

**UNIVERSITY OF VAASA
FACULTY OF BUSINESS STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT**

Johanna Peltomäki

**CO-CREATING VALUE IN SOCIAL MEDIA
Universities' utilization of Facebook**

Master's Thesis in
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UNIVERSITY OF VAASA**Faculty of Business Studies**

Author:	Johanna Peltomäki	
Topic of the Thesis:	Co-creating value in social media. Universities' utilization of Facebook.	
Name of the Supervisor:	Anne-Maria Holma	
Degree:	Master's Programme in Strategic Business Development	
Administration Department:	Management	
Major Subject:	Management and Organizations	
Line:	Strategic Business Development	
Year of Entering the University:	2010	
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ABSTRACT

Despite the increased interest toward co-creation of value, the understanding of essential factors that affect co-creation of value in social media is fairly limited. This thesis focuses on 10 Finnish universities' master's degree programs, and their current stage and execution of co-creation of value on Facebook, which is one of the most used social media sites today. Moreover, this thesis focuses on essential areas that affect universities co-creation of value in social media. Based on the literature review there are four important building blocks to be successful in value co-creation and they are: 1) dialogue, 2) access, 3) risk-benefits, and 4) transparency. Moreover, earlier literature highlights the importance of unique and quality interactions in value co-creation.

The empirical results are collected through primary data of semi-structured interviews from students and universities' Facebook pages' administrators, and through secondary data that was collected online from Facebook and universities' websites. Literature review and collected data in this thesis aims to show the current stage of co-creation of value in social media in university context, and show what needs to be taken into account to enhance co-creation of value in social media. Empirical results indicate that all four building blocks play essential roles in value co-creation, and that there is a need to understand and utilize these building blocks to be able to create unique and quality interactions in social media. Based on the interviews and gathered data online, the four main findings are the following: 1) dialogues with and among the users of Facebook barely exists, 2) access to master's degree programs' Facebook pages is low, mainly because of their the limited existence, 3) transparency of information in master's degree programs' Facebook pages is low, and lastly 4) because of the issues with dialogue, access and transparency building blocks, administrators and students seem to have more risks than benefits regarding the co-creation of value process.

KEYWORDS: Co-creation of value, social media, Facebook

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Today, there are a growing number of services and goods being produced, and also the number of different channels to get these products seems to be ever-growing. Because of these reasons consumers have started to play an essential role in companies' competition strategies, because they need new sources of creativity and innovation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004b: 1 – 2; Ind, Iglesias & Schultz 2013: 5). In the past, companies have been seen as active players who produce goods and services, and consumers have been seen as passive objects who only decide to buy or not to buy. However, this arrangement has been challenged, because today consumers are seen as active players who want to take part in design, production, marketing, consumption, and destruction of services or goods. Moreover, both companies and consumers are seen as active players in all of these steps that affect value-creation. It has been said that value creation with consumers should be part of a company's daily activities because consumers have become more capable, more knowledgeable, and more demanding than before. (Wikström 1996: 359 – 372; Witell, Kristensson, Gustafsson & Löfgren 2010.)

To develop a closer relationship with consumers, companies need to re-examine the traditional system of company-centric value creation. The authors, Prahalad and Ramaswamy, who have studied the field of value creation, believe that creating value together with consumers, that starts from the industrial system of the firm, is the new direction of success (2004b: 1 – 2). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a, 2004b) have researched and written value creation between organizations and their customers, and from their point of view the locus of economic value creation is in the interaction between firm and consumers. Their research raised the attention towards this new area of value creation, and this term is called value co-creation. Since the beginning of 2000s there has been a growing number of studies made, and companies are interested in knowing the best ways to co-create value with consumers to attain strategic and competitive advantages. (Vargo 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004a, 2004b, 2004c.)

Today, connecting with consumers is easier because of the advances in Internet, in technological devices, and especially in 2.0 web platforms like Facebook (Mount & Martinez 2014: 124). The last two decades have seen a growing trend towards the use of Internet

and various 2.0 web technologies which have affected the process of value creation and the need to increase consumers' value (Kothandaraman & Wilson 2001: 380 – 389; Wikström 1996: 372; Mount & Martinez 2014: 124 – 126). Internet has reduced the distance between firms and consumers, and because of this, firms are able to create new value with the help of information they get from the consumers (Águile-Obra, Padilla-Meléndez & Serarols-Tarrés 2007: 188).

Social media is one of the most used digital channels. The use of social media has increased dramatically in the past years (Mount & Martinez 2014: 125), and in addition, social media and mobile applications show to be the biggest growth areas in the next two to four years. (Leeflang etc. 2014: 3.) Social media sites are being used because they offer open and independent platforms for equal contribution and access (Mount & Martinez 2014: 129). Organizations are using social media to connect, collaborate, and interact with their customers (Mount & Martinez 2014: 125), and via successful communication with the customers, companies can reach an advantage over their competitors (Osatuyi et al. 2013: 2624). Social media can be used in many ways but today it is used more and more as an interaction place between consumers and organizations (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013: 46). Social media is seen as a good and active place to co-create value (Bolton, Parasuraman, Hoefnagels, Mighels, Kabadayi, Gruber, Loureiro & Solnet 2013: 245 – 245) by employing the experience of people from both inside and outside the organization (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2010).

Due to use of Internet, generation Y has raised recent attention to the use of social media and value co-creation in social media. Generation Y's (born between 1981-1999) use of social media platforms has affected among other things to service expectations, engagement with firms and brands, value of the firm, but most importantly to participation in value co-creation (Bolton et al. 2013: 245 – 255). Generation Y is the largest group after the Baby Boomers, and only in the USA this group consists of 83 million members. This group differentiates from others mostly because of their technological competence and use of social media. It is apparent to know that reaching this group needs different channels and ways than other people in this world. Use of wide variety of social media platforms and understanding that they rely on opinions of relevant others play essential roles in co-creation of value in social media. Also, finding the right ways and channels to interact play an essential role in value co-creation process for all stakeholders. (Valentine & Powers 2013: 597 – 606.)

Nowadays, market is seen as a forum where firm and consumer converge and where the basis of value is in co-creation of value through interactions. Both, firms and consumers are seen as collaborators in co-creation of value but firms can reach the competitive advantage only if they can co-create unique experiences with their customers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 11 – 13). Hence, companies face challenges in the process of effective information sharing skills which play a vital role in engaging company's target audience in social media. (Osatuyi et al. 2013: 2624.) In addition, consumers expect to be a part in the companies' social media process which requires attention to a wider social media strategy that will capture reach, intimacy, and engagement (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden 2011: 267 – 268) especially because social networking sites are also used by many companies to support their brand creation communities. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010: 63 – 64.) But also, because the generation Y is a huge number of people whom use of social media has raised a wide attention to successful value co-creation (Valentine & Powers 2013: 597 – 606).

