Multiperspectivism on the Value Proposition by Members of a Digital Microfirm

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Abstract

Although value proposition (VP) plays an essential role in companies, there are few studies that address its communication in terms of professional discourse, and the way members of the same company perceive it has not been explored. This study aims to identify the convergent and divergent perspectives that actors in a digital microfirm have regarding their VP, and to determine where these divergences emerge within the microfirm's activity system. A simple case study was conducted to describe how multiple perspectives on VP are discursively expressed and its disruptions in the activity system. First, results were grouped into 11 categories, which then resulted in 3 macro-categories focusing on different aspects of VP: Quality Service, Holistic Marketing, and Challenges and Uncertainty. Using an activity system analysis, 4 distinct disruptions were identified, all concerning the Rules axis of the activity system. Unlike the traditional conception of the VP as a single definition of the essence of the company, it was found that the actors attribute different purposes to their organization.

Keywords: Value proposition, Multiperspectivism, Discourse analysis, Activity theory, Organizational discourse

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1. Introduction

The *value proposition* (VP) — the claim for the value that a firm's offering brings to an audience in a given market — plays a fundamental role in the success of a firm, allowing the company to express an identity and compare its value with that of the competition (Varas et al., 2023). This claim is typically short, between a phrase and two sentences, and it ideally allows stakeholders both inside the firm (makers, management, members) and outside the firm (mentors, market, money) to align their actions around this claim (Pogue et al., 2023). In early-stage startups, the VP often evolves rapidly, as the firm tries out different configurations of markets, goods, supply, production, and organization (Spinuzzi, 2024). As startups find a business model and become established in an industry, the VP typically becomes stable, offering a reliable solution to a defined problem. In this sense, the VP becomes a rationale that governs how the ongoing collaboration of the startup works: A rule that all participants accept and use to guide their actions.

However, this is not always so. In the case of *microfirms* — firms with fewer than 10 people (OECD) — the VP of even an established firm might continue evolving and can change considerably in a short period of time. Even established microfirms tend to be relatively uninstitutionalized, lending them a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness: they are tactically oriented, organizing their daily activities towards addressing the urgent needs of each client rather than toward long-term strategic planning (Cabrera et al., 2025).

In this paper, we examine one such microfirm: Digiserv, a seven-person Chilean digital services microfirm that was established in 2011. Digiserv is a virtual organization whose members live in different cities and rarely meet in person. Such digital organizations tend to be composed of specialists who generate trust with each other and rotate leadership as they address work organized around specific projects (Spinuzzi, 2015a). Under these conditions — highly tactical, reactive to individual clients' needs, with a relatively flat internal organization — we might expect it to be difficult for Digiserv to establish and maintain a single coherent VP that guides their collaborative work. And as we'll see, that is in fact true.

Digital microfirms such as Digiserv present unique challenges in terms of how organizational constituents relate to the VP. Using an activity theory analysis, we explore members' multiple perspectives on the VP and trace these divergences to disruptions in the activity system. Below, we present the theoretical framework of the research, including the value proposition, activity systems, multiperspectivism and organizational discourse. Next, we describe our methodology, then present our discussion and results. Finally, we offer implications for studying the VP in organizational discourse.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Value Proposition

Various definitions and theoretical approaches have emerged to understand and apply the VP in different types of organizations. In recent studies, it has been observed that the literature on VP is in an exploratory phase (Skålén et al., 2015), suggesting the need for more extensive and documented empirical analysis. The concept of VP remains poorly understood and applied and, so far, academic research offers scarce guidance on the topic (Payne et al., 2020).

Bititci et al. (2004) defined VP as an implicit promise that a company makes to its customers to deliver a particular combination of values. Ballantyne and Varey (2006) emphasize bidirectional relationships

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and equity in the value exchange between the parties involved. Frow et al. (2014) defined VP as a dynamic and adjustable mechanism for negotiating how resources are shared within a service ecosystem. Skålén et al. (2015) defined VP in terms of the strategic configuration of resources and practices.

More recently, digital transformation has influenced the business domain, including Business-to-Business (B2B) marketing, and has led to a shift in the focus towards customer centrality and B2B customer experiences (Zaki, 2019). This has led to a re-evaluation of core marketing concepts, such as VP. Payne et al., (2017) conducted a comprehensive review of the most recent literature on VP, and identified the lack of a solid theoretical basis for the concept. Thus, they proposed a definition of VP that highlights its critical role as a communication device and emphasizes the need for differentiation and superiority in the value offered.

It has been argued that VP is not only a marketing communication tool, but represents a step in the stakeholders' judgment and decision-making process (Taylor et al., 2020). This highlights the importance of understanding VP as a dynamic mechanism that reduces customer uncertainty about the value of new technologies and leverages company resources and skills (Nussipova, 2022).

In VP strategy and implementation, ten key elements are identified. These elements include integration with the company's business model, clearly differentiated value benefits, focus on customer experience, emphasis on value in use, integrated design approach, value communication, value quantification, value documentation and value verification (Payne et al., 2020).

