# Understanding consumer resistance to home delivery services: from the SDL-based resource theory to a cultural approach

**Abstract :**

This research draws on consumer sociocultural and service-dominant logic (SDL) theories to explore why consumers reject and resist resource-based market offers. Twenty-six semi-structured interviews were conducted with consumers who actively avoided using home delivery services, opting to shop in person or through family and friends. Our findings reveal that consumer rejection and resistance to home delivery are not explained only by functional reasons but by tensions between different types of market and cultural resources: 1) the immersive in-store shopping experience versus the practicality of home delivery, and 2) informal consumer-to-consumer logistics that reinforce identity, social values, and relationships versus home delivery.

***Keywords:*** *Service-dominant logic, cultural resource theory, resource integration, consumer resistance, delivery service.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Delivery is a crucial service for companies that sell products, encompassing all aspects of customer service — from initial interactions and onboarding to setup, service completion, and follow-up. It refers to the process of delivering a service from the business to the customer, focusing on purchases made in conventional stores or online and shipped to a customer's residential or commercial address (Kassim and Asiah Abdullah 2010). Delivery services can range from local (covering a small geographical area) to national or even international, depending on their scope (Tadić and Veljović 2021). The rapid expansion of online shopping in recent years has highlighted the pivotal role of home delivery services (Uzir et al. 2021).

The global home delivery service market is projected to grow from USD 120 billion in 2023 to approximately USD 250 billion by 2032 (DataIntelo 2024). This service transformation not only reshapes consumption habits but also alters how products are delivered. Home delivery has undergone significant evolutions in recent years, driven by technological advancements, shifts in consumer behavior, global economic challenges, and the need for delivery during the COVID-19 lockdown (Uzir et al. 2021). McKinsey (2021) reported that home delivery tripled between 2017 and 2021, and more than doubled in the American market during the pandemic. What was initially a temporary response to the crisis has now become a permanent fixture for many omnichannel retailers and consumers (Shen, Namdarpour et Lin 2022) owing to the rise in e-commerce and the demand for faster, more convenient delivery services in sectors such as food, furniture, and clothing.

Despite the advantages of home delivery and its status as the dominant, unavoidable model as e-commerce continues to set new records every year (Vakulenko et al. 2019), many consumers still resist using this service for in-store purchases. Market research by OpinionWay found that consumers who use home delivery are half as numerous as those who intend to use the service (LSA 2019). A 2023 study by the State of Digital Grocery Performance Scorecard revealed that in-store grocery sales accounted for 85.3% of the total grocery sales in the United States. Simultaneously, Coresight Research found that online grocery sales grew by 14.7%, but grocery delivery usage declined in 2022, dropping from 55.5% in 2021 to 49%. In recent years, the academic focus has shifted toward app-based food delivery services (Chakraborty et al. 2022), examining trust and loyalty toward mobile food delivery applications (Su et al. 2022). While home delivery offers numerous benefits, such as reduced effort and fatigue, convenience, easy access to products, and sometimes faster delivery, the reasons behind consumer rejection or resistance remain unclear, especially when cost is not a barrier. Previous quantitative studies have explored consumers' preferences regarding different delivery methods (e.g., home delivery, pick-up from store, pick-up from locker) or attributes (e.g., speed, precision, and timing) of home delivery services (Amorim et al. 2024; Milioti, Pramatari and Zampou 2021), but they have largely overlooked the broader shopping experience, the meanings consumers attach to various company services, and how these factors influence their decisions. Studying home delivery services through the lens of consumer resistance offers a more critical and nuanced understanding of resource integration (RI). While preference-based approaches assume rational choice and value maximization, a resistance perspective uncovers the underlying sociocultural tensions that may lead consumers to reject, avoid, or negotiate the use of such services, revealing forms of consumer behavior that traditional models of adoption and satisfaction often obscure.

Service-dominant logic (SDL) offers a valuable framework for examining the values underlying services such as home delivery (Deslee and Guirod 2014). Developed by Vargo and Lusch (2008), SDL highlights the shift from product-based to service-based value creation, emphasizing value co-creation among actors within a service system, including companies and consumers. Vargo and Lusch (2008, p. 149) defined value as an "improvement in system well-being." Value is co-created through interaction when actors mutually integrate resources—both material (e.g., a virtual mirror in a store) and immaterial (e.g., consumer opinions)—that are considered valuable and incorporated through use. In SDL, the key aspect of co-creation is the integration of resources by the actors involved (Vargo and Lusch 2016). A company's mere provision of a resource is insufficient for co-creation; another actor must integrate the resource to facilitate collaboration (Chandler and Vargo 2011). Previous studies have examined how customer engagement influences service co-creation across sectors such as banking, insurance, and telecommunications (Cheung and To 2021), as well as peer-to-peer accommodation (Ashaduzzaman et al. 2024). Torkzadeh, Zolfagharian et Iyer (2021) found that in transformative services, such as public higher education, value co-creation behaviors with students improve service quality, which in turn influences student satisfaction, performance, and retention. Islam et al. (2024) examined value co-creation in healthcare services between patients and providers, linking it to patients' perceived quality of life. In addition to the company, other actors involved in co-creation may include other companies, consumers and influencers (Filali-Boissy, Jouny-Rivier and Perren 2025). Research on how service co-creation results from the integration of actors' resources (Vargo and Lusch 2004a) has emerged relatively recently (Peters, Löbler and Brodie 2014). Scholars have focused on the utilitarian aspects of consumer behavior that facilitate RI, such as skills (Kleinaltenkamp, Brodie and Frow 2012) or motivations (Findsrud, Tronvoll and

Edvardsson 2018). However, research on the mechanisms underlying consumer rejection or resistance to integrating company-provided resources, which can hinder value creation, remains limited.

To address this theoretical gap, we draw on consumer sociocultural theory to investigate whether additional motivations can explain consumer rejection and resistance to service use (Arnould and Thompson 2005). This approach posits that symbolic socio-cultural resources are used in consumption to achieve self-fulfillment (Arnould 2005; Arnould and Price 2006; Arnould et al. 2006; Holt 2004; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Our research applies this framework to explore the cultural meanings behind consumer rejection and resistance to a company's service. For example, a product repair service (a resource offered by the company) may be rejected because the practice of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) carries symbolic and cultural value for consumers (e.g., "I can show that I have the skills to do it myself, which is important for my self-esteem; I can repair it with friends, strengthening our social bond"). While research based on SDL theory emphasizes skills and utilitarian motivations in service adoption or rejection, our study provides a deeper explanation by incorporating a cultural perspective. Therefore, we aim to address the following research question: What meanings do consumers attribute to their rejection and resistance to home-delivery services offered by service providers?