Due to the large volume of generation Y and their use of social media, recruitment process of new students in higher education through social media has got more attention than ever before. Universities need to understand the possibilities of social media channels, and for example the role of Facebook, because it is possible to create unique value through Facebook together with prospect and current students. Research made by Fagerstrom and Ghinea, demonstrates that social media can be used as an arena for co-creation experience as a basis for value creation. Forum that is created around individuals and their co-creation experiences able to offer unique value for all individuals (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004: 6), and because of the huge number of users, Facebook offer a good place for universities to have a forum for co-creation of value because on Facebook it is possible to reach prospect and current students. The study by Fagerstrom and Ghinea also showed that the conversion rate of prospect students who joined a university's Facebook group before applying was higher than prospect students who did not join the Facebook group before applying (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013: 45 – 52).

1.2 Research problem and gap

Today, companies seem to understand the need to be in social media to reach consumers and other stakeholders, however they do not seem to know how to effectively co-create

value (Hanna et al. 2011: 265). Sometimes social media and traditional media are managed the same way, however; social media should be managed differently than traditional media. Social media differs from traditional media substantially because its nature resembles interconnected, dynamic, egalitarian, and interactive organism. (Peters et al. 2013: 281). Social media is still a new technology that needs to be understood in terms of its benefits, risks, barriers and strategic use. Also, understanding the different factors of social media and finding the best social media sites to reach consumers to share wanted information are essential (Picazo – Vela 2012: 504). Most of all, the literature has shown the need for better understanding of co-creation of value in social media (Mount & Martinez 2014; Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013; Dahl 2015). Companies need to gain better understanding of their customer's point of view about how they can create the best value for both of them. (Payne, Storbacka & Frow: 2008.) Also, understanding the importance of generation Y and their use of social media is not taken into account well enough. There is a need to understand their habits and needs to be successful in co-creation of value in social media (Valentine & Powers 2013: 597 – 606).

This thesis takes a deeper look at co-creation of value between organizations and consumers with the help of social media. To study co-creation of value between organization and consumers in social media, this study focuses on 10 Finnish universities and their master's degree programs, and students, who have started their studies in university in the past two years. These organizations were chosen because universities' want to promote their programs, and interact with their potential and current students to create value together. (Durkin & McKenna 2011; Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013). To date, several studies have highlighted the importance of interaction in social media between a company and consumer to co-create value, but they lack to show the factors that need to be taken into account in a real life, and also, they do not offer good enough insights about how organizations should enhance their social media actions to co-create value in more beneficial ways. In addition, generation Y is not taken into account in value co-creation in social media, even though, generation Y has a big know-how and understanding of the use of social media.

1.3 Research question and sub-questions

The aim of this thesis is to explore the current existence of co-creation of value between universities and students in social media. This thesis aims to find factors that affect co-

creation of value in social media, and offer insights and help to enhance value co-creation actions in social media in university context.

The primary research question in this study is the following;

- **What is essential for co-creation of value in social media in university context?**

In addition, there are two sub-questions which help answer the primary research question. This thesis attempts to answer the following sub-questions:

1. What factors affect co-creation of value in social media in university context?
2. How can universities enhance co-creation of value on Facebook?

1.4 Structure of the study

This thesis is structured into five chapters that are presented in the figure 1. The first chapter is the introduction of the study, where motivation and purpose of the study are explained. The first chapter includes background of the study, research problem and gap, research questions and sub-questions, and the structure of the study. In the second chapter the theoretical framework of the chosen topic that is value co-creation in social media is discussed and presented. This chapter is broken into different subchapters which are traditional vs. new direction of value creation, co-creation of value, and social media. A considerable amount of the literature related to co-creation of value in social media is reviewed to create the theoretical understanding to analyze the data collected. The third chapter presents the research methodology used in this thesis. Research methodology chapter includes subchapters of research design and methodology, data collection, and validity and reliability.

The fourth chapter discusses empirical results of the study. The primary and secondary data are presented. At last in the fifth chapter, the conclusions are discussed through main findings, managerial implications, and limitations and ideas for future research. These

chapters aims to offer answers to the research question and sub-questions which were presented earlier in this chapter. Also, this thesis includes the table of content and abstract in the beginning, and list of references and appendices in the end of the study.

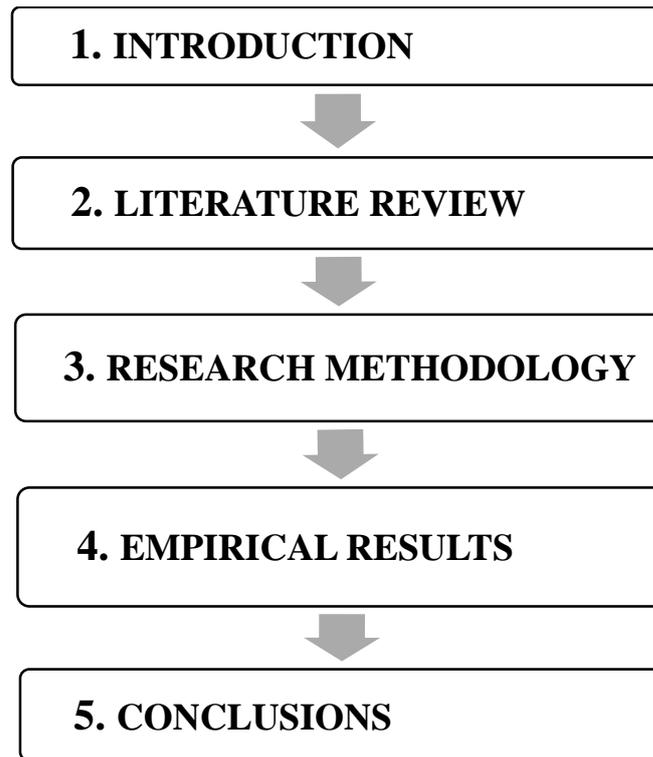


Figure 1. The structure of the study.

2. THE LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's challenging environment companies need to find new and better ways to create value when compared to their competitors. To do that, companies must integrate their resources in a way that they can produce goods and services that satisfies the needs and the price levels of customers and consumers. (Kothandaraman & Wilson 2001: 380). Companies and organizations need to remember that in today's business world the role of consumers has changed from passive to active which means changes in company's overall role in value creation process (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000). By understanding the meaning of co-creation of value, companies are able to create superior value for all their stakeholders (Kothandaraman & Wilson 2001: 380; Hanna et al. 2011).