Additionally, the effectiveness of a value proposition depends not only on its conceptual design but also on the firm's ability to deliver it swiftly and appropriately to the customer. Thus, execution becomes crucial, not merely in terms of capacity, but in terms of organizational agility and responsiveness (Madhok & Marques, 2020).

2.2 Activity Systems

To examine the role of the VP in a firm, we turn to activity theory. Activity theory, originated in Soviet psychology and extensively developed by Leontiev (1978) and Vygotsky (1980), has been applied in various fields of knowledge. This theory focuses on the understanding of human activity as a systemic, culturally and historically mediated phenomenon, oriented towards a specific object. Activity systems offer a way to conceptualize relationships among actors, tools, objects, outcomes, rules, communities and the division of labor of an ongoing activity (Engeström, 2015; Spinuzzi, 2013).

In general terms, the *actor* (or subject) is the individual or group that performs the activity. The *object* of the activity may be a problem to be solved or a product to be created. The *tools* are the physical or symbolic means used by the actor to interact with the object. These may include technological tools, language, and other signs. *Rules* are norms and/or conventions that regulate actions within the activity system. *Community* refers to the social group(s) involved in the activity. The *division of labor* is the distribution of tasks and roles among the members of the community. The *outcome*, finally, is the ideal result that motivates the successful activity; it can be material or immaterial (Spinuzzi, 2015b).

Engeström (2015) describes the activity system using a triangular diagram that illustrates the relationships between these components. This way of depicting activity points out how each element of the activity system influences and is influenced by the other elements, and highlights the importance of community, collectivity and, especially, organizational change (Kaptelinin 2005).

Studying an organization in terms of activity provides an understanding of how the different parts of the organization interact and the internal processes that result in the delivery of a VP. Activity theory provides the framework for analyzing these interactions, which in turn serves to identify disruptions that may arise between the various components of the system.

Accordingly, in the tradition of genre studies in organizational communication, disruptions can be defined as problems or interferences that involve different levels of analysis in an organization and have a direct impact on its activities. Discursive disruptions reflect structural or operational problems within an organization, as well as issues arising from complex interactions between elements of the activity system. Thus, in any organization, especially those subject to constant change, these disruptions are inevitable and often necessary for change and innovation (Spinuzzi, 2013).

In this study, we adopt activity theory as a framework to map organizational practices and examine how meanings about the VP are discursively constructed and negotiated. Activity theory has been applied to organizational contexts, and it has been particularly influential in genre studies (Engeström, 2008). Building on this tradition, we use the activity system to trace the frictions that emerge when discursive perspectives on the VP become misaligned.

2.3 Multiperspectivism

In the context of digital firms, there is a growing need to explore the multiple perspectives that people in an organization have on their VP. To understand this phenomenon, it is worthwhile to draw on activity theory. This theory holds that activities are "multiperspectival", meaning that actors involved in the same activity tend to perceive or focus on different aspects of it and, consequently, to pulse the shared object in different ways, with different rhythms and resources (Spinuzzi, 2015b). For microfirms, this multiplicity of perspectives becomes even more relevant due to their iterative nature and internal diversity of roles.

In a complex collective activity, it is common for different stakeholders to have different motivations and perspectives on the shared object (Nardi, 2005). Moreover, the object in question is multifaceted, evolving and dialogical, which means that it is understood differently by different participants at different times. These activities become "polycontextual" as they are influenced by multiple contexts and motivations (Engeström, 2008; Kaptelinin, 2005).

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In the specific case of VP in a digital microfirm, perspectives may arise from the interaction between collaborators and potential customers. Each of these stakeholders may have different goals, interests, and views on the VP. For example, investors may be more interested in the potential return on investment, while collaborators may value job stability or growth opportunities, and potential customers may seek solutions that meet their specific needs. Understanding how different stakeholders within the same company perceive, interpret and relate to the VP can provide a more complete picture of organizational dynamics and contribute to internal consistency.

2.4 Organizational Discourse

As far as innovation is concerned, organizational discourse can be approached from different scopes, such as actors, values, activities and objects, which interact simultaneously along different stages of the process (Sabaj & Varas, 2019). This implies that communication within the company is essential for idea generation, collaboration, and successful VP implementation. In this sense, flexibility and dynamism impact the way internal communication is carried out, which allows those within the company to align their efforts, share knowledge, and stay updated on changes in VP and the market (Spinuzzi, 2017b).

The purpose of entrepreneurship is to discover problems and then seek opportunities to solve them with innovative solutions, so in order to be rewarded, they must take risks (Spinuzzi, 2017a). Thus, entrepreneurs must persuade different stakeholders, which involves researching potential markets, developing a business model, articulating a VP, assembling a suitable team, and developing marketing and business plans. In this regard, rhetoric plays a crucial role. Alvesson (1993) argued that business-savvy organizations must deal with ambiguity and, therefore, must strive to refine various rhetorical strategies. Passion is also not left behind in business discourse, as it becomes a cornerstone of entrepreneurial identity and is a relevant criterion for investors (Galbraith et al., 2014).