To answer this question, we employed a qualitative research design to investigate the reasons consumers actively avoid stores' home delivery services, choosing instead to shop in person or delegate tasks to friends and family.

This study makes two contributions to theory. First, it clarifies customer rejection and resistance to the company's RI by adopting a cultural perspective. This perspective broadens our understanding by moving beyond individual skills and motivations. Thus, it complements the SDL framework (Vargo and Lusch 2008), particularly when consumers reject a company's value proposition by refusing to use its resources. Second, from a managerial standpoint, this study identifies the key factors that hinder the integration of company resources, particularly home delivery services, and suggests strategies to optimize resource proposals.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature on RI and its role in value co-creation within a service system. Section 3 outlines the field research approach and the qualitative methods used to analyze the meanings consumers attribute to their behavior. Section 4 presents the study's findings, followed by a discussion of the theoretical contributions in Section 5. Section 6 addresses the limitations of this study and suggests directions for future research. Finally, section 7 offers managerial implications.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *The Service-Dominant Logic and the integration of company resources by consumers*

The SDL framework explores the shift from goods-based marketing to service-based marketing. In this context, a product serves as a medium for delivering services. For instance, a product might be paired with services such as home delivery or after-sales support. From this perspective, service offers a new way of understanding economic and social exchanges, focusing on how one actor's resources (e.g., a company or customer) are used to benefit another (Vargo and Lusch 2004b). Resources are categorized as either operant (tangible or intangible, such as knowledge and skills) or operand (e.g., equipment and technology) (Paredes et al. 2014). These resources originate from various sources, including private (e.g., family and friends), market (e.g., businesses), and public (e.g., government) sectors. When integrated by stakeholders, such as customers and companies, these resources can create value (Lusch and Vargo 2014).

According to Vargo and Lusch (2004a, p. 7), "value is perceived and determined by the consumer based on 'value in use.' Value results from the beneficial application of operant resources, sometimes transmitted through operand resources. Firms can only make value propositions." SDL promotes interactions among actors to co-create value at the individual, dyadic, or market levels. Co-creation occurs when resources are interactively integrated and utilized (Vargo and Lusch 2008). For example, when purchasing a product online, customers engage in the value co-creation process by either picking it up in-store or having it delivered to their homes. Similarly, customer involvement in logistics (Goudarzi and Rouquet, 2013) or in the development of a new product or service (Hilton 2008) represents a resource that the company can incorporate into its operations.

Engaging personal resources and integrating them through participation, acceptance, use, and consumption of a service provider's resources can be likened to a co-creation process. Integration enables value creation at the individual, dyadic, or market level, a concept that has attracted increasing interest among researchers (Findsrud, Tronvoll and Edvardsson 2018) owing to its relevance for understanding the SDL theory (Vargo and Lusch, 2017). According to Plé (2016), RI is an essential step in the value co-creation process. This integration is shaped by institutions (e.g., rules, norms, and practices) and requires actors to possess the necessary skills and knowledge, driven by their motivation (Findsrud, Tronvoll and Edvardsson 2018; Skålén, Pace and Cova 2015). As Findsrud, Tronvoll and Edvardsson (2018, p. 512) noted,

RI is the "actors' use of competence in emerging interactions, driven by motivation and enabled by available resources." Baron and Harris (2008) proposed that consumers apply their operant resources both individually and collectively.

Other researchers have examined the specific resources of influencers/consumers (Harmeling et al. 2017) and their RI behavior in service innovation (Wu et al. 2022). A potential resource becomes an actual resource only when it is integrated and applied to a specific activity, with its value derived from its use by focal actors (Löbler 2013). This process varies depending on the ontological perspective employed in the study of RI. For example, Peters, Löbler and Brodie (2014) suggested that an interpretive, subjective approach might raise questions about the reciprocal nature of interactions among actors. RI entails customers strategically deploying resources to create value directly or to facilitate further consumption, thereby deriving value (Hibbert, Winklhofer and Temerak 2012). Kleinaltenkamp, Brodie and Frow (2012) and Korkman, Storbacka and Harald (2010, p. 238) argued for a practice-based approach to analyzing the RI process, which seeks to understand how value emerges from this integration. Drawing on Korkman and Araujo (2019), we argue that resources are integrated into practices that define service ecosystems. RI has been examined from various perspectives, including dyadic (Jaakkola and Alexander 2014; Lusch and Webster 2010), actor-to-actor (Lusch and Webster 2010), and network-to-network (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2012) perspectives.

Some studies highlight the embeddedness of relationships, processes, and the framing of value, resulting from an individual's ability to access, adapt, and integrate resources through habitual practices within networks (Akaka and Vargo 2014). Value, often co-created through the collective activities, interactions, and collaborations of multiple actors, is evaluated during usage (Laamanen and Skålén 2015; Vargo et al. 2008). Thus, value co-creation through RI requires actors to recognize the potential resources available to them (resourcefulness) and engage in ongoing interactions and cooperation with these resources (Peters, Löbler and Brodie 2014). As Vargo and Lusch (2011, p. 184) noted, "the usefulness of any particular potential resource from one source is moderated by the availability of other potential resources from the other sources, the removal of resistance to resource utilization, and the beneficiary's ability to integrate them."

In the RI process model, Caridà, Edvardsson and Colurcio (2019) highlighted the interaction between available resources, RI, and the interpretation of value, which ultimately leads to either co-creation or co-destruction of value. Resource matching is an interactive component of RI, while resourcing focuses on creating and integrating mutually reinforcing resources (Caridà, Edvardsson and Colurcio 2019) and on removing resistance. The valuing phase allows actors to assess value within a social context. Understanding these resource mechanisms could provide valuable insights for both academics and managers. Dehling, Edvardsson and Tronvoll (2022) argued that the conceptual division of RI into separate phases is inconsistent with empirical observations that link the phases together. They view resource asymmetry between actors as a complex information problem that can be addressed through an actor- or agency-driven approach. This approach emphasizes the competencies involved in screening and signaling during interactions, suggesting that information and feedback emerge through the interaction.