Authors, Vargo and Lusch introduced the term "value co-creation" in 2006 when other researchers started to use term "co-production" after their work in 2004. These terms describe better the new ways to create value, but value co-creation shares a wider view of the roles and steps in the value creation process than co-production (2006: 284). Co-creation of value has raised its importance in unique value creation, and in addition, researchers have paid special attention to co-creation of value in the fast changing world of Internet. Social media has been under greater scrutiny, because of its use dramatically increasing in recent years (Bolton et al. 2013: 245-255). Earlier literature have also shown raised attention toward generation Y (born 1981-1999) who use social media widely and who have a good know-how about different social media channels (Valentine & Powers 2013: 597 – 606). However, based on the literature companies seem to struggle in knowledge of the best ways to create value together with consumers. Due to this, this study aims to find factors that affect value in social media and offer a wider understanding of how to enhance the co-creation of value process in social media. This study is made in the context of university because today universities are utilizing social media, especially Facebook, to reach prospective and current students (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013), and also, because the current students most likely are from generation Y. This way the collected data for this study can be collected from universities and the situation of co-creation of value in social media can be studied.

First, this chapter will open the meaning of value by comparing the traditional and new direction of value creation. Second, this chapter continues to literature review about co-creation of value. After value and especially co-creation of value are presented, this chapter will take a closer look to social media and co-creation of value in social media.

2.1 Traditional vs. new direction of value creation

Discussions and debates about value started back on the days when Aristotle discussed two different themes of value creation: “use-value” and “exchange-value”. These are two various ways to think about value creation and value. In use-value, value creation is different between people because of the customers’ own skills and experiences affecting value creation with goods and services. In contrast, in exchange-value, value is created by firms because they produce goods and services that customers need (Vargo, Maglio & Akaka 2008: 146 – 147). Value-in-exchange is a traditional and conventional value creation process where companies and customers have separated roles of production and consumption (Vargo et al. 2008: 14; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004a: 5), and value is created when monetary exchange of the good takes place (Bowman & Ambrosini 2000: 3). In contrast, value-in-use logic’s focus on customer’s judgement about the good, so the value can be said to be subjective (Bowman & Ambrosini 2000: 3 – 4) and the customer is always a co-creator of value (Witell et al. 2010: 142). In addition, these two logics are also called as the goods-dominant (G-D) logic and the service-dominant (S-D) logic where G-D logic refers to value-in-exchange logic and S-D logic refers to Value-in-use logic (Witell et al. 2010: 142; Vargo et al. 2008: 145 –149; Payne, Storbacka & Frow 2008: 83).

In the past 100 years, value-in-exchange process has been the traditional value creation process that has been a company-centric system (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004b: 2). Firm’s output and price have been the focus points in traditional models of value creation. Behind the traditional view is *Goods-dominant (G-D) logic* where value creation happens in the firm, and in the marketplace it is distributed in exchange for money and goods. Firms and consumers have clear roles, where firms are seen active and consumers as passive players. Firms are seen as value creators because they produce goods or service that customers want from them. This exchange transaction from services or goods to money or goods is a measure of a firms’ value. (Vargo, Maglio & Akaka 2008: 145 – 146.) The traditional business thinking and structure has served business leaders for the past hundred years, and based on that Prahalad and Ramaswamy have put together a frame ‘The traditional Frame of Reference for value Creation’ (see Figure 1) that shows what a company-centric system is about.

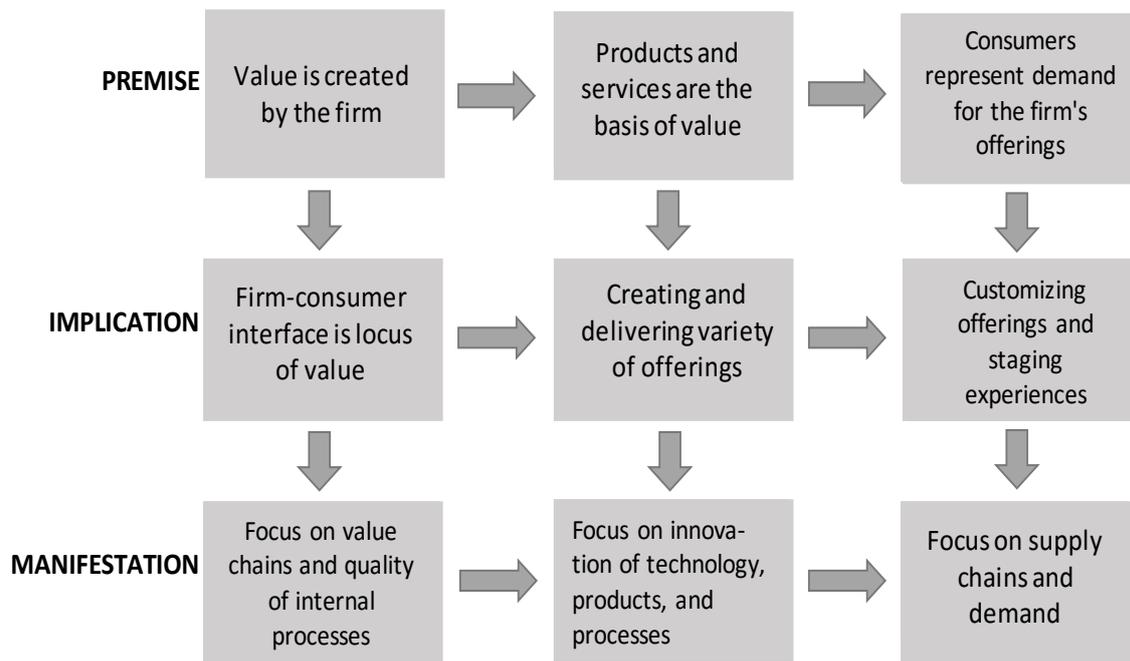


Figure 2. The traditional Frame of Reference for Value Creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004b: 13).

This figure shows clearly the main factors related to the traditional value creation process. A firm creates the value through its choice of services and goods which are the basis of value, and consumers show their demand for the firm's offerings. The implications follow from these premises and the first one is firm-consumer interface that is locus of value extraction. To extract this value, firms increase the variety of offerings delivered, and by customizing offerings or staging the value creation process, as for example themed restaurants do. The last row of manifestation shows the focus points in the traditional value creation. Firms pay attention to value chains and quality of internal processes, innovation of technology, products, and processes; and to supply chains and demand management, to make decisions of what to make, what to buy from suppliers, where to service and assemble products, and how to supply and make logistic decisions. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004b: 13 - 14). The firm is clearly the value creator and exchange transaction of goods and money is a measure of a firm's value (Vargo et al. 2008: 145 - 146). However, more current studies have showed that the traditional value creation is no longer

the right way to create value, because of the change of consumers' role from passive to active.

