shed further light on the "service recovery paradox" and address the controversy about its effect on customers' service experience (De Matos, Henrique, and Alberto Vargas Rossi 2007; McCollough and Bharadwaj 1992).

With the analysis in this chapter, I have pointed to the important contribution that interactionist analyses of people's use of SSTs and their dealings when encountering difficulties in using such systems, often in cooperation with others, can make to these debates. The analysis draws attention to the social situation in which the experience of SSTs, working systems as well as systems not working as anticipated, arises. Thus, it shows the importance of interactionist methods for the analysis of events arising at, and around, SSTs. It unpacks the organization of actions and activities through which visitors "co-create value" by embedding resources provided by the museum, that is, SSTs and associated material, within the organization of their action and interaction. In Chapter 8, I further pursue the question of how value is co-created in interaction by turning to the interactional production of pricing.

Notes

1 For more detailed information on the method of analysis, see Chapter 3.
2 Fragment 7.5 has previously been discussed in Heath and vom Lehn (2008).
3 Fragment 7.7 has previously been discussed in Heath and vom Lehn (2008).
4 This fragment has previously been discussed in Heath and vom Lehn (2008).

8 Pricing in Marketing Interaction on Street-Markets

The previous three chapters have investigated how consumers co-create value by embedding resources deployed within a servicescape within their interaction. In this chapter, I continue the study of the interactional co-creation of value by studying how people produce "pricing" in, and through, marketing interaction on street-markets. Although price is a critical element of the marketing mix, few studies in marketing and consumer research investigate the concrete circumstances in which those involved in the pricing of products discuss and negotiate for how much money the ownership of goods will change. With the emergence of novel price-setting mechanisms like the "personalization" of prices (Esteves 2022; Tomczyk, Buhalis, Fan and Williams 2022) or techniques such as "name your own price (NYOP)" (Chandran and Morwitz 2005; Kim, Natter and Spann 2009; Spann, Skiera and Schäfers 2004) over the past two decades interest has arisen in investigating how consumers may participate in price setting. Yet, still relatively few studies explore the processes through which prices are set in interaction between market participants.

Some of this research has been undertaken in anthropology. Geertz (1978) or more recently Alexander and Alexander (1991), for example, have shown how consumers participate in the constitution of price on peasant markets and bazaars, and how price negotiations are related to, for instance, the unequal distribution of information between market participants. Related research in marketing and consumer research has examined marketing interaction in garage sales. This research suggests that in these kinds of markets the personal is reinserted "into an economic system otherwise characterized by fixed prices and passive consumption" (Herrmann 2004: 75). It, however, does not investigate the processes through which price negotiations are accomplished.

In this chapter, I explore the organizational features of marketing interaction through which consumers become involved in the setting of prices. Street-markets are an economic environment where participants regularly conduct actions through which a given price is questioned,

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challenged, and changed. In the analysis I investigate how challenges to given prices arise (Section 8.3), how offers for price reductions are produced (Section 8.4), and how market participants approach and distance themselves from each other's price offers for wares (Section 8.5). Before I turn to the analysis of the data, I briefly discuss academic research concerned with market and sales interaction and with the interactional constitution of price.

8.1 Markets, Sales Interaction, and the Emergence of Price in Interaction

In supermarkets and similar retail settings, prices generally are invariable. Customers pay the price shown on labels and tags without challenging them at the till. And those working in supermarkets, sales staff, till operators, and other floor staff are not in a position to change the price of goods, and therefore, neither negotiate with customers about price nor offer customers reduced prices. In fact, it is sometimes argued that it is a – maybe unintended – consequence of the recent and ongoing deployment of digital technology in supermarkets that "wheeling and dealing" and the personalizing of prices becomes nearly impossible in these kinds of market (Ryle 2013; vom Lehn 2021). Because price negotiation, personalized offers, and price challenges are more common on street-markets, they are sometimes described as "informal markets" (Garafola, Thomas-Shah, Gilman and Ul-Aflaha 2013; Hochuli 2019; Pena 2000; Sekhani et al. 2019; vom Lehn 2014; 2023).

While in sociology considerable interest has arisen in price and value (Beunza 2006; 2021; Velthuis 2004; Wherry 2008), few studies explore the emergence of price and the practical organization of the constitution of price. Such research has been undertaken primarily in anthropology where, for example, it has been found that on bazaars negotiations about price regularly happen, even if for reductions only on "the right of the decimal point" (Geertz 1978: 32). These informal markets are not inefficient or underdeveloped as some economists may argue but within particular cultural circumstances haggling is a vital part of the social fabric of markets (Alexander and Alexander 1987; 1991).

Sociologists have largely ignored this anthropological research and shown little interest in the practical organization of the constitution of price. Only fairly recently, with the emergence of the "new economic sociology" (Granovetter 1990a; Swedberg and Granovetter 2001) they have acknowledged that economic matters are of sociological concern and market phenomena arise in, and through, interaction (Preda 2009). One such market phenomenon is "price". In the past, the "price" of goods has been fixed independent of individual customers' shopping behavior. This rule of "one-price for all buyers" (Kotler and Armstrong 2017: 340) has

been challenged over recent years, and knowledge about customers has increasingly influenced pricing and allowed for dynamic pricing (Baye, Morgan and Scholten 2004; Clay et al. 2002). Few studies have explored how changes in price arise and are organized. Since the 1980s, however, interactionist studies have argued that price setting is not a bureaucratic process conducted in the back offices of shops and retailers but it is a social activity (Prus 1985; Velthuis 2007). This argument has been pursued, for example, by Çalişkan (2010) who studied the development of prices on Turkish cotton markets. He shows that social interaction underpins price setting and investigates how participants draw on information about the market and market participants as well as about material resources to constitute the price of their goods. In his studies of fine art auctions Heath (2013) shifted the focus toward the organization of the interaction between market participants, that is, auctioneers and bidders. By examining video recordings of auctions he showed that auctioneers use minute actions, such as the vocalization of price increments, head nods, and gestures to generate competition between bidders and to influence the development of the price of lots (c.f. Forsyth and Palmer 2006; Heath and Luff 2007).

Whilst at auction the price of lots is rendered variable from the outset, in the analysis below we will see that on street-markets participants deploy methods through which they render the price of goods variable and potentially decreasable. The price reduction is not organized in competition between two bidders and via predefined incremental bids, but it emerges in interaction between the vendor and, usually, one customer. There has been surprisingly little interest in interaction between vendors and customers on informal markets. Instead, scholars in sociology and consumer research have differentiated types of buyers and vendors in antique malls (Palmer and Forsyth 2002) and investigated gender differences in people's sensitivity to the sales situation in garage sales (Herrmann 1997; 2003; Herrmann and Soiffer 1984). Related research on flea- and street-markets considers markets as dynamic "action scene" (Maisel 1974) where vendors and customers create an atmosphere that brings the "servicescapes" (Bitner 1992) of the markets to life. Studies of consumption on informal markets investigate the experience of markets (Belk, Sherry and Wallendorf 1988; Sherry 1990), and compare price offerings on markets with offers in shops (McGrath, Sherry and Heisley 1993). Yet, how prices are constituted in interaction between market participants has remained unexplored. Exceptions may be Belk and colleagues' (1988) investigation of swap meets where amongst others they report that a small proportion of customers ask for price reductions. They, however, do not further explore how vendor and customer come to agree on a price for the exchange of goods for money.

Price information and the representation of price in labels, tags, and advertisements has been of some concern in marketing and consumer

research (Cochoy, Hagberg and Kjellberg 2018; Hagberg and Kjellberg 2015). In their study of the work of market pitchers, for example, Clark and Pinch (1995) explore how vendors embed price information in their announcements of offers, however, without further investigating how the price for which goods are exchanged, is constituted on markets. In a related way, vom Lehn (2014) and Hochuli (2019) argue that in marketing interaction on street-markets requests for price and information about price are systematically deployed to attract customers to a stall, to keep them interested in wares offered by a vendor, and to turn them into buyers (c.f. Chapter 3). While these and related studies (Pradelle 2006; Sherry 1990) argue that asking for discounts and bargaining are important features of street-markets, how participants come to agree on a price for which wares are exchanged has been studied rarely. Important exceptions are Moor's (2018; 2021) discussion of the communicative functions of money and Llewellyn's (2011; 2015) studies of how paying with cash is used as a form of communicative action when at a museum entrance visitors are asked if they would like to "gift aid" their payment. He reveals that customers display the amount they wish to pay by virtue of showing the cash in their hands to museum staff.

This brief discussion of the literature suggests that price is underpinned by interaction. It suggests that the price people pay for goods (and services) is often not predefined, but it emerges in, and through, interaction between customers and staff or vendors. Apart from a small number of studies in anthropology (Alexander and Alexander 1987) and sociology (Llewellyn 2011; 2015), however, there is little research on how participants arrive at a price for goods through marketing interaction. Instead, most research concerned with price discusses generic price strategies (Armstrong et al. 2014) as well as techniques and technologies of personalizing price (Moor and Lury 2018; Tomczyk et al. 2022) without exploring the processes through which the price for an exchange is achieved. Similarly, research in marketing interested in consumer participation in price setting provides generic concepts but does not study in detail the interactive processes of price setting. In the analysis, I explore how market participants come to agree on a price for the exchange of goods for money at market stalls.[1]

8.2 Providing Candidate Prices: Occasioning Bargaining

It has variously been pointed out that challenging and negotiating a given price for goods is common on street-markets where a wide range of goods are sold. Here, people rarely select wares and buy them for the price written on them or announced by the vendors.[2] Travel guides discussing London's street-markets suggest that haggling not only is commonplace but also expected here (Expactica 2021). They offer the tourist who is not used to

ask for discounts in sales situations with tips and suggestions on how to get a good deal (Fenton 2018; Sood 2010).

In the following fragment (Transcript 8.1), the customer, Jim, displays an interest in an old book that is slightly damaged. He examines the item and after a few seconds asks for its price, "how much?" (line 1, Figure 8.1.1). A few moments after the vendor informs him about the price, "sixty pounds" (line 2), Jim enquires if the price is "negotiable?" (line 8; Figure 8.1.2).