***The sociocultural approach to resources***

For consumer culture researchers, resources are closely tied to personal and sociocultural dimensions. Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) examines the social and cultural contexts that drive retail patronage and purchasing behaviors, focusing on the diverse factors that influence retail purchase decisions. This perspective complements behavioral decision theory and social cognition research in retailing. In these marketplaces, both firms and consumers exert mutual influence. Firms compete by offering specific combinations of resources and engaging in culturally constituted projects that consumers pursue. Arnould et al. (2006) combined a Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) perspective on signs and symbols with the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) framework, which focuses on value co-creation. Their work highlights how consumers rely on market offerings and mobilize both immaterial and dynamic resources (operant) and material and static resources (operand) to generate value for themselves and others. The intersection between SDL and CCT has become significantly less prominent in recent years, and academics have advocated for renewing the integration of CCT and SDL to deepen understanding of how value is realized (Wilden et al. 2017).

A CCT-based approach to retailing aims to explain co-creation —specifically, how consumers utilize their cultural resources, supplemented by retailer-provided resources, to enhance their personal identity and communal projects (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry 1989). Arnould (2005) identified four types of cultural resources provided by firms: economic, utopian, ludic and temporal. These resources help consumers connect to cultural assets that shape individual and social life projects beyond the store's environment. They become valuable to consumers to the extent that they enable them to pursue their personal goals and projects (Holt, 2004). However, firm-supplied resources are inanimate and lack inherent functionality and meaning. Consumers must activate their operant resources to create meaningful consumer experiences. In this sense, retailers represent a space where operant resources interact with consumers.

Arnould et al. (2006) categorized consumers' operant resources into three types: physical (encompassing both physical and mental capabilities), social (including family relationships, consumer communities, and commercial relationships), and cultural (comprising knowledge, skills, history, and imagination). Their research explored the interactions between these different types of operant resources. In the context of RI, operant resources (especially personal skills and knowledge) have received significant attention under the SDL approach (Findsrud, Tronvoll and Edvardsson 2018; Skålén, Pace and Cova 2015), whereas social resources remain comparatively underexplored under the CCT approach. Social resources are embedded in interpersonal and institutional relationships and involve the capacity to access and mobilize social support, norms, or influence through ties to family, communities, or market actors. Cultural resources are oriented assets that consumers mobilize to enact consumption practices and make sense of consumption contexts. Researchers such as Holt (2004), Arnould (2005, 2008), and Arnould et al. (2008) have examined the link between operant and cultural resources, emphasizing that the latter are operant resources that carry symbolic meaning. Arnould et al. (2006, p. 99) explained that "consumer culture theorists conceive of cultural operant resources as varying amounts and kinds of knowledge of cultural schemas, including specialized cultural capital, skills, and goals." Building on the idea that consumption serves not only as a means of social integration but also as a resource for social and identity fulfillment, the authors argue that committing to or refusing to consume a service is an experience imbued with symbolic, cultural, social, or identity-related significance (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Arnould and Price 2000; Arnould 2005; Holt 2004). While some researchers have applied a psychological approach to experience-linked value creation and destruction (Abid et al. 2022), the socio-cultural approach has been less frequently explored.

Several studies have focused on RI in the context of virtual brand communities (Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder 2011; Schau, Muniz and Arnould 2009; Skålén, Pace and Cova 2015). Schau, Muniz and Arnould (2009) argued that value co-creation occurs only when companies and customers' practices align. In contrast, Echeverri and Skålén (2011) highlighted that misaligned practices lead to a lack of value co-creation in virtual brand communities and can even result in value co-destruction. From this perspective, a dichotomous view of RI exists, which can lead to either co-creation or co-destruction. Studying customer networks that the company does not control offers a helpful way to compare company-provided resources with those generated by consumers themselves. Furthermore, research on consumer behavior regarding the integration of service provider resources has focused on factors that facilitate this integration, such as skills, motivation (including intensity and persistence), social aspects (Findsrud, Tronvoll and Edvardsson 2018), and cultural resources (Arnould 2005). However, the lack of integration of resources remains an underexplored topic.

***Consumer rejection and resistance to the company's proposed service***

Refusing to integrate a service provider's resources can be viewed as a form of consumer resistance. In fact, consumers attempt to bypass or reject market pressures through small gestures in everyday life, both conscious and unconscious, observable or declared (Peñaloza and Price 1993; Deng 2012; Roux 2009; Roux and Izberk-Bilgin 2018).

Researchers have explored various resistance practices, focusing on anti-consumption behaviors such as voluntary simplicity, culture jamming and subcultural anti-consumption (Portwood-Stacer 2012). Consumer resistance has also been studied as a mild response to service innovations (Chouk and Mani 2019; Talwar et al. 2020), such as online shopping (Nel and Boshoff 2019), mobile payments (Talwar et al. 2020), and artificial intelligence in autonomous vehicles (Casidy et al. 2021). This form of resistance is of great importance in the present study. As such, we are interested in the reasons that explain the non-use of a service considered the most accessible and convenient. According to Claudy, Garcia and O'Driscoll (2015), whether in offline or digital contexts, the non-adoption of services or products is driven by reasons distinct from those motivating adoption. For scholars, examining both the drivers of adoption and resistant responses is crucial (Seth et al. 2020; Talwar et al. 2020). Additionally, research on consumer resistance to services and products offered through digital platforms, such as food delivery apps, has explored barriers related to purchase or continuance intention (Talwar et al. 2020). In contrast, few studies have focused on context-specific barriers.

Previous studies have primarily focused on precise forms of resistance, such as anti-consumption activism or tepid responses to relatively uncommon technological products. Less-studied resistance behaviours, such as rejection and refusal of services, have received less attention. To our knowledge, consumer resistance to home deliveries remains under-researched, particularly from the perspective of consumers who are embedded in both formal and informal, geographically dispersed networks for their purchasing and consumption activities (Figueiredo and Scaraboto 2016; Scarano and Ertz 2024). Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the meanings that consumers attach to their resistance to integrating home delivery services offered by companies.

## METHODOLOGY

To address our research question, we adopted an exploratory research design to gather initial empirical evidence of rejection or resistance to integrating service provider resources. The qualitative methodology examines the experiences of consumers who chose to rely on a network of relatives rather than home delivery services.