3.Methodology

This research follows a qualitative design (Flick, 2023), cross-sectional, and descriptive-interpretive in nature. It is a simple case study (Yin, 2018) that intends to describe in depth an object of study, which is the discursive manifestation of perspectives around the VP, in a specific unit of analysis, in this case, a digital microfirm.

The objective of this research is twofold: on the one hand, it is aimed at identifying the multiple perspectives that the members of a digital microfirm have on VP, and on the other hand, to determine where the divergences of these perspectives are located in the system of activities of the company. To this end, the following questions are posed:

- What are the converging and diverging perspectives on VP of the team members in the microfirm?
- Where are the divergences of these perspectives on VP situated in the activity system of the firm?

3.1 Sampling

The sample consists of 5 members of Digiserv, a digital microfirm, and Digiserv's website, through which the members express their VP and communicate with customers. The sample is purposive (Flick, 2023). Access to data is an essential aspect for the development of this project: we have a letter of authorization from the digital microfirm to collect the data for this research. Except for the website, the data to be analyzed are private and confidential. Therefore, in addition to anonymizing all data collected, a research execution was guaranteed according to the ethical principles established by international agreements (Brinkmann et al., 2018). Accordingly, participants signed informed consent in which the purposes of the research, the safeguards taken and the forms of disclosure of the project results were specified. In the same line, the project in which this research is framed has the approval of the Ethics Committee of the University of La Serena. This committee reviewed and approved the documents required for the ethical safeguards of the research (informed consent).

3.2 Data Collection Techniques

The Digiserv team consists of 7 members (Table 1). We conducted a total of eight semi-structured in-depth interviews with 5 microfirm participants, as two of them refused to participate in this study: five with the Founder and one each with the Operations manager, Social media designer and Content Creator (Table 2). In addition, three written questionnaires were applied: two to the Founder and one to the Audiovisual designer, and the texts available on the organization's website and social media were collected. As the distribution of data suggests, the Founder was most willing to provide us with data. Table 2 shows the dataset included in the corpus analyzed.

Table 1: Digiserv team

Member
Founder (owner and firm director)
Operations manager
Audiovisual designer
Web designer *
Community manager *
Social media designer Content creator

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Table 2: Collected dataset

ID	Date	Source	Document	Details
1	01/09/2021	Digiserv	Website	217 words
2	08/09/2021	Founder	Audiovisual recording and interview transcription	01:03:55 7475 words
3	28/10/2021	Founder	Audiovisual recording and interview transcription	00:21:43 2702 words
4	26/01/2022	Founder	Audiovisual recording and interview transcription	00:53:32 6019 words
5	18/04/2022	Founder	Written questionnaire	9 open-ended questions and handmade organizational chart 638 words
6	08/06/2022	Operations manager	Audiovisual recording and interview transcription	00:46:57 6344 words
7	24/10/2022	Audiovisual designer	Written questionnaire	4 open-ended questions 654 words
8	19/11/2022	Social media designer	Audiovisual recording and interview transcription	00:37:10 long 5566 words
9	23/11/2022	Founder	Written questionnaire	4 open-ended questions 144 words
10	04/01/2023	Content creator	Audiovisual recording and interview transcription	00:53:09 long 7028 words
11	22/05/2023	Founder	Audiovisual recording and interview transcription	00:14:59 long 3213 words
12	06/09/2023	Founder	Audiovisual recording and interview transcription	01:00:47 long 7264 words

3.3 Data Analysis

To answer the first question, the VP that each actor associates with the organization was identified. The actors answered questions such as: What objectives does the team set when starting a project? Are there differences in the objectives of each worker? What is Digiserv's ultimate purpose? Is it reflected in its value proposition? Do you think it aligns with the needs and expectations of customers? After that, it was determined which are the alignments and divergences between the actors as they characterized the VP.

The analysis was based on the logic proposed by Sabaj (2008) of the linguistic types of discourse analysis. General aspects of the configuration of meaning in the participants' discourses were considered, with particular attention to the way in which meanings about the firm's purpose and value are constructed from different positions within the organization. For the purposes of this research, we used Grounded Theory techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), specifically, open coding, through which discursive segments were identified, categorized, and progressively integrated into broader macro-categories. This analytical process was applied across different sources (interviews, questionnaires, and institutional texts), enabling us to observe convergences and divergences in the construction of the VP. Subsequently, these discursive configurations were linked to the components of the activity system, which allowed us to characterize how multiple perspectives coexist in organizational discourse.

In an initial phase, the open coding process was carried out, in which phrases were identified within the interviews that resulted in 11 categories of the VP (Table 3). These categories represent how participants characterized the VP, including when they claimed to be unaware of it (C) or characterized it as a problem (J). Rather than being external or unrelated categories to the VP, these are perspectives taken by the participants.