Transcript 8.1 Vendor and Jim: Questioning Price

1 J: how much?

Figure 8.1.1

2 V: this was sixty pounds (.) That onehundred pounds (.3)
3 J: >ok<
4 V: If it wasn't damaged it would have been the same price
5 J: =su:[re
6 V: [(the books are from) seventeen (.3) eighteen seventyfive
7 (3.7)

Figure 8.1.2

8 J: negotiable?

Figure 8.1.3

Figure 8.1.4

9 V: which one this one?
10 J: =yah
11 V: go on (.) tell me how much
12 (.9)
13 J: …

The question for the negotiability of the item is produced after the vendor compares the price of this book for a similar one displayed nearby (line 2). He says that the selected book is considerably cheaper than the other one because it is "damaged" (line 4) occasioning Jim to acknowledge the price differentiation and the account the vendor gives for it, "sure" (line 5). While producing the acknowledgment Jim visually orients to the book encouraging the vendor to give further information about the items, "(the books are from) seventeen (.3) eighteen seventyfive" (line 6). The provision of this additional information occasions Jim to, first, quietly look to the book on the table (Figure 8.1.2), before, then, turn his head slightly to the left and glance to the vendor before challenging the given price, "negotiable?" (line 8; Figure 8.1.3). Rather than making a counteroffer Jim enquires about the possibility of a price reduction and then makes two small steps backward, thus increasing the distance between himself, the sales item, and the vendor (Figure 8.1.4). His vocal and bodily action encourages the vendor to exhibit the negotiability of the price for the book when he emboldens Jim to name a price, "tell me how much" (line 11).

Wares sold on street-markets have a price that is communicated by the vendors who use different kinds of "price representations" (Hagberg and Kjellberg 2015), including price tags, hand-/pencil-written price information inside nooks, and vocal price announcements. The price representations used by street-market vendors often have an ephemeral character as tags easily peel off covers, pencil-written prices are struck or rubbered out, and price announcements can be changed on the next call. In Fragment 8.1, the

possibility that the price of the book might be variable arises from a combination of the visible and material characteristics of the book and the vocally given price information coupled with the participants' actions. The price of the books, therefore, is a candidate price rather than the "final" price for which the vendor is willing to exchange the item. After the customer has inspected the cheaper one of the two books, the vendor names the prices of the two books. As there is a considerable price difference between the two items the vendor deems it necessary to provide an account for the price difference by explaining the lower price of the one selected by the customer, "if it wasn't damaged if would have been the same price" (line 4). The reference to the poor quality of the selected book coupled with the price differentiation between the two items occasions the customer to enquire the definiteness of the given price, "negotiable" (line 8), for the selected item. A few moments, later, after the participants have established which of the two books the customer is interested in buying, the vendor encourages him to name his own price (line 11), a technique that is of concern also to marketing scholars exploring "participative pricing" in relationship to online sales (Chandran and Morwitz 2005; Kim et al. 2009).

Inquiries about the "negotiability" of an item's price are one technique customers use to obtain a discount on wares offered at market stalls. In other cases, customers produce counteroffers, thus directly challenging the price for an item given by a vendor. Consider the following fragment (Transcript 8.2) when a customer, Bob, who has browsed paperback books at Tom's stall for a while displays that he is waiting for the vendor to come over as he is ready to pay (Transcript 8.2).

Transcript 8.2 Bob and Tom[3]: Occasioning Bargaining

1 B: (How much is this?)
2 T: yahyahyah just three quid for a three quid for a paperback two
3 for a fiver if you find two you like

Figure 8.2.1

Figure 8.2.2

Figure 8.2.3

4 B: can you::=

5 T: =recommend a second one

6 B: yah bring it down to: twofifty? (.2)

7 T: is that all you got? right?
8 B: its what I like to pay (.) its my birthday

A few moments, after the vendor arrives near him, Bob begins to voice a question, "can you::=" (line 4; Figure 8.2.1.), that Tom interjects by completing the customer's utterance with an offer of a recommendation of a second book, "recommend a second one" (line 5). As Tom brings his offer of a recommendation to a close, he looks at the customer (Figure 8.2.2). Bob declines this offer by producing an alternative completion of his utterance, "bring it down to twofifty" (line 6), occasioning Tom to immediately divert his eyes from the customer and look across to a shelf on his left holding paperback books (Figure 8.2.3). During a brief but audible pause, (.2) (line 6), Bob places the book carefully on top of the box at the edge of the table. Tom can be seen noticing Bob's placing of the book on top of the box. He immediately turns to look at the customer and in a jocular way asks him for an explanation of the request for a discount, "is that all you got? right? (line 7). As he brings his utterance to a close, Tom visibly smirks, suggesting his proposed explanation might have been meant in an ironic way. The customer orients to the irony in Tom's response by beginning to remove the straps of the backpack from his shoulders, suggesting he is preparing to pay for the book, while still, maybe, in a jocular way, saying that today is his birthday (line 8).

In the two cases discussed here, Fragments 8.1 and 8.2, we have observed two techniques customers use to encourage vendors to engage in discussions about the price of items they vocalized in the marketing interaction. In both fragments, customers treat the prices given by the vendors as candidate prices that they challenge by asking for their negotiability or by naming their own candidate prices. The potential variability of the price of wares has been initiated by vocal and bodily actions produced by the customers; they ask about the possible negotiability of price or name a price they "would like to pay", as Bob says in Transcript 8.2. From the analysis of the fragments, we can see that price is not (pre-)set but vendor and customer both participate in the price setting. In the following section, we turn to fragments where the variability and negotiability of price do not originate in customers' actions, but vendors themselves change the original offer and provide customers with discounts on the original candidate price.

8.3 Offering Price Reduction

When browsing wares on street-markets or, as in the case discussed in the following fragment (Transcript 8.3), in an antique shop, customers examine items and compare and contrast their characteristics, including their price. Here, Emma, a "lady with red hair" (line 36), displays an interest in mugs displayed on a shelf that are made from different materials and have different qualities. Some of the mugs are made from tin and are embossed with a name while others are made from earthenware. All mugs have cardboard labels showing their price. As we join the action, Emma holds two mugs in her hand that have "the man's name on it" (line 26) as the vendor says who stands to her left assisting her with the exploration of the mugs (Transcript 8.3).

Transcript 8.3 Joseph (vendor) and Emma: Making an Offer

26 J: Yea(.) So do you like the idea of: the mans name on it or not?
27 E: Yea, no I do:
28 J: You do, right(.) That's about all I've got with you know
for umm:
29 a pint
30 E: So whats the difference between those two?
31 J: Not a lot, probably the condition:(.) So that one is for:ty, that

Figure 8.3.1

32 one is forty->five<, this one is slightly in better condition
33 E: Oh: right

Figure 8.3.2

34 J: But hey: Im not gonna quibble so you can have that for fo:rty or
35 that fo:r forty(.) If that helps you at all(.) I'm a sucker for a
36 lady with red hair

Holding the mugs in her left and right hand, Emma wonders about "the difference between those two?" (line 30, Figure 8.3.1). The vendor looks at the two mugs and then explains the difference in price between the two, "one is slightly in better condition" (line 32). Emma then crouches down and returns the mugs to the shelf occasioning Joseph to offer her each of the two mugs for 40 pounds (lines 34–35; Figure 8.3.2) although the label of one of them shows a price of 45 pounds. He introduces the offer by saying that he is "not gonna quibble" (line 34). Joseph offers a price reduction shortly after he has provided Emma with an explanation of the difference between the two mugs, "this one is slightly in better condition" (lines 31–32). A moment later, the customer says "oh: right", bends down, and returns the more expensive mug to the bottom shelf where she had taken it from. The vendor treats the return of the mug as a rejection of his offer of 45 pounds and revises the price down (lines 35–36). By virtue of a jocular account relating to the customer's red hair, "I'm a sucker for a lady with red hair" (lines 35–36) he explains why he has decided to reduce the price for this mug although it is in a better condition than the other one. Thus, the price for the mug is personalized for a particular customer. The personalization of price arises in light of her display of hesitancy to buy the item. Although the customer does not vocally reject the offer for the mug her bodily action, the return of the more expensive item to the shelf, encourages the vendor to offer a price reduction for the mug that is "slightly in better condition" (line 32).

The personalization of price by virtue of accounts is a technique serving the legitimization of price reductions allowing vendors to make a case for the

possibility of lower prices without having to give other reasons that, for instance, are to do with the quality of the wares. Let us consider another fragment (Transcript 8.4) recorded at a stall where customers often stop to browse books displayed on a table. We join the action when the customer, Rita, examines the pages of a book including ghost stories when the vendor arrives from her left and asks about her interest in this particular book (line 15). A few seconds later, the vendor Tom, offers Rita a discount for this book (lines 21 – 25) that as she has noted is priced at seven pounds (line 20).

Transcript 8.4 Tom and Rita: Offering a Personalized Discount

15 T: you like ghosts:?
16 R: not particularly it just struck me as quite interesting
17 (.6)

Figure 8.4.1

18 T: its ehm what am I asking?
19 (.3)
20 R: seven

Figure 8.4.2

21 T: I tell you what I knock of a pound happily I do it for six

Figure 8.4.3

22 (.3) in fact (.3) as ehm (.3) as you are so charming=
24 R: =hehehe
25 T: I do it for a fiver
26 R: for a fiver it might be a nice present for someone
27 …

He produces the price reduction after Rita has displayed an interest in the book, not only by browsing its pages but also by saying that "it struck me as quite interesting" (line 16), and told him the book's price written onto its first page. By the time Tom begins to voice his offer, the customer has stopped browsing the book, closed its cover, and returned it to the place on the table she had taken it from. Rita's action, the returning of the book to the table, suggests that she rejects, or at least, resists its purchase. He then begins an utterance, "its ehm (.)" (line 18), that may have provided Rita with additional information about the book.

That utterance though is stalled and a moment later he restarts talking, "what am I asking" (line 18; Figure 8.4.1) while leaning across the table, opening the book's cover, and looking for its price. As he reaches for the book Rita tells him the price, she had found inside the cover a moment earlier, "seven" (line 20). She then again opens the book and browses its pages occasioning the vendor who observes the customer's reinvigorated interest in the item to voice an offer, "I do it for six" (line 21; Figure 8.4.2). Seeing that Rita continues browsing the book, thus displaying her sustained interest in the item, Tom improves his offer, a price reduction from seven to five pounds, by saying, "I do it for a fiver" (line 25; Figure 8.4.3). He prefigures the improved offer by voicing an account "as you are so charming" (line 23) and personalizes the offer by referring to qualities of

the customer rather than to his son's scribblings in the front of the book as the reason for the price reduction.