The sample for this study consists of 26 participants who, despite regularly travelling to geographically distant cities for holidays or work, deliberately chose not to use home delivery services for products purchased during these trips. These respondents were selected for their relevance to the phenomenon under investigation: individuals who, despite being time-pressed and mobile, chose to transport goods themselves rather than use home delivery services that could simplify logistics. France was selected as the study context because of the field's accessibility to two researchers living in France and the visibility and regularity of this behavior, observable in everyday practices such as transporting food in suitcases or carrying bulky goods in car trunks on intercity routes. Recruitment was stopped once recurring themes emerged consistently across interviews, and no new explanatory patterns were identified (Flick 2013). Notably, the diversity within the sample—spanning a broad age range (36–84 years), gender identities (17 women and nine men), and a variety of professions (e.g., teachers, managers, homemakers, retirees, and legal and medical professionals)—allowed us to engage with the heterogeneity of practices and motivations analytically. For instance, older participants often emphasized habits formed before the rise of digital services, while professionals such as judges, professors, and managers highlighted trust issues and value-based decisions related to control and quality assurance in their personal transportation. This internal variation enriched our theoretical insights by demonstrating that resistance to home delivery is not monolithic but intersects with lifestyle patterns, identity commitments, and varying relationships with place and mobility. France is a country where e-commerce, associated logistics infrastructure, and home-delivery-based commerce are widespread. This makes it a fertile ground for observing resistance behaviors and enables the study to capture and explain a variety of everyday practices that contribute to the rejection of this widespread service. By focusing on the French context, this study sets clear boundaries for interpretation while opening the possibility of transferring insights to other countries with similar motivations for mobile consumption.

The sample was selected through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques based on participants' experience with the relevant social phenomenon (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Initially, we used word of mouth within the researchers' network to identify potential participants. Snowball sampling was then employed, with the initial participants recommending others with similar experiences (Bryman and Bell 2015). Semi-structured interviews were chosen for their ability to uncover the meaning behind behaviors (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2013). Twenty-five interviews were conducted face-to-face at the participants' homes, and one via video call. The interviews lasted for an average of one hour. We ensured confidentiality and voluntary participation (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2013) and recorded and transcribed all interviews verbatim to maintain reliability (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2013). With respect to data saturation, the determination was not treated as a purely procedural threshold but rather as a cumulative, iterative assessment of thematic convergence. Saturation is a crucial aspect of qualitative research that ensures robust findings (Naeem et al. 2024). As the interviews progressed, recurring patterns emerged, including concerns about trust in service providers, the symbolic value of personal transportation, and the role of family networks in logistics. After approximately 20 interviews, new narratives continued to confirm these themes but did not add substantially novel dimensions. The final six interviews reaffirmed this stability and, importantly, allowed the researchers to test the robustness of the earlier patterns across different demographic and professional profiles. Saturation was thus reached when additional data yielded redundancy rather than conceptual innovation (Bryman and Bell 2015), a determination guided by cross-checks of the emerging coding categories (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Demographic information, including age, gender, and occupation, was collected, as these factors are crucial for understanding contextual differences (see Table 1). Finally, the variability within the sample contributed to a richer interpretation of the findings. Differences in age and life stage, for instance, revealed generational contrasts between older participants whose consumer practices were shaped before the rise of digital delivery infrastructures and younger or mid-career participants who framed their resistance in terms of value-driven choices such as quality assurance. Gendered patterns also emerged: women tended to emphasize relational obligations related to family logistics, while men tended to focus on issues of control and autonomy in transport decisions. Engaging with internal diversity allows the study to avoid portraying resistance as monolithic and instead show how it intersects with lifestyle patterns, identity commitments, and relational networks, thereby refining the theoretical implications of consumer resistance to home delivery.

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the first author's institution. However, at the time of the study, the institution did not require or provide a formal ethical approval process for noninvasive, interview-based research involving adult participants. Nevertheless, all necessary ethical precautions were taken, including obtaining

informed written consent (Arsel 2017), ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, and providing participants with the right to withdraw at any time. This approach aligns with the Declaration of Helsinki, which outlines the ethical principles for research involving humans and ensures the integrity and responsible conduct of the study.

**Table 1**
Demographic profiles of the participants.

| Participant Nr | Age | Gender identity | Profession |
|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | 60 | F | Teacher |
| P2 | 60 | F | Housewife |
| P3 | 46 | F | Teacher |
| P4 | 51 | M | Real estate agent |
| P5 | 57 | M | Manager |
| P6 | 39 | F | Housewife |
| P7 | 37 | F | Banker |
| P8 | 61 | F | Painter |
| P9 | 58 | M | Engineer |
| P10 | 65 | F | Retired |
| P11 | 46 | F | Teacher |
| P12 | 42 | F | Housewife |
| P13 | 41 | M | Manager |
| P14 | 52 | F | Insurer |
| P15 | 36 | M | Manager |
| P16 | 50 | F | Data processor |
| P17 | 53 | M | Manager |
| P18 | 44 | F | Housewife |
| P19 | 75 | F | Retired |
| P20 | 84 | M | Retired |
| P21 | 45 | F | Judge |
| P22 | 46 | M | Manager |
| P23 | 46 | F | Professor |
| P24 | 44 | F | Veterinarian |
| P25 | 46 | F | Professor |
| P26 | 61 | F | Doctor |

Textual analysis was conducted using inductive coding based on the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The analysis began with open coding, where each member of our research team independently identified key "events, happenings, objects, and actions and interactions" (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 102). In the next step, the emerging concepts were grouped into codes (Strauss and Corbin 1998). For example, the pleasure of in-store shopping or the perception that home delivery is too expensive led to the identification of tensions between alternative services. Axial coding was then used to highlight actions and interactions related to the phenomenon, shaped by context (e.g., time, place, and culture) and expressed through consequences (Strauss and Corbin 1998), such as the personal factors contributing to rejection or resistance to home delivery services. Following this process, a selective coding phase was conducted, focusing on more abstract themes, such as the value consumers place on cultural resources. During this phase, a theory emerged that identified competition between resources, which became the dominant theme in the data. Additionally, member checks (Lincoln and Guba 1985) were performed with the first five participants to ensure the accuracy of our interpretations and allow participants to reflect on and assess the findings.

## FINDINGS

Our analysis revealed that tensions between different types of resources can explain the rejection and resistance to home delivery services. First, participants perceive a conflict between the resources offered by a company: the promised immersive in-store shopping experience versus the practicality of a service that simplifies their everyday lives. Second, tensions arise between two sources of resources: participants resist delegating tasks to the market that they can perform themselves or with significant others, as these tasks have personal and intimate significance.

### *Tensions between two proposed company resources: shopping experience and home delivery service*

One emerging competition is between two resources offered by the company, which consumers perceive as alternatives: the in-store shopping experience, which offers recreational enjoyment, and home delivery services, which are valued for their convenience.