Then, in the second phase of analysis, the results of the previous phase were used and the main divergences of the perspectives on VP were identified, as well as their similarities. Regarding the latter, the 11 previous categories were grouped into three macro-categories that bring together the main perspectives of the actors: Holistic Marketing, Quality Service and Challenges and Uncertainty (Table 3).

Finally, to answer the second question, the elements of the activity system were identified through a deductive analysis with previously defined categories (Actor, Object, Result, Division of labor, Tools and Rules). Then, through a comparative analysis, disruptions were identified regarding the components of the firm's activity system (within and between them), dealing specifically with the VP. A disruption was identified when discursive perspectives about the VP revealed a misalignment or tension between two or more components (e.g. Rules/Division of Labor). This allowed us to move from the coding of meanings at the discursive level to the characterization of frictions within the activity system. As a result, four disruptions were obtained, all related to the Rules: Outcome/Rules, Division of Labor/Rules, Tools/Rules, and Rules/Rules.

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Table 3: Category Definition

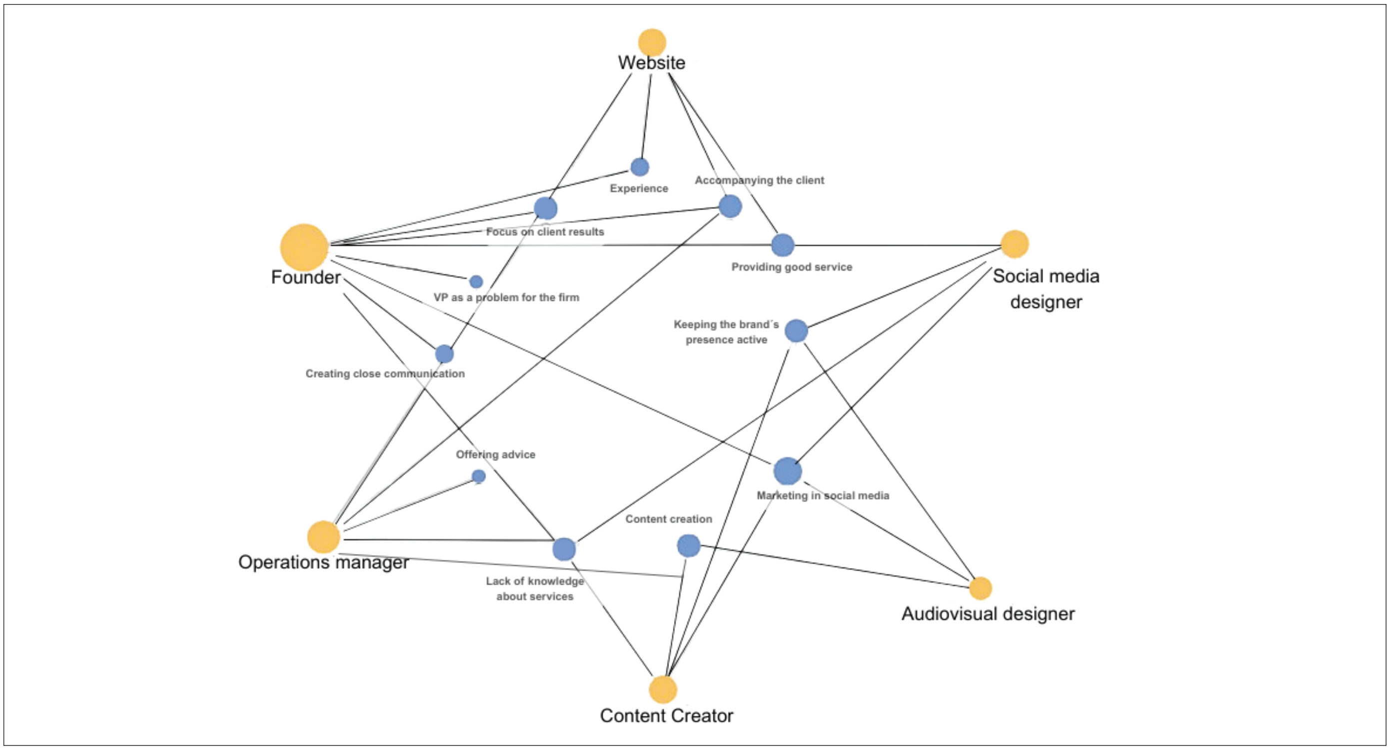
Macro-category	Category	Definition	Example
Quality Service	Providing good service (A)	The firm's willingness to offer high quality projects and services that exceed the client's expectations.	*"What we always do is try to present good projects, you know, like projects that make sense to the client, the price level, bring advanced work."* (Founder)
	Accompanying the client (B)	The firm's willingness to establish a partnership relationship with its customers. They seek to understand their objectives and work collaboratively to create long-lasting business relationships.	*"If a client from 15 years ago calls me and says hey, remember you did this job for me (...) I have the originals and I can make a modification. They are surprised that I am still there and that I am still where I am, that I answer the phone, so that kind of thing is also valued."* (Founder)
	Focus on client results (D)	The firm's willingness to adapt to customer preferences.	*"Ultimately it depends on what the manager or director likes, so there is always a flexibility to be had with those things."* (Founder)
	Creating close communication (F)	The relevance the firm places on establishing trust-based communication with its customers and feedback.	*"The closer communication, that trust that we try to create with the customer."* (Operations manager)
Holistic Marketing	Marketing in social media (E)	Promotional strategies and tools on digital platforms, such as online advertising campaign management.	*"Addressing super different aspects of marketing in an efficient way."* (Founder)
	Offering advice (G)	The firm as a guide that provides knowledge and expertise for the digital transformation process.	*"The overall proposition (...) can be how we help you in that step-by-step to digitize your business."* (Operations manager)
	Content creation (H)	The creation of digital content (audiovisual, mainly) by the firm for its clients.	*"Digiserv creates content for rather niche clients."* (Content creator)
	Keeping the brand's presence active (I)	Strengthen the image of clients' brands through promotion and visibility.	*"Digiserv works on national brand positioning."* (Content creator)
	Experience (K)	The knowledge provided by the firm's manager's long history of working exclusively in the industry.	*"What we have as an advantage is that we have a lot of know-how."* (Founder)
Challenges and Uncertainty	Lack of knowledge about services (C)	Lack of familiarity or understanding on the part of some actors about the services the firm provides and the ways of working.	*"I don't know values, services and all that stuff."* (Social media designer)
	VP as a problem for the firm (J)	The negative aspects of VP for the firm's internal operation are addressed.	*"That flexibility gives a lot of efficiency problems as well (...) sometimes there are projects that take too long."* (Founder)