The analysis of these two fragments (Transcripts 8.3 and 8.4) suggests that vendors treat customers' inspection of the material properties of items as displays of interest in these wares. In turn, when customers return goods to the stall, this action is treated as resistance to a possible purchase and sometimes responded to with offers for discounts. Such offers are techniques vendors use to rekindle customers' interest in wares they have examined, an interest that appears to wane as they bodily distance themselves from them. Offering a discount sometimes encourages customers to pick up wares they have looked at before, inspect them again, and decide on a purchase for the lower price; or they might then try to achieve an even lower price. Reducing the price of wares, however, requires vendors to account for and legitimize the discount without undermining the trust in the purchase. As we have seen, vendors often use the personalization of accounts for price reductions as a technique to legitimize discounts; for example, they explain discounted prices by flattering customers' looks and personalities. In neither case discussed here have customers challenged the discounted price. Instead, the offer encouraged them to reflect on their interest in the wares, return to inspecting their features, and evaluate their decision about a possible purchase.

8.4 Engaging in Haggling

By voicing price reductions vendors may increase customers' interest in making a purchase. Yet in some cases, offers of price reductions encourage customers to question the pricing at a stall altogether. This is the moment when at market stalls vendors and customers engage in processes of price negotiation, colloquially often called "haggling" (Herrmann 2004; x 2009) or "higgling" (Marchi 1994). In Fragment 8.2, I have briefly discussed the emergence of such a moment when haggling commences. Yet, in that particular case, the vendor skillfully interjected the customer's (Bob) attempt to challenge a price by recommending a second book for a reduced price. In the following fragment (Transcript 8.5),[4] Tom, the vendor, and his customer, Rosalyn, have crouched down at the bottom end of the stall where they examine lace garments stored in a bag. After Tom has shown the customer all the lace, he has got underneath his table, he responds to her bodily withdrawal from the wares and her question, "for how much?" (line 4). By this moment, Rosalyn has stood up looking down to the crouched down vendor who a moment earlier has begun to suggest that he is ready to make her an offer, "that's it I can do the pair" (line 3).

Transcript 8.5 Rosalyn and Tom—Initiating Haggling

1 R: Okay
2 T: yah (.) that's it I can do [the pair
3 R: [let me
4 >yah< [the pair for how much?
5 T: [I can do? the pair for eighty

Figure 8.5.1

6 R: make it less
7 (1.5)
8 T: I ca:nt make it much less (.) I do it for seventy eight for you:
9 R: sixty:
10 T: no: (.) I cant do it for that da darling

Figure 8.5.2

11 R: okay let me have a little wander:
12 T: su:re
13 R: whats your na:me?

14 T: my na:me is Tom: (.) I mean (.8) how about we: compro-
mi:se (1.3)

Figure 8.5.3

15 and I do the pai:r for seventy:?
16 (.4)
17 R: do me the pai:r for sixty
18 T: I ca::nt do that lov[e I wont make any money
19 R: [really
20 R: really
21 T: really
21 R: REALLY
22 T: yah once ya kn[ow: Im here to make a living darl

Figure 8.5.4

23 R: [okay alright I might I might come [back I might come
24 T: [Im happy to do you 25
a good dea:l
27 …

Up to the moment when Rosalyn stood up and asked for the price of the lace both participants had crouched to the ground and examined the items of lace the vendor had stored underneath the table. By changing from a crouched position to standing up, the customer physically distances herself from the vendor and does not interact with him on the same level anymore. She looks down to the vendor while discussing a possible price reduction with him. Through her actions, Rosalyn progressively encourages Tom to bodily rise to her level and engage in a negotiation about the price of the items. After the vendor voices his offer of "eighty" (line 5) pounds for the lace she first asks him to "make it less" (line 6; Figure 8.5.1). He then drops the original offer by two pounds by prefiguring the new offer by suggesting that a larger reduction is unlikely. His offer of a small discount occasions the customer to further distance herself from the vendor, first by asking for a discount of 20 pounds from the original offer, "sixty" (line 5), and when the price she names is rejected by visually turning away from the vendor and looking without a specific orientation toward the market while announcing she will leave the stall and "have a little wander" (line 11; Figure 8.5.2). Before she leaves though, she asks the vendor for his name and stretches her right hand out offering a handshake occasioning Tom to stand up, saying his name (line 14), and shaking Rosalyn's hand.

As the two participants now have leveled up physically, standing side-by-side oriented to the stall, Tom offers the customer a further discount he calls "a compromise" (line 14), changes his bodily position to now face Rosalyn, and says, "I do the pair for seventy" (line 15; Figure 8.5.3). Both market participants now face each other while Rosalyn briefly pauses before vocally attending to Tom's offer of a price reduction of more than 10 percent. She then declines the vendor's "compromise" and repeats her demand of a price of 60 pounds (line 16). Her demand occasions the vendor to again decline the price named by the customer and to provide an explanation of the negative response, "Im here to make a liv<u>ing</u> darl" (line 22). As he produces this explanation for the rejections of Rosalyn's candidate price, Tom steps out of the face-to-face position and comes to stand to the customer's right (Figure 8.5.4). They both bodily orient to the stall while looking over their shoulders to each other when bringing this part of the marketing interaction to a close. Rosalyn then again announces that she will increase her distance from the stall and go for "a wander" (line 26) but suggests she will return and maybe, then, they will come to an agreement about the price for the lace.

The analysis suggests that haggling begins when a customer treats a given price as a candidate price that is challeng-able. Depending on the vendor's response the interaction then may focus on the possibility for the price of the wares to be reduced. The market participants often

display different knowledge about the wares and their qualities, and also display different interests in exchanging goods for money. As we have seen in Fragment 8.5, customers may ask for a substantial price reduction vendors cannot or do not want to agree to. A vocal exchange between the participants follows during which vendors and customers vocalize different candidate prices. The vocalization of candidate prices in such a negotiation is often accompanied by bodily movements that reflect the closeness or distance of the market participants' ideas about the "right" exchange price. In its most dramatic form, customers walk away from the negotiation and leave the stall which is a well-known technique used by customers (Alexander and Alexander 1987). Here, however, we also have seen that customers may use announcements that they will "have a little wander" (Transcript 8.5, line 11) as a technique to encourage vendors to rise to their level, not only bodily but also in terms of the exchange price. In Fragment 8.5, this vendor treats the customer's announcement to walk off as challenge to his offer and further improves it, however without being able to align his price offer with the customer's expectation. Furthermore, we have seen how market participants' bodily and visual orientation to each other reflects the state of the negotiations. While they may adopt a face-to-face orientation during negotiations, they move into side-by-side arrangements with their faces turned to each other when the negotiation stalls or is brought to a close.

8.5 Discussion

Pricing is a social practice undertaken in interaction between multiple market participants (Prus 1985). On street-markets, prices can be vocally announced, written on signs, tagged on wares, or proposed by customers. Due to the design of the "price representations" (Hagberg and Kjellberg 2015) and their often, ephemeral nature, they can be subjected to inquiries and challenges, including requests to reduce them. Therefore, prices given on street-markets are only candidate prices that often form the starting point for a negotiation. The negotiability of price on street-markets is not inherent to the market but it is produced and made observable by market participants.

The analysis suggests that customers and vendors use different techniques to achieve a "good" price, whereby they "might have different definitions what a good deal is" as Tom says in a part of fragment 8.4 not discussed in this chapter. Customers, for example, inquire about the negotiability of price or name their own price (Transcripts 8.1 and 8.5) while vendors might offer reductions in price or they might offer discounts on multi-buys (Transcript 8.2). These techniques emerge in the specific circumstances of ongoing marketing

interaction. In Fragment 8.1, we have seen, for example, how a vendor invites a customer (Jim) to name his own price after Jim has displayed an interest in the item but resistance in buying it for the candidate price the vendor has given. Or in Fragment 8.5, the customer names her own price after the vendor has offered a reduction in price for the lace suggesting that maybe a further reduction is possible.

When vendors offer price reductions, they often voice them together with accounts legitimizing the discount. The accounts tend to personalize the offer and justify the price reduction in relationship to customers' characteristics such as their looks or personality. Thus, vendors do not raise customers' suspicion that their reason for reducing the price may be that for some time they had difficulties selling these wares or that the wares may be of questionable quality. Vendors' offers of and customers' requests for price reductions often occasion bargaining or haggling, interactional practice through which market participants often arrive at an agreement on the price for the exchange of goods for money. As we have seen in fragment 8.5. (Transcript 8.5), haggling involves vocal exchanges of candidate prices as well as a careful organization of bodily actions that literally embody vocally articulated stances toward a possible sale or purchase. For example, our analysis suggests that while involved in price negotiations market participants face each other while the halting and closing of negotiations involves a dissolving of face engagements. Customers also display their engagement and orientation to the wares by adopting close or distant positions to them and use announcements to "walk off" as technique to encourage vendors to further lower the price. The possibility to distance themselves and withdraw from marketing interaction is a powerful technique customers use to encourage vendors to offer them a discount.

From the analysis, therefore, we have seen that street-markets are settings where market participants regularly engage and participate in pricing activities. They offer marketing and consumer researchers with a "perspicuous setting" (Garfinkel 2002) where they can study marketing interaction and the techniques market participants use for the pricing of wares. Marketing research rarely considers this kind of participative pricing that happens on a day-to-day basis in our cities (Herrmann 2003; 2004; Sherry 1988; Sherry 2008). Instead, it is primarily interested in online pricing and often conducts experimental studies to explore customers' responses to particular pricing strategies (Chandran and Morwitz 2005; Kim et al. 2009).

Here, I have proposed that marketing interaction on street-markets allows us to study "participative pricing" as an interactional achievement. It requires, as the analysis has revealed, vendors to invite customers to question or challenge a given price, or customers to inquire about the negotiability of price for other reasons. In an economic world where price

tends to be fixed, some customers are hesitant to challenge an offer (vom Lehn 2023) or question a price on their own accord. Overcoming such hesitancy and producing price challenges requires vocal and bodily actions that at the same time display an interest in the wares on offer and the possibility of leaving the stall without making a purchase.

The chapter contributes to current debates on the co-creation of value mentioning but never unpacking the social interaction through which market participants co-create value. The analysis suggests that in marketing interaction on street-markets customers bodily, visually, and materially engage with specific wares suggesting that they hold potential value for them. Vendors orient to such displays of interest because they promise also potential value gains for them if they are able to persuade customers to buy them. Thus, the analysis reveals that the social organization of pricing in marketing interaction on street-markets is accomplished through an alignment of divergent value orientations. By talking with companions and with the vendor customers may reveal their motivations for a purchase, e.g. replacing a broken record, experiences they may have with a new book, while vendors make their living from sales, "I got bills to pay and kids to feed, you know".