For some participants, the in-store shopping experience provided more benefits than home delivery. In-store shopping can be a pleasant, recreational experience that offers hedonic gratification (Falk and Campbell 1997). For example, P11, who lives in Northern France and often visits her family in Nice, enjoys buying soap and cosmetics at local stores during these visits. Even though these products are available for home delivery or online purchase, consumers value store visits for their unique, memory-laden experience. Visiting the store, recalling past visits, and meeting people add a level of personal significance that home delivery lacks. In contrast, home delivery is viewed as a logistical service that transports products from one location to another. The in-store experience, especially when the store is distant and the visit is special, enhances the value of the product in a way that home delivery cannot replicate:

> *It is a pleasure to pick it up from the store. It's not the product itself… How should I put it… It is not necessarily buying the product itself, but it is the act of going there and meeting people. This makes the product so important. […] I do not want to exaggerate, but when I use the soap, I remember the journey I made to Nice to purchase it. (P11)*

Another respondent was similarly uninterested in using home delivery services because the setting and environment of the shopping experience were more important to her. She often travels to her parents' second home in a different region. The same is true for P24, who lives in the same area and has a secondary residence. Both participants purchased products from local stores in the city they visited and brought them back to their hometowns without using home delivery services. P18 emphasized the pleasure of shopping in person and refused to use the available home delivery services because she enjoyed the shopping experience:

> *So, in fact, it's a psychological pleasure, I think, to have a product that you can find there that you would not expect to find here. Having it shipped... honey, it is not possible because [the producer is] a small craftsman in his caravan, so there you go. In my opinion, I can log onto the La Trinitaine website and get every box imaginable, but I have never had the curiosity to look at it. As for oysters, I can indeed find good oysters at Carrefour... but it's going to tempt me much less than if it's at the oyster farmer's... he takes them out of the tank in front of me... It is more of an environment and setting. (P18)*

*We have already received offers to do this (home delivery service), but we have never done it because we enjoy going straight to the shops and making choices. It is something we like.*
*There are cookie factories. They have also suggested this. However, we have never done this. (P24)*

The shopping experience is often linked to social aspects, in addition to the physical location (Tauber 1974), such as other people in the store (i.e., other consumers), sales staff, and the environment in which the product is purchased. This is the case for P10, who divides her time between two Breton cities, her primary residence, and her second home. She does not use home delivery services from the stores she frequents to purchase products, preferring to bring them back and consume them in her city of residence. She values the social aspects of shopping:

*No, I do not (use home delivery services). It's just that I like to go and see people, the little Palais Square... no, not at all. Yes, I imagine my friends do that, but not me for the products I bring back. (P10)*

Practical considerations can also contribute to the rejection of home delivery services, particularly for small product orders. High delivery costs can affect the final price of the purchase, as expressed by the respondents:

*However, home delivery is too expensive. For example, if you want a bottle of Vouvray sparkling wine that costs six euros, I do not know how much it would cost to bring the bottle here, but it would be extra. Moreover, transporting the bottle can cause it to shake, so we prefer to put it in the boot of the car and then come straight over. (P9)*
*You need to place a large enough order to qualify for free shipping, so we are not that interested. (P20)*

Some of our participants who travel between the two countries or live near the border (e.g., cross-border commuters or expatriates) rejected home delivery services. This is because they do not offer the pricing advantages of shopping in a country with lower prices or with tax disparities. Some consumers avoid purchasing products that are too expensive in their countries. Home delivery services do not solve this issue because they apply the same pricing structure as in the country of residence. This is the case for P5, a French citizen living in Switzerland who shops in Milan (Italy) for luxury brands such as Max Mara and Louis Vuitton. This practice allows her to pay less than the final price due to differences in value-added tax (VAT) between the two countries (the VAT is 8,1% in Swizerland and 22% in Italy). A similar practice is followed by P7, who frequently travels to the United States for work. While there, he purchases luxury brand items for himself. In addition, he also purchases for his family and friends who request them, which is a manifestation of delegated consumption (Scarano and Ertz 2024). In these cases, the local shopping experience offers a practical advantage that the company's home delivery service does not. The same applies to P16, who often visits her in-laws in a French border town and, on occasion, her husband and father-in-law shop in Spain because the products are cheaper there. The convenience of lower prices extends not only to luxury goods and food (as explained by P16) but also to medicines, as seen in the case of P22, who buys medicines in France to send to his family in Lebanon:

*My husband takes care of that... in Spain. This is because it is cheaper and there is a wide variety of charcuterie. They often go to Al Campo, near San Sebastian. They pay the toll... (laughs), but they go shopping at Al Campo. My husband dreams of bringing the big ham back to Marcq, but you need the slicer; it would take up a lot of space in our kitchen... so he brings a bit back. For example, my father-in-law buys olives in Spain and brings them to Paris. They're small cans. Always by car. (P16)*

*There are medicines I can buy here that are cheaper than those in Lebanon. So, sometimes it's complicated because some I cannot buy because they require a prescription, but others don't, and that's convenient. The formula also seems to be better. If it is urgent, I will send them through someone. However, there is no need to send them by post. If it is urgent, I ask someone who is going there to pick them up. (P22)*

Our findings indicate that tensions can arise among various resource proposals within a company due to personal, social, and practical circumstances. However, consumers' roles in RI extend beyond merely choosing between company resources. Consumers can also act as key players in value co-creation by positioning their cultural resources against those offered by the company.

***Tensions between consumers' cultural resources and the company's functional and operand resources***

Another key finding was the tension between consumers' cultural resources (Arnould 2005) and the functional

operand resources offered by market-based home delivery services. In this case, the tension arises not between the two resources proposed by the company but between the consumer as a cultural actor and the company. The experiences of delegating home delivery to a service provider versus managing it themselves differ significantly in terms of experiential value.