4. Results

4.1 Converging and Diverging Perspectives on Value Proposition

The divergences in the multiple perspectives around VP are easily recognizable in Figure 1. There are 11 categories, with different sizes depending on the number of relationships established, covering the different notions actors have about what is essential to their firm. Critically, each individual provided at least two perspectives on the VP. The actors reporting the most variation within their own perspectives are the Founder and the Operations manager with 8 and 5 different categories respectively.

Figure 1: *Actors' Perspectives on Value Proposition*



Below, we discuss these in terms of the three macro-categories.

4.1.1 Quality Service.

For participants taking the perspective of this macro-category (Founder, Operations manager, Social media designer, and the microfirm's website), the firm's VP excels at meeting and exceeding customers' needs and expectations. The firm strives to build strong relationships with clients and demonstrate flexibility and adaptability to respond to their changing demands. In addition, it reinforces the idea of team commitment and the presentation of projects that build trust and strengthen the relationship with clients.

The actors demonstrate a willingness to react and adapt to customer demands. When the Founder states that "*super different aspects are addressed efficiently*" (ID5), it indicates that they seek to exceed expectations and provide customized solutions. To this end, a wide range of knowledge and skills are addressed within the team, allowing them to provide solutions tailored to the specific needs of each client.

In addition, the team's performance is highly valued by clients. The commitment and dedication of the staff is recognized, which is reflected in the quality of service. This appreciation reinforces clients' confidence in the firm. Also, the Founder emphasizes the "*presentation of good projects (...) to bring advanced work, not only to arrive with a budget, but to bring ideas for graphics or implementation*" (ID4). Thus, the members make an effort to come up with creative ideas that are valued by the clients. The team's commitment, flexibility and the presentation of quality projects are elements that reinforce this perspective and create a competitive advantage in the market.

The firm focuses, in turn, on understanding their clients' desired outcomes and translating them into a customized proposal. By considering the "*gifts and goals*" (Founder, ID2) of its clients, the firm can tailor its services and projects to align with each client's needs. As the Founder states, "*it depends on what the manager or director likes, so there is always a flexibility to be had with those things*" (ID2). The relationship with clients is described as quite fluid and a good team relationship is also highlighted. In other words, trusting relationships are based on what this firm can provide: a relationship that is built on a teamwork environment, where both parties feel comfortable sharing ideas, providing feedback and working together to achieve objectives.

4.1.2 Holistic Marketing.

This macro-category, supported by the Founder, Operations manager, Social media designer, Audiovisual designer, Content creator and the microfirm's website, brings together perspectives around digital marketing to promote their clients' brands. This includes social media marketing strategies, content creation, brand presence maintenance and consulting services. The VP is underpinned by social media management as a tool to increase visibility and brand recognition, and highlights the importance of creating eye-catching content.

Clients demand services related to campaigns on platforms such as Google, email marketing, website maintenance and e-commerce, among others. In this sense, web content becomes fundamental to achieve the clients' marketing objectives, and emphasis is placed on "*rather niche*" clients (Content creator, ID10). This implies that the firm adapts its products to the particularities of each brand it works with, which adds differentiated value to services provided.

The value of experience is reflected in a set of stories that demonstrate challenges that have already been overcome. This notion is reinforced when the Founder states that he "*knows how to get the job done*" (ID12) because he has always been in the same business, so that knowledge contributes to the client's success. When the Founder shares his own path from employee to owner of this firm, he highlights the continuity in his dedication to communications projects. This consistency over the years becomes a hallmark that he says surprises clients and adds value to the firm.