In contrast to the value-in-exchange logic, service-dominant logic (S-D) that is all about the value-in-use logic has a wider perspective to value creation (Witell et al. 2010: 142; Vargo et al. 2008: 145 – 149; Payne, Storbacka & Frow 2008: 83), and many scholars hold the view that in today's challenging environment service-dominant (S-D) logic has started to strongly displace the traditional goods-dominant (G-D) logic because organizations try to create value in new ways (Vargo et al. 2008: 147 – 149). Prahalad and Ramaswamy put together a frame about the traditional value creation, but they also put together a frame about 'The new frame of Reference of Value' (see Figure 2) that shows the new direction of value creation that is co-creating value (2004b: 13). Service-dominant (S-D) logic's key resources are knowledge and skills which help organizations to achieve competitive advantage and create deeper value for everyone who participates. Service-dominant (S-D) logic's main focus is value creation from a service perspective where separation of firm-consumer disappears and where all participants have a role in value creation for themselves and for others (Vargo et al. 2008: 147 -149). In co-creation of value, firm's and consumers roles are not separated, but instead, they both are seen as active players. Firm and consumers create value together for themselves, but also, to all stakeholders. Together they are able to offer more and better value for all by making services and products better than they would have been without the cooperation. (Vargo, Maglio & Akaka 2008: 146.) Prahalad and Ramaswamy say that the new focus points in value creation are on the quality of consumer-firm interactions, innovating experience environments, and on experience networks (2004b: 13).

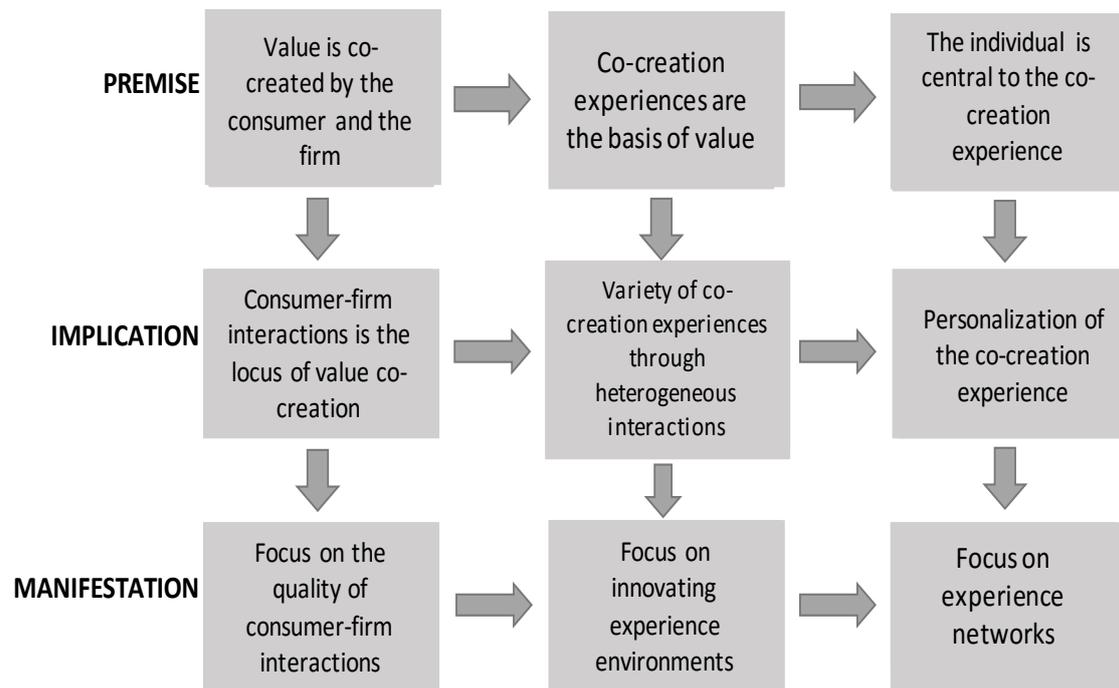


Figure 3. The new frame of Reference for Value Creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004b: 13).

Thus far, previous literature has paid little attention to how the co-creation of value process should be managed in the real life, but instead, several examples and understandings about what should be addressed are done. In addition, because of the trend of increasing use of social media there is a need to look more into the role of social media and how the co-creation of value could be managed there. (Payne, Storbacka & Frow 2008: 85 – 94.) Also, because of generation Y (born 1981-1999) who use social media widely and are now or soon in the age to apply or are currently students in the university, the context of university and their utilization of social media in co-creation of value has raised interest (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013). First, this thesis aims to offer a better understanding of the meaning of co-creation of value, and also, social media is studied in the context of value co-creation.

2.2 Co-Creation of value

“The most successful organizations co-create products and services with customers, and integrate customers into core processes.”

—IBM, “Capitalizing on Complexity”

Like mentioned earlier, co-creation of value is the new direction because consumers seek more and more opportunities to take part in every step of a firms’ business system to gain better value for all stakeholders (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 6). To understand the meaning and idea of co-creation of value this section will start by taking a closer look at various authors’ definitions. Next, this section will explain the main factors that co-creation of value is about.

Co-creation of value has been defined by several authors (see table 3). For example Ind, Iglesias and Schutz define it as “an active, creative, and social process based on collaboration between organizations and participants that generates benefits for all and creates value for stake-holders.” (2013: 8). And also, Roser et al. defines it as an “active, creative, and social process” (2009). Witell, Kristensson, Gustaffson and Löfgren’s (2010: 143) definition is that co-creation “Aims to provide an idea, share knowledge, or participate in the development of a product or service” which differs by describing what happens in the process more detailed than others. Cova, Dalli and Zwick argue that co-creation of value can only happen if there is interaction between a firm and customer because during an interaction, customers as a co-producer can influence the firm’s production process (2011: 237). This is why it requires an ability to manage within and across customer and firm value creation processes (Payne et al. 2008). Fuller et al. (2006) describe co-creation of value as “an interactive and reciprocal action between consumer and producer (Dahl 2015: 35). Co-creation is frequently described as mutually beneficial – or at least framed as a process which empowers consumers to have an active input into the creation process”. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2010) say that “It creates business value by employing the experience of people from both inside and outside the organization”.

Table 1. Definitions and meanings of value co-creation.