In marketing and consumer research, there has recently been considerable interest in novel pricing techniques such as "participative pricing" and the "personalization" of price (Chandran and Morwitz 2005; Esteves 2022; Kienzler and Kowalkowski 2017; Moor and Lury 2018; Tomczyk et al. 2022). Research often links the use of these pricing techniques to the availability of digital and networked technologies. It also psychologizes the concept of "price" by moving the process of pricing from marketing managers' to customers' cognitive orientation to the market, where, in their terms, decisions about "right" prices are made. Sociologists challenge the psychologization of price and have recently begun to draw attention to the interactional basis of pricing (Preda 2009; 2023). They highlight the cultural and social anchoring of price (Moor 2018; 2021; Moor and Lury 2018) and examine the relevance of price representations (Hagberg and Kjellberg 2015) and the voicing of price (vom Lehn 2014), for example for the possibility of market participants to compare prices. The discussion in this chapter reveals how market participants orient to price and price representations on street-markets in interaction with each other. It suggests that in these economic settings market participants design and orient to prices as candidate prices that may be subjected to negotiation. Thus, the chapter contributes to studies exploring how customers orient to price representations in interaction with each other (Llewellyn 2015). It argues that forms of pricing such as "name your own price" and the "personalization" of price are underpinned by interaction between market participants rather than relying on a particular technological infrastructure.

Having discussed the interactional pricing of wares on street-markets, in the following Chapter 9, I turn to the ways in which CEOs of technology companies promote an emerging technology, namely Virtual Reality. In a sense, the promotional activities of these CEOs resemble the market cries we are so familiar with on street-markets (see Chapter 3). These men, many, if not most of them are men, stand on podiums, give talks, and interviews about their "visions" (Dierkes 2001) about the ways in which the technology their companies develop and distribute will revolutionize society, talks that are listened to by journalists and covered in the print- or broadcast media they work for. In Chapter 9, I focus on the promotion of Virtual Reality and explore some of these "visions" about this technology as communicated in newspapers.

Notes

1 The methods used for data collection and analysis have been discussed in Chapter 3.
2 My observations suggest that the challenging of price is less common on flower-, fruit-, vegetable, and other food markets. I am not considering these kinds of markets here; see Pradelle's (2006) wonderful ethnography of French farmers markets.
3 The fragment has previously been discussed in different ways in vom Lehn (2018; 2023).
4 Fragment 8.5 was previously discussed in a different way in vom Lehn (2023).

9 Promoting "Virtual Reality" in Public Discourse

With this chapter, I am turning to the marketing function and activity of promotion. I will explore how CEOs of technology companies and journalists "talk about" (Weyer 1989) innovative technologies, not only to generate interest but also to encourage people to imagine a future in which the technology will have become a valuable everyday tool. The technology in question is Virtual Reality (VR). Over the past decade, VR has been discussed in public discourse as an innovative technology that, as representatives from industry and the media argue, will transform education, medicine, travel, and many other institutions. These reports and discussions coupled with promotional videos generate the expectation that soon people will be able to explore and inhabit "virtual reality" or the "metaverse" in the same way in which thus far they have been living in the "physical reality".

VR principally involves the use of a head-mounted display (HMD) where a three-dimensional world can be seen, earphones transmitting surround sound, and a hand-held device facilitating the navigation of the virtual reality. The HMD technology has been around since the 1960s when experiments with immersive technology were undertaken to support, for example, scientific research (cf. Sutherland 1965). A noticeable public interest in this technology, however, arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s when according to the media discourse Jaron Lanier coined the term "Virtual Reality" to describe the technology. Lanier is a computer scientist and entrepreneur based in Silicon Valley who at the time gave presentations at computer science conferences and became one of the main public protagonists talking about VR in interviews for mass-, broadcast media, and fringe magazines like *Mondo2000* (Lanier 1990, 2018; Waffender 1991).

The public discourse in the 1990s and more recently in the 2010s has generated a "hype" (Schnipper 2014) about VR that stirred interest not only amongst those interested in technological innovation more generally but also in the wider public. Articles about VR have been published in

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glossy outlets like *Time Magazine* (Morrow 1994; Time 2015) and *Wired* (Snider 1993) as well as movies like "Lawnmower Man" (1992) and "Ready Player One" (2018) have helped to generate a large interest in VR. The media discourse in the 1990s dissipated when the promises made by the engineers and journalists did not materialize, and other technological developments, in particular the WorldWideWeb, became the focus of the public's attention. In the early 2010s, the discourse about VR started once again when novel, lighter, and less expensive versions of HMDs became available such as the Oculus Rift and Google Cardboard. The so-called cardboard VR headsets require people to insert their smartphones into a cardboard box as a screen where they then can view 360-degree video content, often created by journalists to provide a more intimate experience of environments affected, for example, by natural disasters and war. The cardboard boxes cost as little as five dollars or have been given away for free by newspapers like the *New York Times* that at the time developed and distributed immersive video content through a dedicated app. This technology made VR accessible and allowed a large number of people to have an immersive experience for little money.

As the HMD technology advanced creating increasingly lightweight systems that do not have to be connected to high-powered computers anymore the technology has become more affordable. Moreover, today a growing number of applications are available making the purchase of the technology more attractive for people than in the 1990s. These applications allow people to engage with a wide range of virtual environments, including games, interior design, education, and shopping. Due to the public visibility of VR systems, for example in estate agents, shopping malls, and entertainment parks it is unsurprising that also the public discourse about VR again intensified since the early 2010s. When in 2014 Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, announced that his company was buying Oculus, the developer of affordable HMDs he stated that beginning with the purchase of the headset company Facebook would become a major player in the VR industry. Between 2014 and 2021, Zuckerberg and the then-CEO of Oculus, Palmer Luckey, frequently appeared in the media as well as at conferences communicating about the state and future of VR. In this period, journalists have widely spoken and written about the re-emergence of VR by drawing on Zuckerberg's and Luckey's discussion of the technology.

In this chapter, I examine the public discourse about VR by considering it as contributing to the promotion of the technology. This discourse often includes notions of "technological imaginaries" that point toward utopian and dystopian futures (Ornella 2015) and thus, as marketing scholars have suggested, can open up imaginations of future markets (Brownlie 2009;

Maclaran and Brown 2001). In a similar vein, sociologists of technology have introduced concepts, such as "guiding visions" (Dierkes 1992; 2001) and "sociotechnical imaginaries" (Jasanoff and Kim 2009; 2015) to capture the influence of "talk about technology" (Weyer 1989; 2008) can have on innovations. Regarding the discourse about VR, Preece, Whittaker, and Janes (2022) have drawn on discussions on "sociotechnical imaginaries" (Jasanoff and Kim 2009; 2015) when they explore public discussions about the trajectories for the future of VR. In this chapter, I add to these debates by analyzing the recent public discourse about VR and reveal three "guiding visions" (Dierkes 1992) that have pervaded the announcements by CEOs as well as the articles written by technology journalists between 2014 and 2021: (1) "This Time it is Different", (2) "VR as Application", and (3) "VR as Empathy Machine". Before I turn to the analysis of the data, I will briefly provide some background about the history of VR and the discourse about the technology and then describe my methods of data collection and analysis. The chapter will end with a discussion of the relevance of the analysis for current discussions in marketing and the promotion of technological innovations.

9.1 A Short History of VR

In this section, I briefly discuss relevant historical and technological information about the development of VR. The idea that media environments can be created that allow people to have multisensory experiences of alternative realities is age-old. Some trace the idea back to Plato's parable of the cave, others name stories and novels like Weinbaum's *Pygmalion's Spectacles* or Huxley's *Brave New World* (Kao et al. 2020; Rubin 2018). Media scholars with an interest in virtual reality, with a small 'v' and a small 'r', suggest that as media develop they provide people with sensorily ever richer experiences (Levinson 1977; 2017).

These discussions in media theory coincide with the development of human-computer interfaces in the computer sciences. The transition of computer systems out of the backrooms of large corporations into offices and the home entailed important changes to the interfaces through which these novel machines were operated (Barley 2020; Heath and Luff 2000; Orlikowski and Barley 2001; Szymanski and Whalen 2011). While early computer systems were operated with punch cards as years went by screens as well as keyboards and mice were developed that made the use of computer systems more intuitive. These novel interfaces coupled with advances in the display of information on the screens allowed more and more people to undertake complex operations without having to learn computer programming. Today, menu-driven systems operated by keyboards and mice enable people to use the multifunctionality of computer systems, for

example, to write letters, do their tax returns, communicate with people elsewhere in the world, play games, and much more.

Despite the advances in computer technology and the increasing ease with which many operations can be carried out the use of these systems still differs from the ways in which we engage with physical objects. Therefore, in the 1990s when the internet started to become popularized the distinction of "real world" and "virtual world" was introduced to highlight the difference there is in how we access physical and virtual objects, a distinction that sociologists have criticized (Jurgenson 2012; Maddox 2017). Whilst people directly manipulate the former, they only have indirect access to the latter via keyboard, mouse, and screen (Bricken 1991; Grudin 1990).

Virtual Reality, with capital 'V' and capital 'R', is fashioned as a technology that promises to overcome the distinction and separation of real and virtual world by providing those delving into the virtual with direct access to objects they encounter "inside the virtual world". In this sense, despite the media hype VR is nothing but another stage in the development of interfaces. It offers a novel way of engaging with the world behind the interface. The technology currently involves an HMD, headphones, and hand-held controller. While in the past, these devices had to be connected to a powerful computer system, new VR systems work without the support of a computer but have in-built computing power. Those wearing an HMD see a three-dimensional world in front of them that changes vertically and horizontally as they move their head. They can explore the virtual environment by using the hand-held controller. Their actions within the virtual environment are accompanied by corresponding three-dimensional sounds delivered over the headphones. Because the HMD and headphones auditory and visually separate the user of the VR equipment from the world they inhabit, the term "virtual reality" still is used to describe the three-dimensional environment behind the interface (Rheingold 1992; Rubin 2018).

When defining VR some engineers and computer scientists talk about "the degree of immersion" and argue that only when the user becomes fully immersed within the virtual environment the technology facilitating this separation from the physical world should be called "Virtual Reality" (Mogal 1993). Today, such a degree of immersion can be enabled by the use of VR systems made up of HMD, headphones, and hand-held controllers as well as by so-called Cave systems (Creagh 2003). The experience of immersion is further enhanced when inside the virtual world the user sees a doppelgänger, such as an embodiment of the hand that operates the controller. In the metaverse, the virtual world facilitated by the company Meta users are represented by an avatar they can style in their own fashion. This avatar is supposed to enhance people's feeling of being present in the virtual world and improve interaction with virtual co-participants

(Hennig-Thurau et al. 2022). By relying on this definition, VR can be distinguished from other technologies that also confront people with three-dimensional environments and sound, however without visually and auditorily separating them from the world they bodily inhabit.