As for their website, there is a professional team that is "*seasoned by experience*" (ID1). This means that it is no longer just about the Founder's work, but about all the members and how their combined experience is channeled into a collaborative dynamic.

4.1.3 Challenges and Uncertainty.

Rather than characterizing the VP itself, this macro-category, held by the Founder, Social media designer, and Content creator, characterizes the struggles that participants perceive in relation to the VP. It highlights a lack of both knowledge and willingness to acquire knowledge about how the firm conveys the nature and scope of its services. Perspectives on VP emphasize the obstacles it implies for internal operations, related to flexibility in dealing with client requests, strategic planning and project management. This indicates that there is a group of actors who have a limited perception or are detached from the firm. When the Social media designer states "*I don't know values, services and all that stuff*" (ID8), it suggests that either the firm has failed to effectively convey the services offered to its members, or there is a lack of commitment to the team's objectives by those who have this perspective.

However, this lack of awareness can be attributed to the changing nature of the industry and the diversity of services offered by both this firm and others like it. The Content Creator, for example, compares the firm with other companies, which indicates that there is indeed competition in the market, but he is not able to recognize the differentiating aspect of the firm in which he works.

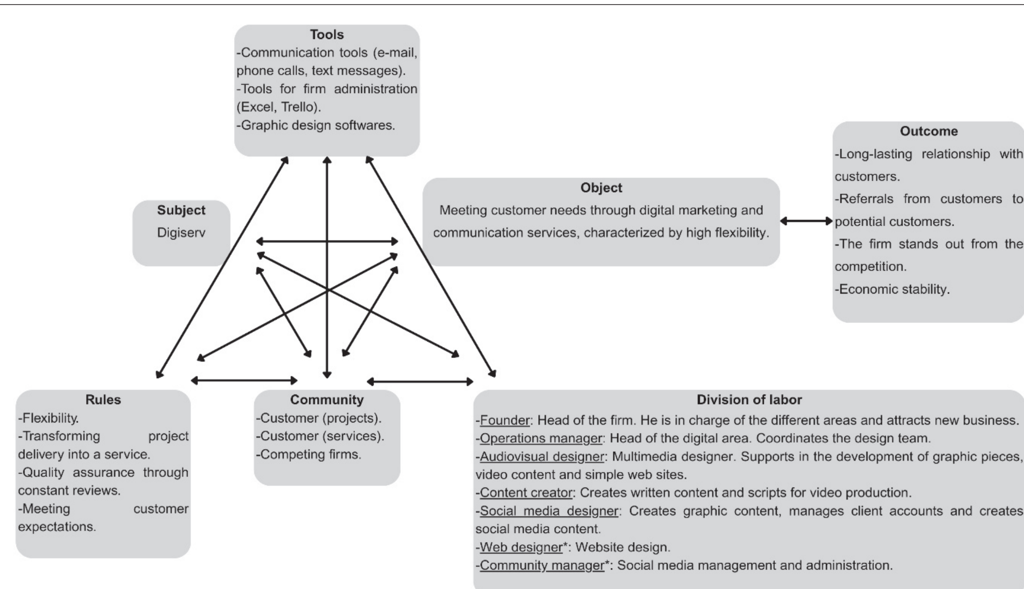
The Founder's statements, in turn, reveal some concerns related to the firm's flexibility and how this may affect efficiency and project delivery times. When he states that "*sometimes there are projects that take too long*" (ID2) he highlights the challenges that arise when the firm is very flexible regarding client requests. While flexibility is valuable in meeting customer demands, it also creates challenges in terms of planning and execution. This is demonstrated when he states that "*we always work very tight on time, we are always in a rush*" (ID2), which can have implications on the quality of the service, one of the aspects most valued by the actors in terms of their VP.

Furthermore, there is a lack of "*strategic planning*", (Founder, ID2) as opposed to what the firm claims on its website. This may in turn be related to the lack of knowledge of the VP on the part of some actors, given that there is no agreement among the members as to what moves them as a firm or the working rules that structure the firm.

4.2 Disruptions of Perspectives in the Activity System

Based on the study of the components of the firm's activity system and the comparison within and between them, we characterize the VP within the Rules of the activity system: The participants describe the VP in terms of explicit and implicit rules that mediate the microfirm actors' relationship with the community of clients they serve. These rules guide how the participants collaborate in providing the service. Yet the participants understand the VP differently, creating disruptions that cluster around the activity system's Rules. We identified four disruptions around the Rules: Outcome vs. Rules; Tools vs. Rules; Division of Labor vs. Rules; and Rules vs. Rules. These disruptions reflect the tensions and/or conflicts within the activity system that affect the work dynamics and, more specifically, the implementation of the microfirm's VP. Figure 2 shows Digiserv's activity system.

Figure 2: Digiserv's activity system.