Consumers reject a company's home delivery service because it fails to meet their relational goals. As a result, they avoid accepting direct home delivery of products and brands from the company. The primary motivation is to handle home delivery themselves, to express personal attachment through what they view as a "labor of care."
Some consumers place great importance on managing their deliveries. Even though companies' home delivery services are more practical, consumers continue to handle logistics tasks themselves, despite the difficulties involved (e.g., finding space in the car). P19 shared that transporting muscat for friends is complicated, but she continues to do so:

> *When we can, we do it. When we know it's not going to be too complicated, we do it. However, this is already complicated for us. (P19)*

For P21, transporting her parents' favorite local chocolate is also challenging when the weather is warm, but she does it regardless. It has become a ritual because this personal effort is tied to nurturing their relationship. The focus is on giving pleasure to family and friends, showing them how important they are, and being present when the product is opened to witness their reactions:

> *Chocolate is complicated. Transporting it... When I take the train, I place the box at the bottom of my backpack with the cooling plate, ensuring it is not in direct contact with the cardboard but is insulated effectively. I do not put it in a suitcase because the suitcase on the train will be exposed to ambient temperatures, so I prefer a backpack. […] We arrive, have lunch, and then there is a surprise. Now that it's no longer a surprise, and everyone is happy to know that the chocolate has arrived home, it's one of the first things I take out of the backpack and say, "It'll be for the coffee." Everyone thinks it's normal, even if my mom still says, "Oh, my darling, you shouldn't have, you should have kept your money for yourself, it's much too much..." My mom is adorable. It's a ritual. […] I think there is an expectation. I think it is legitimate because my parents have done a lot for me and continue to do so in my life, and I believe they genuinely enjoy it. (P21)*

Affection for others is not only linked to the products given. Personal delivery expresses the desire to bring pleasure to another person.

> *When you give a gift like that, taking the time to buy and deliver it shows that people are happy to give pleasure to others. You are happy to please others by giving and receiving them. In a way, it shows how much people care for each other and how attached they are. (P6)*

Delivering products personally expresses a specific attachment to a culture, offering a consumption experience that consumers share with their networks. This is particularly true for consumers attached to products from a country where they have friends and visit periodically on holidays. For instance, P3, who travels from France to Italy, transports products not only for her family's consumption but also for her French friends in northern France. She uses these products as a medium to communicate her consumption experiences:

> *There is this extraordinary olive oil I brought back from Pietrasanta. Frankly, it's a marvel. So, I offer it. Therefore, when they arrive, they can taste it. They taste the pasta or wine we bring back to them. I also always bring gifts. When I return, I offer gifts. So, I do not give the touristy stuff... no. I offer a bottle of olive oil, or I offer olives, or I offer... I bring back... rosemary, some kind of dry rosemary cookies. […] The aim is to share this experience. It is about communication. (P3)*

This behavior is widespread among individuals residing far from their home countries. Their families send parcels to maintain bonds of affection and care while they are away in another city or country, ensuring the continuity of specific consumption rituals. Family and friends personally send these parcels to communicate surprise and pleasure, rather than using a home delivery service. Recipients value this personal touch and often avoid companies' delivery services. P13 and P6 described such situations as follows:

*One thing I forgot to mention is that they [the family] send us parcels. The last time, it was 20 liters of olive oil with inevitable sausages and cheese. […] The shipment takes place on their own initiative because we are used, as we were in Rome, to having Calabrian olive oil locally, and therefore, they are keen to continue making this delivery here in France. (P13)*

*During the year, my mother sometimes sends me packages that are great surprises because they contain games for the girls, something to make me happy, like, for example, a pack of Quarta coffee... something to make my husband happy, for example, and also chocolate for children, even if they are available here... but it's as if they have added value because they were bought there and sent by my mother. (P6)*

Creating boxes filled with appreciated local cultural products for postal mail is a practice that home delivery services cannot replicate. Families assemble unique product bundles that family members residing in other countries regularly consume to express love. This logistics system fosters or maintains social bonds around specific products and brands, thereby creating and sustaining a consumer network. Even if recipients no longer have a direct relationship with the store, they continue to consume the products because they receive information from family or friends or order them directly.

This act of care is recognized by the social network of the person handling the deliveries. For our participants, using a home delivery service would disrupt the informal roles created within their consumer networks or the way family and friends show their attachment to them, as expressed by P6. For example, P17 had an Italian friend who lived in the same region in France. Together, they discovered Prosecco, an Italian sparkling white wine, during their visit to the producer in Italy. Since this enjoyable experience, P17 has been ordering wine periodically but without using the producer's home delivery service. Instead, he decided to let his friend act as a bridge between himself and the producer. In this case, P17's friend assumed an informal role in the relationship with the wine producer:

*We discovered this Italian product, Prosecco, with our friend Stefano, and it was an enjoyable experience. This left us with memories. We have now placed an order through him. This was not simply due to language difficulties. Knowing that I could order this product directly, we continued to build loyalty in the relationship that Stefano has maintained. (P17)*

In some cities or countries, shopping in stores reassures consumers that a product is original (Ismail and Khedr 2024; Liu, Burns and Hou 2013), a value that is significant for some consumers (e.g., P22 and P23). This explains why some consumers prefer to rely on their networks to purchase products.

In geographically dispersed networks, resources such as home delivery or the broader geographical distribution of local or regional products and brands often conflict with the shopping experience and social connections. Consumers do not derive the same hedonic or social value from home-delivery services. For instance, a company that expands product availability through wider geographical distribution may lose consumer engagement, as consumers no longer feel the need to transport the product themselves. As a result, consumers' commitment to the product or brand is diminished. In contrast, when consumers handle logistics for others, they elevate the product or brand as a central topic of conversation, strengthening group dynamics. While this commitment benefits the company, it can also create challenges. Consumers may resist home delivery services because they attach social value to informal relationships. These ties are strengthened by maintaining a small network around a product or brand that is not widely available in the local market. Companies may offer resources that consumers perceive as conflicting with their values. The decision to choose one resource over another is not merely a matter of personal preference but is shaped by the shared goals of multiple consumers. They experience dissonance between the two value propositions offered by the company. This suggests that consumers may reject specific resources due to conflicting values. In our study, participants personally managed the logistics of particular products by introducing them to friends, family, or colleagues. This network enhances sociability and storytelling, making it functionally important.

Our analysis highlights the broader sociocultural tensions that explain the rejection of home delivery services. At the same time, we observed important differences linked to participants' generational positions and relational roles. Older participants (e.g., P11, P19, and P13) often framed their refusals through narratives of continuity and tradition, emphasizing long-standing consumption rituals and emotional ties to specific places and people. Their rejection was frequently rooted in the desire to maintain symbolic family practices, such as transporting goods for children or receiving packages assembled by aging parents. Younger participants (e.g., P6, P3) also rejected home delivery but framed it around the affective performance of care within peer or friendship networks. In all cases, gift-giving and shared consumption experiences were

seen as ways to strengthen bonds with partners, children or close friends. Participants in caregiving roles (e.g., P19, P6) often assumed responsibility for managing delivery logistics to demonstrate emotional investment. Some others delegated this task to family members who had acquired an informal role as "logistical mediators" (e.g., P17's friend, Stefano, or P16's father-in-law). These variations illustrate how consumers negotiate the materiality and functionality of delivery services, as well as the relational meanings attached to them. Thus, refusing a service is embedded within generational and relational contexts that inform the symbolic significance of personal involvement. Attending to these differences enriches our framework by showing that practices of resistance are not monolithic but deeply contextualized within social roles.