9.2 Methods and Data

The starting points for my analysis are publicly available presentations by Palmer Luckey, until 2016 CEO of Oculus, a producer of VR technology, and Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, the social networking company that in 2014 bought Oculus and renamed itself Meta in 2021. In their presentations, the two CEOs talk about VR as a technology that, in their view, will be used in a wide range of domains and situations. The examination of four presentations given by the CEOs between 2013 and 2022 has provided me with key topics and themes for the analysis of the public discourse about VR that is characterized by references to the public presentations by Luckey and Zuckerberg.

In the analysis, I have included newspaper articles published between 2013 and 2021. This period covers the time before and after Oculus was bought by Facebook in 2014 when it had become the principal developing company of HMDs. The purchase of Oculus by Facebook generated a lot of interest in VR as, it was argued, the social media company had the financial means to support the advancement of the technology and make it interesting for a large number of consumers. Knowing about VR's failure to capture a sustained interest of consumers in the 1990s I was interested to find out why now those discussing VR in the media suggest that this time the technology will be a mass market success.

Having closely read articles about VR published in various British newspapers and in the *New York Times* I decided to concentrate on *The Guardian* where since 2014 VR has been covered on a regular basis; in fact in 2014 the newspaper also set up a section dedicated to VR. I have gathered all the articles published in this section since 2014 and subjected them to a systematic analysis using the techniques developed by Charmaz and ostensibly used amongst others by Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2013). Overall, I have gathered and included in the analysis 132 articles published in the British newspaper *The Guardian* between 2014 and 2021. I coded the data "by hand", inserting the articles in a table with three columns that included the first- and second-order concepts as well as aggregate dimensions (Charmaz 2006; Gioia et al. 2013).

9.3 Promoting VR in, and through, Public Discourse

The recent public debate about VR in the mass media as well as on social media reflects the promotional activities of the companies that now

develop, produce, and distribute the technology. As we will see in this section, journalists heavily draw on the public presentations by Mark Zuckerberg and Palmer Luckey when discussing the opportunities offered by VR and challenges that, like in the 1990s, might still hinder the wide distribution and economic success of the technology.

In the 1990s, when according to many authors Jaron Lanier coined the term Virtual Reality for the technology that uses an HMD allowing people to become immersed within virtual worlds. At the time, a wide range of applications for the technology was discussed and promoted by CEOs of companies hoping to gain from the boom of the technology (Rheingold 1992). This earlier promotion and public discussion of VR has had an important impact on the current public debate that started at about 2014 when Oculus presented its novel and relatively affordable HMD. In their presentations of VR today, Zuckerberg and Luckey as well as journalists often refer to the failures of the technology in the 1990s and suggest that it will be different this time around (Section 9.3.1). The reason for their optimism lies in the affordability of the current HMDs and recent development of applications for VR (Section 9.3.2). Despite the wide range of applications currently developed for VR, however, it has been difficult to identify a "guiding vision" (Dierkes 1992; 2001) that would influence and shape the design of future hardware and software. In the past couple of years, Zuckerberg and to a lesser extent Luckey have begun to put forward such a vision that links to the mission of Zuckerberg's company's Facebook, now Meta, to facilitate global networking and communication (Section 9.3.3).

9.3.1 "This Time It Is Different"

In the early 1990s, mainstream newspapers like *The Guardian* and magazines like *The Economist* or *Der Spiegel* published articles about a new technology developed in Silicon Valley, California, called "Virtual Reality". Many of the articles in these outlets drew on discussions in US-American fringe magazines like *Mondo2000* and public appearances by Jaron Lanier who like other advocates for the technology spoke about the transformative power of VR and the enormous opportunities it would offer to advance social institutions, such as education and healthcare. The so-called hype related to VR lasted for about six years until the late 1990s when interest in the technology dissipated and was overwhelmed by a new discourse concerned with the World Wide Web.

Recent discussions about VR as well as public presentations by Zuckerberg and Luckey do not ignore this history of the technology but actively refer to the developments in the 1990s.

> For many, Virtual Reality (VR) brings to mind Figures of people in the 1980s wearing headsets and gloves to interact with games and virtual worlds. There was plenty of hype, but the technology didn't catch on – a pattern matched in the mid-1990s with Nintendo's Virtual Boy VR device and then a decade later with headset-less virtual worlds such as Second Life "Imagine enjoying a courtside seat at a game, studying in a classroom of students and teachers all over the world or consulting a doctor face-to-face – just by putting on goggles in your home". (*The Guardian*, 31 March 2014)

While acknowledging that VR failed to "catch on" at the time, in the public debate about the technology in the early 2010s some of its promoters reiterate their "believe in what VR can deliver when the technologies are applied appropriately and with the needs of the end users and end organizations well and truly in mind" (Bob Stone in *The Guardian,* 28 May 2015). With Facebook putting its financial weight behind the current promotion of VR these technologists consider the future of the technology to be more assured than 30 years ago.

In their discussions of the reasons for the failure of VR to gain traction in the 1990s today's promoters of the technology primarily argue that

> [T]he technology simply wasn't there: screens weren't high-resolution enough to be placed that close to eyes, they couldn't refresh fast enough to present a smooth Figure, and the processors behind them couldn't push enough pixels to render a convincing world. (*The Guardian*, 28 December 2015)

These technical difficulties with VR in the 1990s had serious implications for its development in the early 2000s which by and large happened without public attention; "The failure of the 1990s wave of virtual reality was so complete that it killed the field for a generation" (*The Guardian*, 28 December 2015). The promoters of VR suggest that now technology is further advanced allowing them to be optimistic that "this time it's different" (*The Economist*, 29 August 2015). They, for example, argue that "[T]he technology required to make a top-tier smartphone has a remarkable similarity to the technology required to make convincing VR" (*The Guardian*, 28 December 2015).

These technological advancements have the potential for VR to become "mainstream". While for long the technology has remained a "niche idea" Zuckerberg now believes that "this kind of immersive, augmented reality will become a part of daily life for billions of people" (*The Guardian*, 31 March 2014). The money invested by Facebook in the development of VR will, its promoters argue, further advance its

technological development, help with its marketability, and eventually make it more affordable (*The Guardian*, 31 March 2014). Therefore, on 25 March 2014, Oculus wrote on its blog,[1] "Over the next 10 years, virtual reality will become ubiquitous, affordable, and transformative", a quote copied by *The Guardian* (31 March 2014) and expanded by the comment that "[T]he theory is that with Facebook's resources, Oculus will be able to hire more talented engineers to improve its technology, bring it to market more quickly, and (crucially) make it more affordable".

By arguing that "this time it is different" the promoters of VR today differentiate the current development of the technology from the 1990s when it failed to become widely distributed and economically successful. Instead, VR has remained a niche area of research and practice. After the dissipation of the public debate about the technology in the late 1990s technologists continued to develop the various parts of the systems used to generate immersive experiences. With the re-emergence of VR in public debate since 2014 promoters of the technology have often focused on possible applications for the technology that, in their view, the future of VR is bound up with.

9.3.2 VR as Application

When VR was promoted in the 1990s a wide range of applications was developed and presented at conferences, such as the ACM SIGGRAPH in 1992. The future of applications was seen in entertainment, education, and healthcare as well as in the treatment of phobias (Carlin, Hoffman, and Weghorst 1997; Hamit 1993; Rheingold 1992). In 2014, public debate continued where it left off with the discussion of applications for VR in the 1990s. Again, it is argued that the technology has the possibility of helping people "who are isolated in the real world, from general social anxiety to various phobias. Exposure therapy – whether to spiders, snakes, planes (or, indeed, snakes on planes) – could be one area to benefit" (*The Guardian*, 31 April 2014). Moreover, VR promoters like Mark Mon-Williams, Professor of Cognitive Psychology at the University of Leeds, are cited as arguing that

> further into the future, we can expect to replace computer terminals with VR headsets. The keyboard and the mouse will become things of the past and we will assemble sentences by waving our hands at words and assembling them rather like Tom Cruise's character handles symbols on screen in the film *Minority Report*. (*The Guardian*, 28 October 2017)

To give such views on the future of VR credence,

> Oculus founder Palmer Luckey showed off the controllers, claiming they'll be used for everything from picking up and shooting guns to waving, pointing and 'giving a thumbs up' while playing. 'This isn't science fiction: this is reality, and it's happening today,' said Luckey. (*The Guardian*, 11 June 2015)

For Facebook the basis for the future of VR is Oculus and its development of an affordable HMD and controller that allows people to participate in activities in virtual worlds.

> Imagine enjoying a courtside seat at a game, studying in a classroom of students and teachers all over the world or consulting with a doctor face-to-face – just by putting on goggles in your home. (Zuckerberg in *The Guardian*, 27 March 2014)

According to Zuckerberg, this new technology will "One day […] become a part of daily life for billions of people" (*The Guardian*, 22 July 2014). Other technologists like Jonathan Waldern and Bob Stone who were already involved with the development and promotion of VR in the 1990s agree with Zuckerberg's view that in future VR will pervade our life and work.

> One can imagine scores of scenarios where it would be transformative. Planning your next holiday? Why not "visit" the alternatives first, via a headset? Games, exploration, psychiatry and many other fields could all be revolutionised. "Sex, of course," says Stone. "We've seen some crazy devices coming out of Japan." He points to healthcare, education and training as other fields that are most likely to take it up quickly. (Jonathan Waldern in *The Guardian*, 18 February 2015)

The immediate future of VR is often seen in entertainment and gaming. This was highlighted by both Zuckerberg and Luckey in their presentations quoted in the public debate.

> Mark Zuckerberg said it was time for the social network to "start focusing on what platforms will come next to enable even more useful, entertaining and personal experiences". (The Guardian, 27 March 2014)

Yet, save for considering VR as a new development in computer gaming the now joint companies also hope to move into new areas soon. One of these areas is the production of VR films allowing viewers to be entirely immersed within the scene they are watching (*The Guardian*,

22 January 2015) (cf. Janes 2022). The idea of VR films has encouraged the production of immersive films people can watch with low-tech HMDs like Google Cardboard that use smartphone screens as displays. Palmer Luckey "isn't a fan, having recently described Google Cardboard as 'muddy water' compared with the 'fancy wine' of Oculus Rift" (*The Guardian*, 7 January 2016).