4.2.1 Outcome vs. Rules.
Tensions between expected results and rules indicate a mismatch between the firm's objectives and the standards that govern its operation. In this case, the firm favors flexibility with the customer, which, although it has a positive value in terms of customer service, impairs the efficiency of internal processes, leaving little time for internal organization or strategic planning. This misalignment can delay the delivery of products or services, which contradicts one of the three central axes of the VP, Quality service. The disruption between Outcome and Rules underscores the importance of organizational adaptability. To maintain a competitive value proposition, firms should be able to continuously review and adjust their rules (Payne et al., 2020), which implies a reflexive approach to process management and decision making, ensuring that rules do not become barriers. In this way, these tensions can be catalysts for system transformation, pushing towards the review and adaptation of rules to align with organizational goals.

4.2.2 Tools vs. Rules.
Disruptions between tools and rules occur when tools are not used consistently with the established rules or when the latter limit the use of the tools. In this microfirm, although the use of a corrective guideline is a rule, the Content creator says that one of the members does not use it, which leads to deficiencies in the service delivered to the client. In addition, Content creator states that the very individualized work and the lack of use of internal communication tools by some members make it difficult to provide a good service (ID10). This type of tension highlights the importance of the willingness to adopt new technologies or methodologies available among team members to implement VP. To this end, it is important to communicate the ways in which the tools can be used to maximize productivity and collaboration, as well as the willingness of team members to adjust their work to the rules based on feedback.

4.2.3 Division of Labor vs. Rules.
Disruptions between Division of Labor and Rules refer to conflicts around the assignment of tasks and responsibilities within the team. In this firm, actions were sometimes carried out without prior approval from the client, despite the fact that this is constituted as a rule. This is why Founder (ID10) now asks to be sent a copy of all emails sent to customers, so that there is a record of what they are and are not notified of. In addition, the implicit rule of closeness and flexibility was only expressed by the Founder and the Operations manager, while the other workers do not mention it or recognize that this value defines their work. One of the members is perceived by their colleagues as "*rough*" with customers (ID12), which goes against the value of closeness. These conflicts can arise when the firm's formal rules do not adequately recognize individual skills, leading to an inefficient distribution of work. These tensions in the division of labor indicate that rigid organizational structure (different from the self-reported organizational structure of their firm, but manifested nonetheless) can be detrimental to team flexibility, recognized as the VP.

4.2.4 Rules vs. Rules.
Disruptions within the Rules axis arise when there are internal conflicts between different rules and procedures within the firm. For instance, the microfirm offers strategic planning to clients, but its internal procedures do not actually support strategic planning within their own organization. In addition, although the firm creates content for others, it does not promote its own content, which limits its reach to potential customers. These internal conflicts between rules negatively affect both team cohesion and efficiency, which points to the lack of harmonization and alignment of internal regulations with the firm's strategic aims. However, Kaptelinin (2005) states that rules should be seen not as static entities, but as dynamic elements that evolve over time in response to the needs and challenges of the system, so that having a rigid regulatory structure that is always in line with a specific objective does not appear to be a requirement.

5. Discussion

In Digiserv, tensions reflect discrepancies in discourses, revealing the different priorities and expectations associated with actors' roles regarding VP implementation. VP narratives are co-created and transformed in a continuous process of interaction. This is in line with the business discourse literature, which notes that businesses are constructed through discourse, in which the value proposition is co-created and continuously transformed through interaction between actors (Mautner, 2021), supported by principles such as efficacy, optimism, and inventiveness (Altizer & Ulrich, 2024). However, in Digiserv, these interactions do not always lead to agreement, which evidences the coexistence of multiple perspectives that, in some cases, lead to disruptions in internal coordination.

Despite the tensions, areas of agreement were also identified. These were mainly related to the focus on customer satisfaction as a central axis of VP. This shared focus is consistent with the findings of Clifton et al. (2020), who emphasize that leadership and power in organizations are intrinsically linked to the ability to respond to customer needs through continuous adaptability. In the case of Digiserv, this adaptability is a meeting point between the various stakeholders, allowing for some alignment in their collective efforts — but also reflecting a lack of cohesion.

Innovation in VP, in addition to a positive influence on brand strengthening, has a further effect on brand legitimacy in the market, so that VP acts as a partial mediator in this interaction (Zhu et al., 2024). Moreover, to succeed at innovation, firms need to develop an effective strategy for both value creation and value capture and differentiation (Pacheco-Ruiz et al., 2022). However, these two aspects are difficult to match (Colombo et al., 2023). From this, it is understood that firms must go beyond traditional strategies that prioritize only material benefits, such as salary or flexibility, and pay attention to the role that discourses play in shaping VP (Andersson & Eksell, 2025). It is essential that firms and microfirms focus on meeting the deep needs of workers, in order to promote personal growth, community connection and a shared purpose, which not only ensures a more sustainable work environment, but also a differentiated value proposition that is resilient to changes in the market and competition (Mortensen & Edmondson, 2023).