AUTHOR(S)	DEFINITION
Ind, Iglesias & Schutz 2013: 8	An active, creative, and social process based on collaboration between organizations and participants that generates benefits for all and creates value for stakeholders
Witell, Kristensson, Gustaffson & Löfgren 2010: 143	Aims to provide an idea, share knowledge, or participate in the development of a product or service.
Cova, Dalli & Zwick 2011: 237.	Co-creation of value can take place only if interactions between the firm and the customer occur. If there are no direct interactions, no value co-creation is possible. During interactions, the customer as co-producer can influence the firm's production process
Roser et al. (2009).	Active, creative and social process
Payne, Storbacka & Frow (2008)	Value co-creation requires an ability to engage 'the extended enterprise' by managing <i>across</i> and <i>within</i> customer and supplier value creation processes
Füller et al. (2006): Stephan Dahl 2015: 35	An interactive and reciprocal action between consumer and producer. And although the power balance in this interaction may be asymmetric, co-creation is frequently described as mutually beneficial – or at least framed as a process which empowers consumers to have an active input into the creation process
Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2010)	It creates business value by employing the experience of people from both inside and outside the organization

By these definitions and meanings of co-creation of value, without collaboration there cannot be co-creation of value because then it is not an active, social and creative process that it needs to be. Also, the co-creation of value process should create value for all in a beneficial way. To meet the purpose and meaning of this thesis, this thesis defines co-creation of value as *an active and social process where all; firm, consumers and stakeholders, gain value through firm and consumer interactions.*

Like shown in the start of this chapter, Prahalad and Ramaswamy's Figure 1 and 2 shows that the new focus points are: quality interactions between consumers and firm, and experience networks; and due to this, the traditional view of company-centric value creation has been challenged (2004b: 13). Today, the market is changing to an implicit negotiation between the firm and consumers where the value is created together. To co-create value, many changes have happened in the relationship between a company and consumers (see Table 3) during these years, but one of the biggest transformations is the change from one-way to two-way interaction that shows the change in the consumers' role from passive to active. Also, consumer-to-consumer dialogues have started to play an essential role in consumers' value creation and especially, because today more than 1.3 billion mobile phones and PCs around the world allow greater and easier connectivity than ever before (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 6 – 8), but also because of the role of generation Y and their use of social media (Valentine & Powers 2013: 497 – 606). These are why firms must pay attention to high-quality and various kinds of interactions with their consumers to co-create unique experiences. This way firms are able to gain an important competitive advantage. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 6 – 8.) However, it seems that companies are struggling to have interactions in social media to have successful value co-creation. Companies must understand the changes that have happened in the past years in the relationship between firm and consumers to be able to manage their co-creation of value activities.

Table 2. The transformation of the relationship between firms and consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 12).

Transformation of The Relationship between Firms and Consumers	
<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-way • Firm to consumer • Controlled by Firm • Consumers are “prey” • Choice=buy/not buy • Firm segments and targets consumers; consumers must “fit into” firm’s offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-way • Consumer to firm • Consumer to consumer • Consumer can “hunt” • Consumer wants to/can impose her view of choice • Consumer wants to/is being empowered to co-construct a <i>personalized experience</i> around herself, with firm’s experience environment

Consumers must be seen as active participants rather than passive, because of their willingness to be a part of successful product or service creation. (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013: 46). In co-creation of value it is important that both company and individual benefit from the collaboration, but also, that value is created for all. To work together and co-create value, interactions with a firm and other consumers play an essential role (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013: 46). On the other hand, not all individuals interact actively, but they still can get value from other people’s participation. Interactions happen in a certain place and Ind, Iglesias and Schultz call this space co-creation space (see Figure 4) that shows the connections between community and organization in co-creation. The overlapping spaces include individuals who do not actively interact with the organization but who can benefit from products or services that are developed by those who participate. Individuals who participate are interacting with organization in co-creation space. (Ind et al. 2013: 9 - 10.)

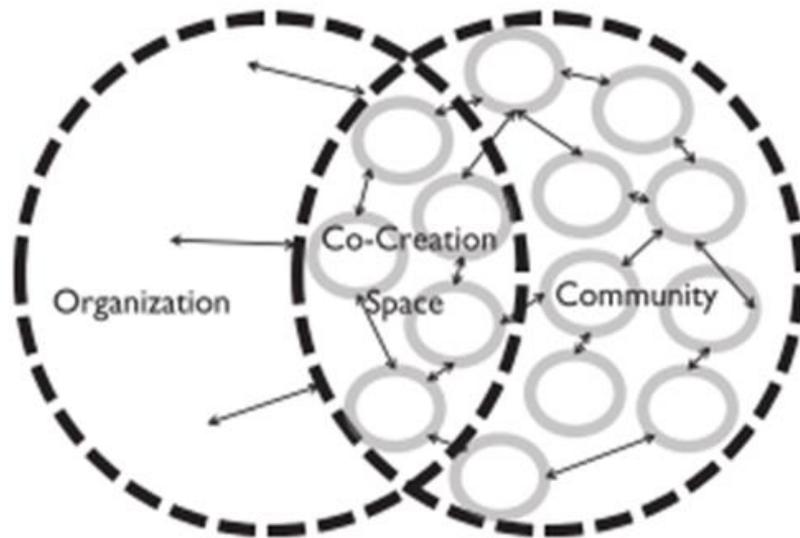


Figure 4. The Co-creation space (Ind et al. 2013: 10).

Interactions in co-creation space can happen face-to-face and/or they can be online interactions (Ind. et al 2013: 10). Based on the literature and empirical section of this paper, Facebook offers space online where co-creation of value is possible. Facebook offers opportunities to use it as a place where organization and consumers can meet and create value through online interactions. Social network communities, such as Facebook, are valuable places for universities to be, because of their collaborative and interactive nature (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013: 46). In addition, On Facebook all individuals are able to gain value through interactions despite of their willingness or not willingness to take a part of the co-creating interactions. This shows that Facebook is an important social media channel that allows co-creation of value, and offers value for all stakeholders. However, universities seem to struggle to have social and active interactions with users, which has an impact on successful value co-creation.

To meet the need of unique and quality interactions, several authors (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004a,2004b,2004c; Ramaswamy 2008; Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013; Ind et al. 2013) have suggested that personalized interaction should be the focus of firms' value creation process with consumers. To reach this goal, Prahalad and Ramaswamy introduced the DART-model that includes four building blocks of interactions between company and consumer that ease the process of co-creation of value (see figure 5). These four

building blocks are dialogue, transparency, access, and risk-benefits. By combining these four blocks companies can engage customers to collaborate with them more effectively. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004a: 1 – 9.)