9.3.3 Generating Empathy with VR

Google Cardboard and similarly "cheap" versions of VR facilitate one of the features of the technology that the promoters of VR emphasize in their discussions of the technology, that is, immersion. The promoters of VR suggest that "What excites people about VR is its immersiveness" (*The Guardian*, 2 November 2016). Those distributing cheaper versions of VR offer immersion but turn users into viewers of an all-surrounding world without being able to interact with that world, for example by virtue of an avatar. VR thus becomes a passive viewing experience that Luckey and other promoters of the technology criticize for pursuing the goal of providing users with a virtual world they can inhabit and where they can interact and communicate with each other. They, therefore, often compare VR with technology known from science fiction, such as the Holodeck many people know from StarTrek:

> Our goal is really to transport the player into these fantasy worlds," said Adams [of Gunfire Games]. 'I love Star Trek, so that whole idea of the holodeck? Man, this is basically the holodeck!' (*The Guardian*, 12 June 2015)

In their view, the immersive features of the technology enhance people's emotional involvement with events in the virtual world.

> When you put on a headset, you do feel like you are there. To me, that makes the connection between you and the character even stronger," said Ted Price of Insomniac Games. 'What's happening to the character resonates more strongly with the player, and that's exciting, because that's what we've been going for several decades: strengthening that player/character connection.' 'Our goal is really to transport the player into these fantasy worlds,' said Adams [of Gunfire Games]. (*The Guardian,* 12 June 2015)

This emotional connection facilitated by VR has increasingly become the focus of presentations by Zuckerberg and Luckey as well as of discussions of the technology in the media. Yet, rather than considering VR

primarily as a technology facilitating novel forms of playing games or viewing films the promoters of the technology compare VR with smartphones and therewith highlights its potential to transform how people communicate with each other. In their view, the technology will facilitate social experiences in virtual worlds, and people will be able to engage with others in novel ways.[2]

> Zuckerberg, though, remains convinced that VR will evolve into a technology that reshapes the way people interact and experience life, much as Facebook's social networks and smartphones already have. (*The Guardian*, 12 October 2017)

> "The thing that's really striking is that when you have another person there, the whole thing inherently becomes social," said Zuckerberg. "It's not a game. There's no points. There's no score. There's no objective. But people find ways to interact. And they're novel ways of interacting". (*The Guardian*, 22 February 2016)

By meeting other people in virtual worlds, they can put themselves "in other people's shoes" (*The Guardian*, 2 November 2016) and understand how they experience the world around them. Thus, as promoters of VR Zuckerberg and Luckey describe the technology as "an 'empathy machine'" (*The Guardian*, 2 November 2016) whereby they consider "empathy" as the "killer app" for VR (25 October 2017). In this sense, Zuckerberg argues that "[O]ne of the most powerful features of VR is empathy" (*The Guardian,* 10 October 2017). The technology allows people to virtually step into others' worlds which can make them aware of "what's happening in different parts of the world" (*The Guardian,* 10 October 2017).

These emphatic features of VR, the promoters of VR argue, make the technology superior to previous forms of digital communication and bring it closer to the level of face-to-face communication.

> Virtual reality is the first technology that tries to make digital communication, not just more efficient or more useful, but more compelling and more human. That's the promise of VR: the best of real world communication combined with the best of digital communication. (*The Guardian*, 2 March 2016)

Like their predecessors in the 1990s, they suggest that "pretty soon we will be freed from the constraints of the physical world and live in a world where everyone has the power to share and experience whole scenes as if you're right there in person" (Zuckerberg in *The Guardian,* 2 March 2016).

> Imagine being able to sit in front of a campfire and hang out with friends anytime you want. Or being able to watch a movie in a private theatre with your friends anytime you want. (Zuckerberg in *The Guardian,* 2 March 2016)

In Zuckerberg's view, the result of these technological developments will be the emergence of "one global community" (Zuckerberg, in *The Guardian,* 23 April 2016), echoing visions of the future he has promoted earlier in the context of the increasing influence of the social network Facebook. To facilitate forms of communication that can be likened to face-to-face communication further technological developments are required that go beyond the communication of "very basic facial features and hand gestures" (*The Guardian*, 23 April 2016)

> Achieving a real sense that the person is right there with you will require a system that can capture a person's movements down to the subtlest gesture, and turn that into a digital doppelganger inside a virtual world. (*The Guardian*, 23 April 2016)

The guiding vision describing VR as an "empathy machine" implies that in future in the view of its promoters the technology will facilitate almost natural communication between participants in virtual worlds. With this argument the promoters of VR have returned to suggestions made by Jaron Lanier and others in the 1990s, that is, that VR will transform digital communication and facilitate social occasions in virtual worlds that are of the same quality as face-to-face communication in the real world.

9.4 Discussion

Over the past decade, VR has received a lot of attention in the media, both in the mass media and on social media. The media interest was spurred on by presentations that, first, Palmer Luckey of Oculus and, then, Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook gave at technology conferences and other public events. In these presentations, Luckey and Zuckerberg have provided utopian visions of the future for VR as a technology that will facilitate empathetic social relationships between people. Technology journalists largely uncritically report the content of such presentations and thus further the vision that technologies like VR will solve humanity's problems (Morozov 2014).

Previous research has critically analyzed the discourse about VR to reveal its ideological underpinnings. By drawing on the concept of "sociotechnical imaginaries" (Jasanoff and Kim 2015), Preece, Whittaker, and Janes (2022) argue that the discourse about VR "hides the heavy

environmental cost" of the technology and the notion of the "empathy machine leaves unquestioned who benefits from empathy" (ibid.: 11). The analysis in this chapter adds to these debates in marketing. It applies a perspective adopted from the sociology of technology arguing that the public discourse is not mere "talk about technology" (Weyer 1989) but it influences and shapes the future development of technology. This argument aligns with debates in marketing that are concerned with the – sometimes – contentious relationship between "technological imaginaries" (Ornella 2015) featuring in the public discourse about technology (Brownlie 2009; Maclaran and Brown 2001; Zwick and Bradshaw 2016). These technological imaginaries embody what a technology could be like and what market it might open up in the future.

The analysis of the public discourse about VR reveals that those talking and writing about VR in the period between 2014 and 2021 under investigation here are concerned with creating a viable future for the technology after it failed and disappeared from public view 20 years earlier. They repeatedly make a case that "this time it is different" (*The Economist*, 29 August 2015) and explain why the new HMDs will offer VR a pathway to the market (Section 9.3.1). They then, and still today in advertisements shared on Facebook and YouTube, highlight potential applications of VR that predict a bright future not only for the technology but also for those using it (Section 9.3.2). Yet, to ensure the sustained success of VR a "guiding vision" (Dierkes 1992; 2001) is required that helps interleave the technology with society. The development of the "empathy machine" as a guiding vision emerged only in the more recently published articles examined in this chapter. It highlights the influences VR will have on social relationships according to those promoting the technology (Section 9.3.3). With the guiding vision of the "Empathy Machine", VR is characterized as a novel communication technology that will transform how people will relate to each other in the future. Already shortly after the acquisition of Oculus Zuckerberg described the advancement of VR to become a communication tool as an almost unavoidable process through which people's natural experience and thought is digitally captured and then becomes sharable with others:

> For Zuckerberg, video has ushered in a "golden age" of online communication. "Photos are richer than text; video, much richer than photos," he explains. "But that's not the end, right? I mean, it's like this indefinite continuum of getting closer and closer to being able to capture what a person's natural experience and thought is, and just being able to immediately capture that and design it however you want and share it with whomever you want". (*The Guardian,* 26 April 2016)

This view of innovation and technological development resonates well with Paul Levinson's (1977) discussion of the innovation of media from toy to mirror and then art. Zuckerberg's suggestion, however, goes beyond such conceptual views of innovation by linking the development of VR to Facebook's mission, "Bringing the World Closer Together".[3] Thus, Zuckerberg and Luckey argue that the scope of the use of VR goes beyond influencing "gaming", "education", "healthcare", and other areas (Section 9.3.2). In the view they promote in their public presentations, VR will be the communication tool of the future and influence all parts of society. They, therefore, consider the size of the market for VR to be limitless.

Save for the enthusiasm about VR, there also is considerable skepticism about the future of the technology. For example, the aforecited Bob Stone (University of Birmingham) who has been involved with VR since the 1990s suggests that Oculus "is not much different from the headsets of the late 1990s" and "you aren't really experiencing total immersion" (Stone in *The Guardian*, 27 March 2015). Stone appears to be disappointed when he asks, "[M]ore than 20 years on, shouldn't we be further ahead in this?" (Stone in *The Guardian*, 27 March 2015). Such skepticism in the future of VR, however, does not feature much in the public discourse that has been dominated by the promotional activities of Zuckerberg and Luckey.

I have begun this chapter by suggesting that communication about technology, such as promotional presentations by CEOs of technology companies and the public discourse in newspapers and magazines contribute to and shape the process of innovation (Weyer 1989; 2008). Discourse and debate about innovations involve discussions about possible trajectories for technological developments. Regarding the case of the public discourse about VR, my analysis has revealed that in presentations as well as in newspaper and journal articles technologists and journalists have introduced a "guiding vision" (Dierkes 1992; 2001) that describes VR as an "empathy machine". Guiding visions like this provide technological innovations with imaginations about the trajectory their developments might take. They serve those involved in the innovation process as a joint framework and allow them to communicate about the technology's future (Hoffmann and Marz 1992). Moreover, they project the value those who in the future will use the technology may gain from adopting it. In this sense, the different guiding visions entailing different value propositions test the public and therewith consumers' response to the value proposition of potential futures with the technology.

By introducing the guiding vision of the "empathy machine" into the public discourse about VR those promoting the technology offer experts and journalists specializing in technology and innovation as well as the general public with resources to make sense of VR and project a particular future world where the technology has been adapted by people. Only the

future development of VR as a technology and the accompanying public discourse will show if the "empathy machine" as a guiding vision is viable or, like other guiding visions before it, will be replaced by another one.

