Preface

Since the onset of the digital revolution, the traditional divide between value creation – *research and development, production and advertising* – and value distribution – *sales, use and post-use* – has been blurring. If we consider the impact of digitalization in value chains we find a new and active role for the customer in the value processes. Individuals and companies are increasingly invited to exchange multiple inputs and outputs before, during and after sales. The new contemporaneity and continuity in the creation, distribution and consumption of products and services is gradually leading to a new social game between parties. Companies are able to promote, intermediate and intercept customer conversations, while individuals are able to keep companies under non-contractual observation. Consequently, the new overlap of *social interaction* and *sale* can generate a positive loop between corporate and individual responsibility which brings the market and society closer together.

Nevertheless, the increasing attempts by companies to promote, intermediate and intercept individual conversations is opening up a new ideological debate: is the new social game bringing new value for the gamers? Are individuals acting as customers or as citizens? Is their work being properly compensated? And lastly, are we seeing a truly new form of value co-creation or simply a new form of exploitation?

This work examines theoretical implications of the growing overlap between dialogue and sales, between the market and society or, more simply, between Money and Gift. A review of recent literature is followed by a discussion of logics and empirical evidence, which leads into a focus on the convergence currently taking place between the roles of the customer and the citizen. We develop a new theory of convergence and test it through a specially developed model of a “co-value chain”. The model is applied to a large number of recent case studies, providing a topical focus on implications for management.

The findings of our qualitative analysis are confirmed by our quantitative analysis: the active role of consumers in the new co-value chain involves individuals and their expectations about money and gift benefits. This leads to a growing interest on the part of the consumer in being a dynamic actor in the value chain. Companies are thus taking a minor role, as consumers become both producers and users of services. In many cases, companies are mere facilitators of the service, while consumers are channel leaders and drivers of service production and consumption. This phenomenon of *collaborative consumption* is investigated in detail in the empirical section at the end of the book, which conducts an analysis of BlaBlaCar and Airbnb.

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