## DISCUSSION

This study provides new insights into consumer behavior by examining rejection and resistance to company RI from a cultural perspective. Research on consumer resistance to RI has been limited in both scope and application. While some studies have focused on the individual skills and motivations that enable RI (Findsrud, Tronvoll and Edvardsson 2018; Kleinaltenkamp, Brodie and Frow 2012), few have explored the cultural context of meaningful experiences and social connections. We address this gap by examining the interaction between company resources and consumers' cultural operant resources (Arnould et al. 2006), offering a diverse understanding of value (Echeverri 2021). Our findings suggest that resources may conflict rather than complement one another. Based on these insights, we propose four theoretical contributions.

First, customers may view different company resources as competing rather than complementary. In the service management literature, various offerings are often presented as competitive advantages for companies (Kindström 2010). We expand on this by showing that one service offering can compete with another, leading to its cannibalization. For example, the enjoyment of the shopping experience is influenced by factors such as location, personal interactions, and positive memories associated with the purchased products. A satisfying shopping experience can be considered a more compelling resource than home delivery services, which may lack the same emotional appeal or overall experience (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Although home delivery offers time-saving and convenience benefits, our study shows that consumers may reject it even when it saves time or gives advantages. This resistance is not necessarily due to dissatisfaction or a mismatch between expectations and experience (Lunardo, Roux and Chaney 2016). Notably, the sales staff's role did not appear to contribute to this refusal, as participants reported positive interactions with them. In fact, many cited the opportunity to interact with salespeople as a key reason for rejecting home delivery. Ultimately, home delivery services fail to replicate the enjoyment of the in-store shopping experience.

Second, consumers perceive competition between their own cultural resources and the company's resource offerings. Cultural resources are operant resources that convey symbolic, social, and identity-related values (Arnould et al. 2006). Our findings confirm that consumers use their cultural resources, both individually and collectively, to achieve personal goals (Baron and Harris 2008), such as delivering products themselves to strengthen social bonds with loved ones. Research has shown that in contemporary society, social connections often hold more value than material goods (Cova 1995). As a result, consumers' cultural resources can temporarily compete with service providers' offerings, such as home-delivery services. Our results reveal that the social bonds formed by transporting products for family and friends are perceived as more valuable than home delivery services, which could undermine collective well-being (Leclercq, Hammedi and Poncin 2016; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010). Consumers take special care in delivering products themselves, as it leads to personal and intimate achievements for them. Barth and Antéblian (2010) noted that mothers often refuse to delegate their shopping to pick-up services, as doing so helps them construct their identity and role as mothers. We observed similar behaviors (consumers resist delegating services) even when it requires more effort because doing it themselves is seen as an act of care for others. We interpret this refusal as a "labor of care". Despite the burden or chore involved, handling product delivery becomes an experience that reflects identity, reinforces community values, strengthens emotional bonds, and promotes well-being. Baron and Harris (2008) argue that consumers use their operant resources both individually and collectively. By contrast, home delivery services risk dissolving personal and community goals related to consumption and affection for consumers' social networks. The use of home delivery diminishes the roles of logisticians (those who transport and send products) and recipients (those who request products), reducing products to trivial personal consumption rather than items that carry social and symbolic significance within the consumer network. Thus, the rejection of home delivery services appears to be closely linked to the role of transportation and shipping in nurturing social ties and expressing affection for loved ones. These factors are crucial for maintaining close consumer networks and creating alternative values that home delivery services cannot replicate.

Third, we present a different interpretation of the RI process. In the existing literature, the co-destruction of value is often attributed to a negative consumer service experience. However, our findings suggest that a lack of interest in

a value proposition is not always due to a negative experience, but rather to resource tensions. Previous research has framed value co-destruction as a dichotomy with co-creation, defining it as "an interactional process between service systems (e.g., the company and its customers) whose result is a reduction in at least one of the two well-being systems" (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres 2010, p. 431) caused by the misuse of resources (Leclercq, Hammedi and Poncin 2016). This process involves "the integration and/or application of available resources by one service system in a manner that is considered unexpected and/or inappropriate by the other interacting service system" (Leclercq, Hammedi and Poncin 2016, p. 432). While consumers can drive this (Smith 2013), our research reveals that participants are not simply co-creators or co-destroyers of value. Instead, they can integrate or temporarily reject company resources such as home delivery services. This study did not involve the misuse of resources. Instead, it highlights the lack of integration of specific company resources, leading to perceived tensions. These tensions can arise between the shopping experience and home delivery or between home delivery and the social value of personally handling logistics. Additionally, the value of product and brand circulation represents a hidden value proposition that companies often fail to integrate into their strategies. This dynamic view of value creation incorporates time and space (Echeverri 2021). In the RI process model, Caridà, Edvardsson and Colurcio (2019) emphasized the interaction of available resources, RI, and the interpretation of value, which ultimately leads to value co-creation or co-destruction. Our findings suggest a temporary disruption in the integration process, in which consumers block the integration of a company's resources, such as home delivery services, and substitute them with their own efforts. For Hilton (2008, p. 362), "the service experience moves from a process of co-creation that combines the operational resources of consumers with those of service employees to a process where consumers use their operational resources to produce the service." Consumers' production of services is sometimes referred to as co-production, as they integrate specific company resources (e.g., an app the company provides to facilitate self-service). This approach considers consumer-driven service production as part of a company's service system. However, consumers can also produce the service independently without utilizing the company's resources. This is the case with home delivery services, where consumers may opt to reject the service offered and handle logistics themselves. A tendency that connects with the prosumer strand of literature, which posits individuals as producers of goods and services for themselves and others (Ertz, Maravilla and Cao 2025).

Fourth, our final theoretical contribution addresses consumer resistance theory. While resistance is often framed as an antagonistic behavior, some researchers argue that consumer resistance need not involve hostility (Lee et al. 2011). In our study, consumers do not oppose the company per se, nor do they engage in anti-consumption or boycotts (Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Portwood-Stacer 2012; Stolle and Micheletti 2013). Instead, they perceive tension between competing resources.

Finally, our research introduces a novel framework for studying RI: cultural integration. Previous studies have examined the social dimensions of RI through institutional theory (Edvardsson et al. 2014), focusing on structural mechanisms, or through motivation theory (Findsrud, Tronvoll and Edvardsson 2018), which centers on psychological factors influencing behavior. By applying a sociocultural approach alongside resource theory, we build on Vargo and Lusch's (2017) assertion that communities, when analyzed through CCT (Arnould and Thompson 2005), offer a valuable context for understanding RI.

