

Marketing in Food, Hospitality, Tourism and Events

A Critical Approach

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Consumer Resources and THEF Experiences

■ Introduction

This chapter explores how individual consumers utilise a set of resources to negotiate and form their experiences with THEF products and activities. The traditional approach to understanding consumers including marketing resources is normally located at the macro level, assumptions are made that all members of a demographic or socio-economic group possess the same or similar resources. However, this chapter makes the assertion that individual consumers all possess different resources of various kinds and deploy them in individual personal ways. The result of this is that it is important that we can locate and place the consumer in a micro framework of resources and practices, as it is only then that we can locate and understand the consumer's capabilities and relations to marketing and products. A number of resources and practices will be examined below. These resources also inform a number of other chapters in this including the location and status of consumers by defining their group position as explored in Chapter 6.

■ An outline of the Theory of Resources

The service logic of marketing is predicated on the notion that value is created through the integration interaction of marketing resources (products, activities, deeds, and communications etc.)

with those of the consumers. This interaction based perspective mirrors the theories of the cultural perspective that maintains that marketers produce cultural resources that consumers incorporate into their lives through the deployment of their own resources and consumption practices. Integral to both these perspectives are what Vargo and Lusch (2004) call operand and operant resources.

- Operand resources are those that a consumer acts upon to create value and would include a marketplace object or activity itself and their money, time, allocative spaces or material resources (Arnould *et al.* 2006).
- Operant resources on the other hand are those that a consumer deploys to act upon operand resources to create value (Vargo and Lusch 2004).

In this chapter these specifically include a consumers stock of knowledge and skill (Arnould *et al.* 2006). In most cases a combination of operand and operant resources are integrated alongside those offered through the marketplace to create meanings and value. For example a consumer, staging a dinner party will draw upon their ability to cook (resources of knowledge and skill) and utilise their kitchen appliances, cookbooks and utensils (material resources), to produce a meal for their friends (social resources) using items they purchased from the supermarket (marketplace resources) using their money or vouchers (financial resources).

Having outlined the role and significance of consumer resources we now turn to describing the nature of each of these and their relevance in producing THEF experiences. We will begin by looking at consumer operand resources, which include financial resources, time, material resources and space. This will be followed by an examination of consumer knowledge and skills that constitute the consumer's operant resources.