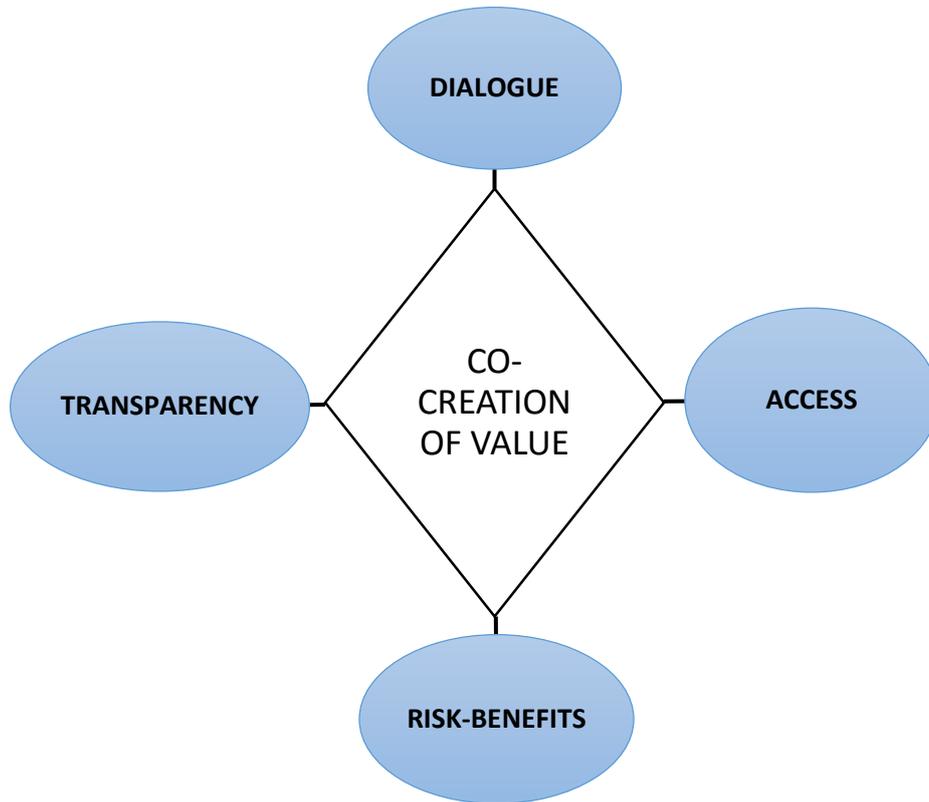


Figure 5. Four building blocks of interactions for co-creation of value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 9.)

These four building blocks play essential factors, because with these it is possible to build a system for co-creation of value that facilitates co-creation experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 9). Through these interactions it is possible to create high-quality interactions between individuals, groups, and organizations. Having a meaningful dialogue between a customer and a company, providing a place to have these interactions, managing risks and benefits in the process of co-creation of value, and sharing valuable information are all essential factors in the process of creating co-creation experiences and

in the value creating process for all stakeholders (Ramaswamy 2008: 9 – 12). Without direct interactions between firm and consumers, co-creation of value is not possible (Cova, Dalli & Zwick 2011: 237).

The first factor of dialog is important, because with meaningful dialogues between a firm and consumers, companies are able to develop services and products that create more value for all (Cova et al. 2011). Dialogues between consumers and a firm imply interactivity, deep engagement, and the ability and willingness to act on both sides (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 9). Dialog must center on issues of interest for both, and both sides should be equal and joint problem solvers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 9). Also, meaningful dialogues are not only between firm and consumer, but between and among all individuals who want to take part in any way (Ramaswamy 2008: 11). Second, in terms of successful dialog between a firm and individuals, company must provide consumers access to a place where dialogue can exist. Without offering a place to have interactions co-creating value is impossible. Third, companies must think about everybody's personalized understanding of risk-benefits, from the customer's and the company's point of view. Companies want to offer more benefits and returns for all stakeholders and less risks for everyone. This can be done by reducing the potential risks during the value creation process, and by raising the benefits gained instead. The fourth and last building block of transparency is all about shared information. With transparency consumers can build trust towards a firm and are able to make informed decisions. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 9 -10; Ramaswamy 2008: 11 – 12.)

Ramaswamy (2008) wrote about co-creating value through customers' experiences and used Nike, as a case company, to demonstrate why these experiences are valuable and how they took care of these four building blocks to sustain competitive advantage. Nike offered consumers access to a website where they were able to have many meaningful dialogues, receive a wide amount of information and knowledge about products and services, and also, offered proper information to consumers to lower their own risks to not lose customers and to lower customers' risks of disappointment. All four building blocks played important factors to sustain good co-creation of value, because the benefits were bigger for Nike and for customers. Nike benefitted from these things because they get valuable knowledge and feedback from their customers through these building blocks. (2008: 9 – 11.) Nike used Internet to achieve this competitive advantage because they understood that it offers possibilities to reach all their stakeholders and makes it possible to co-create value in greater ways. Also, generation Y, that is the largest group since the baby boomers, use social platforms to interact with firms and other consumers, and using

social media platforms to co-create value is the right direction in today's business (Ramaswamy 2008; Bolton et al. 2013). Companies, who understand to utilize social networks to create value and take advantage of them, will be the winners in value co-creation process (Peppard & Rylander 2006: 139).

To sum up, authors of the field have suggested and showed (Figure 3 and Figure 4) that co-creation of value between a company and consumers happens in a certain space and through unique and high quality interactions. Due to value co-creation, social media has raised a lot of attention, because it offers an interactive and collaborative space for value co-creation and it allows the company to reach all stakeholders, especially generation Y who use social media widely. However, firms need to utilize the four building blocks of dialogue, access, risk-benefits, and transparency, because through them the space and interactions can meet the needed qualities to have successful value co-creation process in social media. (Pralhad & Ramaswamy a2004; Ind et al. 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 11 – 13.) All of these reviewed areas are essential in the context of university because of generation Y (born 1981-1999) who are currently or will be students in universities in the coming years. Based on the empirical research made in this thesis, universities and their master's degree programs need help on how to utilize social media in a way that creates value for all users of their Facebook pages.

Next section of this chapter will define and open the meaning of social media, and continues to look at social media applications.

2.3 Social media

The roots of social media started in the end of the 1970s when Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) were created. After dial up into a central computer, to the 'host' of the BBS, users were allowed to send and receive messages with other users, share photos, upload and download software, and even some of them had online games. Next, in the 1980s the Usenet emerged and allowed more users to connect than Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) allowed. This virtual and global discussion system ran on inter-connected servers, when BBS only had one 'host'. In 1991 the World Wide Web emerged and social online interactions started to take place. Some of the BBSs original user-base services started to migrate to web-based services to reach the growing audience of Internet users. In the middle of 1990s more user-friendly software was developed and no content was generated by the

website owners. This was the beginning of user-generated and shared content in its simple forms. However, Web 2.0 has commonly been assumed to be the first form of Internet that allowed user-generated, collaborative, and information sharing even though that had been possible already a decade before in the earliest forms of Internet. Web 2.0 is understood to be an interactive World Wide Web where social interactions take place with the help of user-generated content. (Dahl 2015: 76 – 79.)