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEACH

This study offers novel insights into how consumers integrate or reject company-provided resources within their social networks, with a particular focus on the tensions between logistical services and the existing social dynamics of care and connection. By examining how certain commercial practices may conflict with or complement informal consumer arrangements, we contribute to a deeper understanding of the relational foundations of value co-creation in consumption contexts. This perspective extends the current knowledge in marketing by highlighting not only individual preferences or utilitarian needs but also the social roles and moral responsibilities embedded in everyday consumption practices.

The originality of this study lies in its focus on the ambivalent integration of resources, particularly home delivery services, into networks shaped by emotional ties, place attachment, and social obligations. Through a qualitative approach, we shed light on the subtle ways in which consumers evaluate and negotiate resource offerings within their relational context, rather than merely on efficiency or convenience.

This study has some limitations. The study is grounded in the lived experiences of adults primarily located in France, and purposive sampling limits the generalizability of findings. Moreover, we studied the cases of consumers who shop in distant cities from their city of residence, sometimes abroad, and thus often for special craft or artisan products as well as luxury goods. This situation opens several avenues for future research. Investigating younger or more diverse networks,

such as those involving coworkers, students, or casual acquaintances, across different cultural settings may reveal distinct patterns of resource valuation and integration. Future studies could adopt a multi-stakeholder approach, incorporating the perspectives of companies, designers, and policymakers to better understand how resource strategies are developed and received. Moreover, while this study focused on special, artisanal, and luxury products, there is considerable scope to examine more routine or commodified goods—such as groceries, clothing, electronics, or cultural items like books—to test whether similar tensions and practices emerge. Lastly, future studies could focus on home delivery services within the same city of residence to verify whether the findings are the same or to identify any changes.

More broadly, this work invites scholars and practitioners alike to reflect on how commercial offerings can be better aligned with consumers' social and cultural ecosystems, not only to enhance adoption but also to foster more respectful and responsive forms of market engagement in the future.

## MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

To enhance the value of their offerings and avoid consumer rejection of company resources, companies must understand the tensions between competing resources and the sociocultural context in which consumption occurs. Based on our findings, we identified four interrelated areas where companies can act: consumer relationship management, communication strategies, service design, and commercial incentives.

### *Consumer Relationship Management*

Our analysis highlights three consumer profiles firms can rely on to construct a segmentation and an adapted CRM. First, "store loyalists" valorize the symbolic act of visiting stores and maintaining place-based loyalty; thus, services should highlight continuity with the origin of the store or city. Second, "caregivers" prioritize relational obligations, making them more receptive to delivery services that serve as backup to existing care practices. Finally, "value seekers," who emphasize price and trust, will be best engaged through incentives, transparent delivery processes, and authenticity guarantees. Even when expanding distribution geographically, companies should preserve symbolic and relational dimensions by, for example, processing online orders through customers' "home" stores or explicitly associating collections with their places of origin. This continuity anchors delivery within consumer networks, rather than displacing them.

### *Communication strategies to offer company resources as complementary*

To avoid competing for resources, companies should develop communication strategies that frame home delivery as a logical extension of the shopping journey rather than a replacement. Our results show that consumers sometimes refuse home delivery services because they prefer to handle logistics themselves. Emotional connections and a sense of place can be reinforced through mailing campaigns featuring imagery of the store's interior or emblematic sites in its city, creating a visual reminder that anchors the store in consumers' memories and their conversations. This does not replace the in-store experience, but it provides a visual connection that helps customers recall and discuss the store and the city. As regards the most concerned products (luxury goods, fresh food, local, ethnic, or traditional products), communication and storytelling tools could help avoid competition for resources by facilitating and valorizing consumers' logistics and the symbolic meaning of these logistics. Short social media videos could convey that a seamless delivery service is offered, but at the same time, they could valorize other alternatives, such as personal logistics. Given that this logistics is guided by socio-cultural meanings, communication and storytelling could valorize the importance of delivering products through life stories.

### *Service design*

In terms of service design, delivery offerings should align with how consumers already organize their daily lives and their needs, especially informal logistics and care arrangements. Rather than imposing standard solutions, companies should present home delivery as a flexible tool, activated when needed, that complements existing behaviors and practices. This approach not only helps communicate the company's value proposition, encouraging consumers to integrate the company's resources (Findsrud, Tronvoll and Edvardsson 2018), but also prevents competition among resources. A hybrid "visit & ship" service, for instance, would allow consumers to enjoy the ritual of in-store shopping during a trip while arranging the shipment of some items home. Likewise, small-basket delivery services tailored for symbolic or occasional items would

reflect the "labor of care" consumers often perform when transporting products themselves. While doing so, managers will accompany and facilitate the ritualistic aspect and the "labor of care" informal consumer logistics. Allowing customers to include a personalized message when sending a product to someone else acknowledges the social significance of the act and embeds the service in the user's care practices. This is especially relevant when consumers are unable to deliver the product themselves and must temporarily delegate this responsibility to a third party. Additionally, when considering expanding the distribution channel geographically, companies can maintain product sales within the original location of the parent company or brand. This would allow consumers to continue fulfilling their logistics commitments and preserve the value they place on personal care while still offering alternative delivery options. Third-party certifications and labels can further strengthen credibility by signaling quality, responsibility and accountability (Dekhili and Ertz 2024).

***Commercial Incentives***

As regards customers living in a country who purchase high-value goods abroad owing to lower prices from VAT dumping, companies could identify these customers based on their purchasing patterns (through a loyalty card). Offering discounts twice a year (for instance, at brand stores in their home country) would encourage them to buy locally, preserving their connection to the brand while offering value through the company's resources. To promote a circular relationship between channels, companies can enhance the in-store experience by providing hybrid incentives, such as discount coupons redeemable only in physical locations when using a delivery service. Collaboration is key for small- and medium-sized businesses. Instead of bearing delivery costs independently, local businesses can form networks to share logistics infrastructure and costs.

Our managerial suggestions provide a practical roadmap for companies seeking to remain relevant in an environment where value is co-created, socially embedded, and highly sensitive to perceived disruption. Clear communication is essential for setting expectations and framing new service offerings. A thoughtful service design ensures that services are welcomed rather than resisted, and respectful relationship management fosters long-term loyalty by showing that the company understands and supports its customers' lived realities.

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