Micro, small and medium-sized firms should aim to improve their competitiveness both locally and globally, which is possible thanks to the timely adoption of ICTs (Ferrer-Dávalos, 2021), but they also face persistent challenges across Latin American SMEs in their path toward digital transformation (Castillo-Vergara, 2024). Similarly, the lack of strategic planning (López-Lemus & De la Garza-Carranza, 2020) and the dependence on the leadership of the founding entrepreneur are recurrent obstacles in microenterprises. Solarte et al. (2023) point out that, unlike large firms, SMEs tend to neglect the strategic approach, which is fundamental when making investments in digital business. In the case of Digiserv, this lack of strategic focus translates into frequent disruptions in project execution and a reduced ability to anticipate market changes.

The above demonstrates that discursive tensions are not always effectively addressed. Objects in activity systems are inherently dialogical, as they must account for the different projections of those involved (Spinuzzi, 2017b). In Digiserv, this dialogicity together with the lack of a shared focus on the meaning and goals of their VP hinders greater organizational cohesion.

Finally, based on genre studies, the firm's website can be understood as a discursive genre that fulfills the function of positioning the firm and its VP over the competition. Indeed, genres are not simple textual forms, but recurrent social actions that address context-specific needs (Auken, 2020; Miller et al., 2018; Russell, 2023). In the case of Digiserv, their website not only acts as an informational tool, but also mediates customers' expectations and the identity projected by the firm.

5. Conclusions

This research aimed, first, to identify the perspectives of the actors in a digital microfirm on its VP, and secondly, to determine where the divergences of these perspectives are located in the activity system of the microfirm. It was determined that between the 5 members and the website they have 11 different perspectives that focus on different aspects of the firm, both products and services, and even the problematic aspects of the VP. Contrary to the traditional conception of VP as a homogeneous and single-minded definition of the essence of the firm (Frow et al., 2014), we were able to find that the actors attribute different meanings and purposes to their organization. These findings challenge the idea of a single shared VP, and suggest the existence of multiple visions within the same business environment.

In this sense, the diversity of perspectives in relation to VP enriches the firm's adaptability and responsiveness as it addresses customer needs and expectations from multiple angles. Recognizing that there is no single way to define and deliver value to customers opens the way for creativity, flexibility and innovation in the firm's strategies. Thus, this study provides a more complete and applied view of VP by placing it in a real-life context of a digital microfirm, and also highlights the need to manage this diversity of perspectives as a key element in organizational discourse.

As for the second objective, which focused on identifying where the disruptions in the perspectives around VP were located in the firm's activity system, it was determined that these tensions were centered on the Rules axis. The disruptions, identified as Outcome/Rules, Tools/Rules, Division of Labor/Rules and Rules/Rules, reflect internal dynamics that, to a greater or lesser extent, affect the implementation and maintenance of the VP recognized by the firm. The Outcome vs. Rules disruption demonstrates that flexibility with the customer, although it improves customer service, undermines the efficiency of internal processes, and causes delays in the delivery of products or services, which contradicts the central axis of the firm's VP: offering quality service. The Tools vs. Rules disruption indicates that tools, when not used consistently with the established rules, lead to deficiencies in the service delivered. The Division of Labor vs. Rules disruption points out that the formulation of the firm's rules does not recognize individual skills, resulting in the inefficient distribution of work and again, bringing problems with customers. Finally, the Rules vs. Rules disruption reflects internal conflicts between different procedures within the firm, such as the contradiction between the claim of having strategic planning and the reality of not having it implemented, which brings problems in the organization and delivery of the VP.

These findings reinforce the idea that, in micro and small firms, internal coordination challenges can hinder the consolidation of a shared value proposition. In this regard, Boronat-Navarro et al. (2021) suggest that competitive intelligence routines may help compensate for structural limitations typical of small firms, enabling them to pursue strategic ambidexterity despite their size. However, in the case of Digiserv, the lack of strategic mechanisms and limited internal alignment reveal how these routines are either underdeveloped or inconsistently adopted, resulting in repeated disruptions in the Rules axis of the activity system.

Despite the above, it is worth mentioning some limitations that may have influenced the findings, such as the fact that some participants provided concise answers during the interviews, which made it difficult to obtain detailed information. These brief responses may have left relevant aspects not fully explored, affecting the complete understanding of their perspectives around VP. In addition, on account of this study being part of a larger project, the sample used in this study was purposive (Flick, 2023) and limited to a single firm. While this allowed for a deep dive into the object of study, the results obtained may not be generalizable to other firms or contexts.

A more diverse sample in different contexts or types of firms is suggested for future studies. Furthermore, in a broader study it would be interesting to explore how perspectives around VP relate to other discursive and empirical dimensions in the firms, such as organizational culture, change management, and internal and external communication strategies, as the latter was not considered in this study. Another rarely studied approach is the way in which VP is reflected in the discourse of customers and how it influences their perceptions and decisions. Thus, based on the results obtained in this research, it would be possible to study how customers determine or condition the different strategies that firms create around their VP.

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