The guiding vision of the "empathy machine" to capture the innovation potential of VR describes only one trajectory the technology might follow in the future. In the discussion of the data, I have suggested other possible trajectories that are related to the opportunities VR may offer, for example, for new developments in gaming and films. Regarding the latter, developments like the production and dissemination of immersive films by newspapers bear some similarity to the "empathy machine". Yet, they rarely live up to the promise of VR to provide users with opportunities to actively participate in (virtual) events as they rarely allow users more than acting on the producers' terms with(in) the films (Janes 2022). Moreover, technologists' argument that immersion enhances people's empathy with those featuring in films ignores that empathy is a practical and interactional accomplishment (Ruiz-Junco 2017). They neglect that empathy involves processes of imagining and sharing others' thoughts and feelings and do not discriminate between empathy, sympathy, and compassion (Ruiz-Junco 2023). Interactionist research in medical interaction and care provision has begun to reveal how empathy is co-constructed between medical practitioners and patients as they are involved in problem-focused activities (Ruiz-Junco and Morrison 2019; Ruusuvuori 2005; 2007). This research can help discriminate more clearly between emotional orientations and inform the discourse about technology designed to facilitate social relationships.

Some scholars have placed the (re-)emergence of VR in the context of the debate about the intertwining of economic and emotional relationships sometimes described as "emotional capitalism" (Illouz 2007). They, for example, suggest that the way in which the technology is discussed in public discourse imagines users with particular characteristics and abilities (Preece et al. 2022a). In the analysis, we have seen that the discourse about VR as "empathy machine" suggests that the value of the technology lies in its ability to facilitate emotional relationships between users who meet in the virtual world. Research on social relationships in virtual environments inhabited by people using the latest VR-technology is scarce cf. (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2022) and thus far provides little evidence that the technology actually provides for emotional bonds between its users.

The communication about VR since 2014 is closely entangled with the promotion of the Oculus Rift system that Facebook acquired together with the company Oculus. The presentations by Oculus's CEO Luckey and Facebook's/Meta's CEO Zuckerberg as well as the take up of these presentations by the media, therefore, (also) are promotional activities that advertise VR in general and the system they develop in particular. In this chapter, I have given a flavor of how the guiding vision of the "empathy machine" features in the promotion of VR as a communication

technique to popularize the technology and align its future with the mission of Facebook. The future will show if the past decade was just another phase in the longer-term development of immersive technology or if this time it really is different for VR and it becomes a popular consumer technology.

9.5 Postface

The public interest in VR has remained fairly high until mid-2022. However, when in the beginning of 2023 Microsoft announced the closing of AltspaceVR, a VR platform where users could create virtual spaces and organize virtual events, doubts about the future of VR emerged once again. The reason for such doubt may be linked to the disappointing developments in the 1990s – from hype to demise – and because, again, expectations in VR raised by those promoting it in the media have largely remained unfulfilled. While we come across an increasing number of "natural" experiments with VR in education, entertainment, and shopping environments (Barnes 2016; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2022), as in the 1990s doubts on the prospects of VR are arising (Kao et al. 2020). Moreover, since 2022 the public discourse has shifted and now appears to be more interested in artificial intelligence than in the slow improvements in the development of VR; in 2023, up to October, The Guardian has published only 18 articles in its VR Section. In the coming years, we will see if VR is here to stay and fulfill any of the promises made by companies' CEOs, technology enthusiasts, and those who are excited about the possibility VR offers them already today.

Notes

1 https://www.oculus.com/blog/oculus-joins-facebook/?locale=en_GB
2 It may be interesting to note that Jaron Lanier also suggested that VR would facilitate new forms of communication, which he called "post-symbolic communication" (Lanier 2011) as the technology would allow people to engage with each other without the need for language.
3 https://www.facebook.com/notes/393134628500376/; after the renaming of Facebook to Meta the mission has been modified only slightly, "Giving people the power to build community and bring the world closer together".

10 Discussion

Peopling Marketing, Organization, and Technology

The book introduces the interactionist attitude to marketing and consumer research. Adopting this sociological attitude, the studies reported in Chapters 3 to 9 demonstrate that the marketing functions of production, place, promotion, and price are not abstract categories but practical and interactional accomplishments. In this final chapter of the book, I highlight contributions interactionist studies make to marketing and consumer research by discussing the peopling of marketing, and the embedding of technology in the organization of marketing interaction.

10.1 Peopling Marketing

The studies reported here bring the abstract notions of the marketing mix, that is, production, place, promotion, and price, to life by showing that they are accomplished by people interacting with each other. The analysis investigating the *production* of exhibits and exhibitions reveals that design teams use "professional theories" (vom Lehn, Sang, Glassborow and King 2019b) of imagined audiences to inform their interpretation of the design brief and their discussions about the content of exhibitions (cf. Macdonald 2002) (Chapter 5). The professional theories include imaginings of the atmosphere the design work will create as well as imaginings of people's actions at, and around, and their experience of, exhibits. The content of these imaginings arises in discussion and negotiation between the members of the design team and may also involve representatives of the funders and museum managers. In the analysis of design meetings, I have revealed that those present ongoingly interpret the brief, propose, and deliberate about exhibits and exhibit(ion) features, and make suggestions on how members of the audience will respond to them.

These interactions and discussions are critical parts of the design work through which exhibits and exhibitions are created. They provide the basis for the material work designers and their contractors undertake in workshops where exhibits and other parts later deployed in the exhibition are

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fabricated. In these discussions, the participants use an analytic scheme they call "Design Approach" as a device to structure the proceedings. The Design Approach functions like a "boundary object" (Star and Griesemer 1989) that is at the same time specific enough to help guiding discussions and generic enough to allow everybody to contribute to discussions and make contributions to the different parts of the model (Chapter 5).

In a related way, the analysis in Chapter 6 investigates the work of video editors who when producing and designing video content for art museums deploy professional theories of the audience they imagine will watch gallery talks online. The analysis of the recordings of a gallery talk published on social media suggests the editors' work aims to create an experience for online audiences that to some extent simulates the experience of live audiences. They generate video content enabling online audiences to see spatial relationships between curator, exhibits, and live audience, and engaging people at their computers with the exhibit by zooming in and out of exhibits in alignment with the curator's talk.

The marketing function of *place* or distribution features in Chapters 3 and 4. The analysis of marketing interaction on street-markets reveals how customers orient to the distribution of stalls on a street-market, for example, by orienting to stalls visually as they traverse the market or by walking toward some stalls and not others. It also suggests how the distribution of wares is accomplished in, and through, marketing interaction. The marketing interaction here involves customers to display their interest in selected wares and vendors orienting to such display by announcing the wares' price or by making offers for wares.

The analysis discussed in Chapter 4 continues the investigation of the marketing function of place by exploring how managers of a supermarket chain decide about the deployment of digital technology to enhance the distribution of goods. It reveals that managers' decisions involve the deployment of "professional theories" (vom Lehn et al. 2019b) about customers and their behavior on the shop floor as well as professional theories about the impact the deployment of the technology will have on the company's operations. It transpires that the technological innovation of supermarkets involves "unanticipated consequences" (Merton 1936), such as changes to the relationships between store staff and customers, store managers and sales(wo)men offering them products, and between individual stores and the center of the company.

Promotion features in Chapters 3 and 9 but is important also to the discussion in Chapter 5. Market vendors produce market cries through which they announce what they are selling and engage in marketing interaction where they promote their wares to customers. Both, market cries and face-to-face promotions are produced in interaction with customers. In Chapter 3 we have seen how market cries are oriented to the

actions of customers in the vicinity of stall, and the analysis has shown that vendors closely observe and produce promotional actions in alignment with customers displaying an interest in particular wares. Thus, the analysis has revealed the practices through which promotional activities rely on knowledge of the market that vendors acquire by observing customers' actions at their stalls (Hackley 2002). The analysis, therefore, contributes to research about the practice of "environmental scanning" (Brownlie 2010) that in marketing textbooks is often obscured by generic models such as the model of the "marketing environment" (Kotler and Armstrong 2023).

I investigated another kind of promotional activity in Chapter 9 where I examined the public discourse about Virtual Reality as it manifests itself in newspaper articles. The analysis discusses how journalists interpret proclamations about the future of new technology made by CEOs of technology companies. The interviews and presentations by the CEOs together with the write-ups by journalists frame the technology discourse in ways allowing listeners and readers to interpret the technology as having the potential to enhance their current activities, such as gaming, watching films, traveling, or communicating with others. The analysis argues that the public discourse is structured by "guiding visions" (Dierkes 1992; 2001) that provide possible future trajectories for the development of Virtual Reality. The guiding vision that currently appears to be most promising, also identified by Preece and colleagues (2022), describes Virtual Reality as an "empathy machine". It considers Virtual Reality as a technology that facilitates close interpersonal relationships between its users. In particular, in light of video communication tools widely used since the pandemic, Virtual Reality is promoted as a technology that can generate value by bringing people closer together despite being geographically separated and facilitate emotional bonds between them. Yet, it transpires that those developing guiding visions for the technology rely on underdeveloped, often psychological notions of, "empathy", that allow linking their promotional activities to newly emerging capitalist forms such as "emotional capitalism" (Illouz 2007). Research utilizing interactionist concepts and frameworks of "empathy" as a social achievement (Ruiz-Junco 2017; 2023; Ruusuvuori 2005) may help not only to create promotions that are more in line with the capabilities of the technology but also capture better how to relate to each other in virtual worlds.

The analysis in Chapters 3 and 8 is concerned with *price* and *pricing*. Here, I examine marketing interaction at market stalls where participants embed references to price in their actions and interactions. The two studies add to discussions of "price-setting as social activity" (Prus 1985) in interactionist sociology as well as to investigations in marketing concerned with pricing and novel, participatory techniques of pricing, such as the

"personalization" of price (Esteves 2022; Tomczyk et al. 2022) and "name your own price" (Chandran and Morwitz 2005; Kim et al. 2009; Spann et al. 2004). Rather than relying on the use of novel digital technologies, I have shown how such techniques are regularly used in marketing interaction on street-markets.

Thus, throughout the chapters generic and abstract concepts have been enlivened and animated as people and their actions have been brought "back in" to marketing. The studies have allowed us to see that production, placing, promoting, and pricing are underpinned by marketing interaction. Market participants interact with each other when producing and deploying exhibitions and publish online content, distributing wares to customers and making decisions about the deployment of technology that will enhance companies' operations and distribution of products, promoting wares on markets, in public presentations, and in the media, and pricing wares and products.

The discussions in the chapters address arguments made in (critical) marketing before in that they show that concepts like the marketing mix are useful analytic devices, in practice, however, the analytic distinctions do not hold up as personnel ongoingly interweave production, placing, promotion, and pricing (Hackley 2009; 2013). For example, we have seen that price information is embedded in promotional activities, such as in market cries or when vendors make offers and recommendations, the production and publication of online content by a museum enables online audiences to experience art and promotes exhibitions to a wider public, and the distribution of wares and products relies on the pricing having been done before. The studies argue that marketing activities, production, placing, promoting, and pricing, as well as the interweaving of these activities are accomplished in, and through, marketing interaction.