Because of the increased use of internet and social media (Águila-Obra, Padilla-Meléndez & Serarols-Tarrés 2007: 188) consumers are able to get more information through mobile phones, websites, and especially, through different media channels, easier than ever before, because of easy access. However, because of the increased use of internet that needs fast reactions, companies are facing difficulties in value creation process (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004: 1). In addition, because of today's harder competition, companies must be fast moving and better in innovative moves, and because of that it is important to have deeper connection with their stakeholders. Innovation inside the company is not enough anymore or at least competitive enough to stay in the speed of competition. Communication channels have changed and companies need to be on the Internet and use social media in creative ways. Finding the best channels and ways to get stakeholders, and especially consumers, to take part in innovative thinking helps firms get better results and value for all stakeholders (Chesbrough 2003). Because of the changes in the role of consumers and use of internet and social media, the locus points of value co-creation are interactions and conversations between firms and customers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004: 5 – 8) where companies need to pay more attention.

Companies' use of social media has grown in the past decade. (Lardi & Fuchs 2013: 8 – 12). Companies cannot be early adapters anymore, so having the right people managing social media tools is essential (Bottles & Sherlock 2011: 68). Social media tools can be used for communication, information sharing, customer support activities, recruiting, marketing (Lardi & Fuchs 2013: 8 - 12), or for co-creation of value (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013; Ramaswamy 2008). Depending on the main purpose of use of social media there are several channels where companies can reach their customers or other stakeholders (Lardi & Fuchs 2013: 8 – 12). However, companies need to remember that social media differs in many ways from traditional media because of its different characters (Peters et al. 2013: 281; Águila-Obra et al. 2007). In addition, social media is argued to be better place in brand building than traditional media because of a stronger empowerment of customers. (Leefflang, Verhef, Dahlström & Freundt 2014: 10; Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins 2013: 243). Also, consumers are more led by other consumers' opinions and

reviews in social media, which seems to have a strong effect on consumer decision making (Leeflang and etc. 2014: 2).

2.3.1 Definition of social media

As noted by Kaplan and Haenlein the term “social media” does not have one clear definition. Authors have had mostly similar definitions, but the definitions can differ from the point of view taken (see table 3). One of the reasons is that there are two concepts, Web 2.0 and User Generated Content, which are connected to the term of social media. Web 2.0 can be seen as a platform and User Generated Content as a sum of ways people are able to use Social Media. Hence, Kaplan and Haenlein’s definition for social media is “- Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.”(Kaplan & Hanelein 2010: 59 – 61.) Meijer and Thaens think that social media is just a new version of the original internet. That is because the old technologies such as mailing lists or Usenet seem to fit most of the criteria that has been set for social media, and because of this they define it as the following: “Social media – or Social Networking Sites (SNS) – is used for a group of new technologies such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook that have been argued to form a new generation of internet technologies (Web 2.0). The term social media refers to a set of online tools that are designed for and centered around social interaction. They provide platforms for interactions between users and these users engage in a variety of interactions to obtain the information they are specifically interested in” (2013: 344).

Table 3. Definitions of Social Media.

Author	Term	Definition
Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:61	Social Media	Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.
Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni & Pauwels 2013 :282	Social Media	Social media are communication systems that allow their social actors to communicate along dyadic ties.
Meijer & Thaen (2013: 344)	Social Media	The term social media – or Social Networking Sites (SNS) – is used for a group of new technologies such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook that have been argued to form a new generation of internet technologies (Web 2.0). The term social media refers to a set of online tools that are designed for and centered around social interaction. They provide platforms for interactions between users and these users engage in a variety of interactions to obtain the information they are specifically interested in.
Mount & Martinez 2014: 126.	Social Media	Social media refers to a set of online tools open for public membership that support idea sharing, creating and editing content, and building relationships through interaction and collaboration.
Kieztmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre 2011: 241.	Social Media	Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content.

Collaborative projects in social media are becoming the main source of information for many consumers, and also many authors pay attention to these projects. They enable creation of content where all of the end-users are able to write and edit the content, but also they are essential for consumers who want to find information. Companies need to understand that consumers use Internet and social media actively to seek needed information (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010: 62.)

Peters et al. definition of social media is that social media means communication systems that allow their social actors to communicate along dyadic ties (2013: 282), and collaborative projects, Mount and Martinez think social media refers to a set of online tools open for public membership that support idea sharing, creating and editing content, and building relationships through interaction and collaboration (2014: 126). Kieztmann et al. think similarly about social media as previous authors when defining that social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content (2011: 241).

Like mentioned, there are several social media applications that consumers can use through their computers and mobile technologies to share, co-create, edit, and interact with others. These different social media sites can have a different focus, but all of them connect people and allow sharing and creation of content. However, because of different characters of different social media sites, companies have to find the best fitting site(s) to enter so they can reach their target audience and co-create value for everyone.

2.3.2 Social media applications

The role between social media and value creation has played essential role in the past decade because social networks like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter have changed consumers' ways of interaction (Fagerstrom & Guinea 2013: 46). Workers in social media must understand to be ready for quick responses and changes, and therefore, guidelines are crucial for firms because they offer directions for all forms of social media. However, there are several factors that companies need to consider before entering into social media. First of all, finding the right social media applications to reach the company's customers is essential. Secondly, after choosing and understanding the media, companies must think of ways to be social. It has been said that by being active, interesting, and

honest with updates plays a key role in gaining and keeping consumers. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010: 65 – 67.)

Kaplan argues that the use of high-speed internet is behind the creation of social networking sites (2010: 60). Social networking sites, like Facebook, Myspace, and YouTube, have reached high popularity in the past years and are used as tools for external stakeholders' engagement (Meijer & Thaen 2013: 344; Mount & Martinez 2014: 124). These sites enable users to create personal information profiles (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010: 63 –64), but most of all, social media applications focus on continuous and ongoing contact between users where the emphasis is on sharing user-generated content (Dahl 2015: 3). In addition, social media and its applications are seen as production tools that empower consumers to be active participants in the production process and take part in co-creation of value (Dahl 2015: 33 – 34). However, the use of social media and its applications in co-creation of value is still quite new for many companies even though the use of social media has increased (Lardi & Fuchs 2013: 8 –12).

There are currently a rich and diverse ecology of social media sites that can be separated into social networking sites, microblogging sites, wikis, forums, and blogs, which vary in terms of their functionality and scope (Osatuyi 2013: 2622; Kiezmman et al. 2011: 242). Kaplan and Haenlein argue that social media can be divided into six different groups based on their level of self-presentation and social presence. These groups are: Collective projects (e.g. Wikipedia), blogs, content communities (e.g. YouTube), social networks (e.g. Facebook), social virtual worlds, and virtual game worlds. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010: 62 – 64.) Some of the social media sites are meant for general masses, like Facebook, some for professional networks, like LinkedIn, and some for media sharing sites, like MySpace and YouTube. Today companies have the opportunity to choose to utilize or not to utilize social media as part of their everyday actions. If companies decide to use social media applications as part of their business strategy, they must understand the changes in communication and actions between a firm and individuals who want to join their social media sites (Kiezmman et al. 2011: 242).