10.2 Unpacking the Co-production of Value

Value is often conceived as "subjective, context-dependent and complex" (Karababa and Kjeldgaard 2014). This concept of value has barely shifted over the past century or so, despite developments like service- and relationship marketing (Gummesson 2002) and the service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004; 2008) highlighting that value is "co-created" (Grönroos 2007b) and that interaction both amongst customers and between customers and company personnel is critical for value to emerge. Therefore, relatively little research has been undertaken to explore the interactional underpinnings of the co-creation of value. The analyses in Chapters 3 to 9 contribute to these and related discussions in marketing and consumer research.

They reveal that those developing and deploying servicescapes (Sherry 1998), such as museum exhibitions use professional theories of customers and the audience to create these spaces. Thus, by responding to surveys and participating in interviews with market researchers and audience consultants, customers contribute to the design of servicescapes. Moreover, the atmosphere within servicescapes is not predefined by the work of designers and managers but it emerges as people inhabit and engage with the material and visual environment and interact with each other when exploring the space and the objects displayed there (Biehl-Missal and Saren 2012; Biehl-Missal and vom Lehn 2015; Biehl and vom Lehn 2021; Preece, Rodner and Rojas-Gaviria 2022b). The analysis of marketing interaction in street-markets, for example, reveals how markets' atmospheres arise not only from the placing of stalls and wares across the site but also, and probably more so from the "buzz" market participants generate through their actions and interactions on the market. Visits to street-markets, therefore, are experienced as valuable because of what wares are offered and what atmosphere a market "has" whereby those visiting the market actively contribute to its atmosphere.[1]

The co-creation of value also is entangled with the deployment of novel and digital technology in servicescapes like exhibitions and supermarkets. In Chapter 5, I have investigated how members of an exhibition design team decide about the development and deployment of interactive exhibits by considering the imagined audience who will visit the exhibition and engage with the exhibits. In Chapter 4, I have suggested that the deployment of computer systems, barcodes and scanners, and subsequently self-service checkouts requires the socialization of staff and customers to ease the use of the technology. Staff are offered training to adapt their skills and knowledge to the new digitally enhanced environment, and customers learn from staff as well as from each other how to use the systems. The value created in, and through, the engagement with such systems differs between company, staff, and customers, and is difficult to pin down and conceptualize in a value-creation model that would obscure these differences. We also have seen how customers engage with self-service systems and how, in interaction with each other, they identify and deal with issues in the operation of such systems. This interactive dealing with operational issues, such as the engagement with SSTs that do not respond to customers' actions in anticipated ways, contributes to the value generated in servicescapes (Chapter 7). Thus, visitors' experience of exhibits, whether or not they work in anticipated ways, arises in, and through, their interaction in which they orient to and make sense of system responses. The analysis, therefore, reveals how people's engaging with failing SSTs can be experienced as valuable as it leads to the emergence of social relationship, sometimes between people who did not know each other before. At the

same time, it might turn out that when people encounter failing SSTs in museums or elsewhere their experience is spoilt (Kollmann 2007), value is destructed (cf. Echeverri and Skålén 2011), and they turn to social media to voice their dissatisfaction and frustration (Giaccardi 2012).

In service marketing, promotional activities are sometimes described as resources customers use to develop expectations of the service experience they will have when engaging with a company or organization. Promotional activities, therefore, foreshadow customers' experiences and play an important in the process through which value is co-created in marketing interaction between customers and companies and in interaction amongst customers (cf. Grönroos 1984). Regarding the promotion of Virtual Reality as a new technology enabling empathetic communication between geographically distributed people, I have argued that such promises, if not fulfilled by technological developments might have detrimental consequences for the prospects of the technology on the market (Chapter 9). In earlier chapters, I investigated how promotional activities are embedded within the value co-creation process on street-markets. These promotional activities, the market cries, the casual offers being made by vendors, and the personalization of such offers make important contributions to customers' experience of markets and provide the basis for the popularity of street-markets in a time when this kind of market is often conceived to be economically inefficient. It transpires, however, that marketing interaction on street-markets provides the basis for long-lasting experiences that people enjoy and value.

The interactive processes through which prices are created between vendors and customers underlie the co-creation of value on street-markets. Purchases made on markets sometimes might be more a side-product of the marketing interaction while what counts for participants is the market experience arising in marketing interaction at stalls or with staff in other retail environments. Purchases, of course, generate economic value as they lead to an exchange of goods for money paying toward vendors' livelihood. Yet, it often is the interaction itself that creates value for the participants. Therefore, they frequent street-markets because they value the experience of marketing interaction, including the possibility to negotiate price, even though in value-for-money terms they might lose out to vendors (Chapters 3 and 8).

10.3 Marketing Interaction and Technology

The analysis of marketing interaction has involved investigations of how market participants embed technology within marketing interaction. I have explored how those involved in decision-making about the development and deployment of technology in supermarkets and exhibitions talk about

how the "affordances" (Gibson 1986) of technologies will influence operations as well as customers' experiences. For example, the managers of the supermarket chain discussed the opportunities and challenges posed by technologies like computer systems, barcodes, and scanners for their company. These discussions about technology have influenced and shaped specific design features of systems and devices and their deployment within the supermarket (Chapter 4). Similarly, we have seen how discussions about technology amongst members of a design team have shaped their decision-making about the selection of technologies for deployment in exhibitions. In these discussions about different technologies members of the design team explored the impact technologies, such as lighting, interactives, and special effects, may have on the imagined audience's experience of the space (Chapter 5). And in Chapter 9, I have explored how CEOs of technology companies and journalists discuss technology and create a public discourse about Virtual Reality, that can influence the future development of technology. The chapters in this book, therefore, contribute not only to discussions in marketing and consumer research but also to debates in the sociology of technology interested in "talk about technology" (Weyer 1989) and its influence on technological innovation.

Apart from talking about technology, the chapters also include investigations of "technology in action" (Heath and Luff 2000). This body of interactionist research is addressed in the analysis of visitors' engagement with interactive exhibits that do not work as anticipated (Chapter 7). In the analysis, we see how exhibit features are constituted in concrete situations, when visitors interact with each other while orienting to the self-service systems. We have seen how people make sense of system responses to their actions, even when these responses are not arising as expected. The analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 also add to this body of research by examining how exhibition designers and video editors imagine consumers' responses when developing and deploying exhibits and online content.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I have considered how a conceptual model, that is, the Design Approach, as a technology that members of the design team deploy to structure discussions amongst themselves and with other stakeholders. The Design Approach as a "boundary object" (Star 2010; Star and Griesemer 1989) is sufficiently generic that it can be used across different situations and audiences and specific enough to provide people with a framework to align their actions with, in a way others can recognize.

10.4 Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

The aim of the book has been to introduce the interactionist attitude to marketing and consumer research. Other scholars in these disciplines

have drawn on (symbolic) interactionism before, but in my view have focused all too much on the "symbolic" while neglecting "interaction".[2] Hence, studies in marketing and consumer research that involve an interactionist attitude are primarily concerned with issues like "identity" (Belk 1988; 2013; Solomon 1983; 2010; Solomon, Marshall, and Stuart 2015) and "community" (Cova and Pace 2006; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) while showing less interest in the marketing interaction that underpins the emergence of identity and community. Due to the lack of studies exploring the interactional constitution of identity and (consumer) communities in recent years, doubts have been voiced regarding the existence of such communities. And it has been argued that such communities are "ideological figures" (Zwick and Bradshaw 2016: 110) used to lure consumers into existing symbolic structures and market relationships, for example, by virtue of participatory media (cf. Arvidsson 2013; Arvidsson et al. 2018). These discussions criticize "communicative capitalism" (Dean 2005; 2014) as it has emerged in light of the growing influence that the internet and social media have on the "public sphere" (Habermas 2022). They suggest that participatory media, such as social media, encourage superficial, pragmatic forms of communication.

In this book, I have argued that studies adopting the interactionist attitude are particularly well suited to examine the organization of communication and interaction underpinning market relationships. Scholars who have an interest in "communicative capitalism" and communication using participatory media could benefit from using interactionist methods to study interaction and communication. In Chapters 3, 6, 7, and 8, I have used the ethnomethodological interaction analysis to unpack marketing activities and reveal how participants co-create value in, and through, marketing interaction (Heath et al. 2010; vom Lehn 2018b; 2019a). Thus, I have begun to show how studies using the interactionist attitude coupled with suitable methods of data collection and analysis can help unravel the marketing gloss of the "co-creation of value".

Apart from the ethnomethodological analysis of interaction I have used various other interactionist research methods. (Peopled) ethnography, that is, participant observation, often coupled with other forms of data collection like qualitative interviews and document analysis, is probably the most important interactionist research method (cf. Fine 2003). In Chapter 5, the analysis of the discussions members of an exhibition design team held is based on ethnographic fieldwork and audio recordings as well as the analysis of documents. In Chapters 4, 6, and 9, I have examined data collected online: recordings of oral history interviews, video recordings of a gallery talk, and newspaper articles. Oral history interviews with managers of a supermarket chain have provided me with access to the accounts these personnel now give for decisions they have made about the adoption of

new technology in the operations of their company (Chapter 4). Videos published on YouTube have been used as documents of editors' professional theories of the audience they imagine will watch the gallery talk online. For the examination of the recordings, I have used methods gleaned and adapted from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (Heath et al. 2010) (Chapter 6). And in Chapter 9, I have examined the public discourse about Virtual Reality providing me with the opportunity to investigate how CEOs of technology companies and journalists conceive the future development of an innovative technology.

Thus, in this book, we have seen how the interactionist attitude and interactionist research methods offer a novel way to study marketing. Adopting interactionism to the study of marketing provides us with an attitude and methods to bring to life marketing concepts that obscure the marketing interaction through which they are accomplished by market participants. Generic concepts, such as the marketing mix, are interpreted in concrete situations for the purposes at hand. They can be "useful" (Box 1976) schemes for the analysis of marketing activities but are not suitable to capture the complexity of the work those involved in marketing practice undertake to produce, place, promote, and price goods and services. Marketing is a peopled activity, accomplished, in, and through, marketing interaction. Therefore, it is necessary to explore and unpack the organization of marketing interaction and investigate how technology is embedded within it. With this book, I offer interactionism as an attitude to undertake such research.

Notes

1 The same argument can be made about the atmosphere of museums and servicescapes.
2 See for example McCracken's (1990; 2005) excellent books that almost exclusively investigate the "symbolic" meaning of consumption.

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