After understanding the vital role of social media applications and how to be social in them in the right way, it is also essential to understand the value of followers and nurture these relationships in social media actions. When involving these in your social media strategy it will strengthen the relationship between the organization and consumer, but also, it will build loyalty. (Metz & Hemmann 2011: 14; Bottles & Sherlock 2011: 68.) Knowing your followers' and audience's habits is helpful to determine the best ways to

communicate and interact with them. Also, it is important to create a social voice. With this you can engage and communicate better with the audience. Being consistent is essential because it is helpful to gain more followers, and to earn the trust of current followers (Metz & Hemmann 2011: 14). Communication with followers helps to strengthen the social media plan. (Metz & Hemmann 2011: 14.) In addition, Bottles & Sherlock, recommend that one qualified person should take the lead of the social media strategy, so that focus and direction of social media networks has a well-organized orientation. However, it is not recommended that the person is from outside the company, but instead, from inside the company. It has been said that it is more beneficial to find someone who is familiar with the organization, because this person would have a greater commitment to the organization. (2011: 68.)

Earlier literature has shown that consumers and companies have various social media sites to choose from, and that social media sites have different focuses. It seems that one essential factor is to understand different social media sites and choosing the right social media channels to be able to reach consumers who want to interact with a company. However, social media applications and utilization of them creates difficulties for companies, like selection of the right application(s) and the ways to interact in them. These are some of the reasons why companies need insights and help to be able to enhance their social media interactions to be successful in co-creation of value.

This study aims to offer insights of co-creation of value in social media, and Facebook was the chosen medium of this thesis, because of its high number of users. Also, the empirical results of this study showed that Facebook is a widely used channel among universities and students, especially for generation Y.

2.3.3 Facebook

Facebook is one of the most influential social media networks that was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg from Harvard University to connect his friends (Gensler et al. 2013:246; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010: 63). It is one of the social media networks that dominates the global market (Picazo-Vela et al. 2012: 505) and is the most popular application in social media (Dahl 2015: 216). Facebook is a social networking site where users can create personal information profiles which can include photos, video, audio files, and blogs (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010: 63). Facebook is a platform that is built around identity

and lets users to keep their online identities in one place (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre 2011: 243). Communication happens through emails, instant messaging on a chat service or through comments on updates that users (like companies and consumers) make (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010: 63). In addition, it has been studied that Facebook is a great place for brands, because sharing brand stories and communicating with consumers is fast and easy. Also, consumers themselves are more willing to hear and discuss about brands on Facebook instead of YouTube where videos play the vital role. (Gensler et al. 2013: 251 – 253.)

Based on the empirical research done for this study, Facebook allows users to create unofficial or official pages, such as, master's degree programs in universities to connect with people. Social networks, like Facebook, can function as an arena where organizations and consumers can interact and co-create value together. In other words, Facebook offers a good forum where individuals can get together and create greater value. Facebook relies on user-generated content which means that interactions play an essential role, and also, that organizations need to create content that attracts and retains users of their pages. (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 20013: 46.)

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the used research design and research methodology are being addressed. This will explain the used methodological choices and show how research questions will be answered. Next, the data collection of the study is presented which will offer more clarification about the study. In the end, a discussion about validity and reliability of this research is made.

3.1 Research design and methodology

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) define research design as a general plan of how you will go about answering your research question(s). They mention three classifications of research purpose: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory, or the combinations of these three studies (136-139). Robson (2002: 59) says exploratory study is a valuable means of finding out “what is happening; to seek new insights, to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light”. Whereas descriptive study is “to portray an accurate profile of persons, events, or situations” (2002: 59) and explanatory study establish causal relationship between variables and the emphasis here is on studying a situation or a problem in order to explain the relationships between variables (Saunders et al. 2009: 140). As this thesis studies co-creation in social media and the focus is on universities and students this study can be said to be mainly exploratory study but also, some explanatory elements are present.

Regarding study design, study methods play an essential role too; and quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods represent the three different movements of research methods (Venkatesh, Brown & Bala 2013: 22). Quantitative is the oldest method that offers objective results because of the numerical result(s) that researchers cannot affect. The results compare the relationship and differences between at least two different variables (Vilkka 2007: 13 - 14). In contrast to this method, in 1960's the qualitative research method started to gain more popularity. The qualitative research method offers non-numerical, but explanations and understanding of a certain phenomenon. Interviews, case studies, online research and non-participant observed studies are examples of different approaches that can be used in this research method. The main purpose of qualitative study is to explain and offer insights into certain phenomena that were studied (Tucker, Powell & Meyer

1998: 383 – 387; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008.) The last research method, mixed methods approach, includes both quantitative and qualitative data collection and data analysis at the same time or one after other. However, all the data are analyzed by using the chosen method's data analyzing methods (Saunders et al. 2009: 152 - 153). To meet the purpose and meaning of this study this paper uses qualitative research method. By using qualitative research method it is possible to describe and gain insights about the studied phenomenon of this thesis: co-creating value in social media.

Wolcott argues that experiencing, enquiring, and examining are the three ways to make qualitative research, and the strategies are the following: Non-participant observation strategies, Participant observation strategies, Interview strategies, and archival strategies. Silverman says that different methods to do qualitative research can be interviews, observation, textual data, and visual materials (2008: 77 – 93), also, online data like for example blogs and other information on the Internet are more and more essential in today's business researches (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 103 – 110). Online research is one way to do qualitative research because it is possible to research organizations' websites, blogs, and diaries. By researching external network pages it is possible to study interactions between organization and consumers (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 96 – 102). To gain the best possible understanding of co-creation of value in social media, interviews and online data research methods are chosen for this study. With these two methods it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon than by using just one method.

Like mentioned above, interview strategies are one way to make qualitative research to gather valid and reliable data to answer your research question and objectives (Wolcott 2000: 90; Saunders et al. 1997: 318). In qualitative research interviews can be structured and standardized, guided and semi-structured, or unstructured, informal, open and narrative interviews. Qualitative research questions are mainly 'what' and 'how' questions but the structure and content varies by chosen type of interview. Structured and standardized questions are mainly 'what' questions for all participants, and guided and semi-structured question are 'how' and 'what' questions around a certain topic or theme. The last option, unstructured and open questions has the freedom to move in any direction and has both, 'what' and 'how' questions. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 78 – 83.) All together, qualitative interviews have 'open-ended' questions that are used to small samples to gain needed data for the research made (Silverman 200: 88 - 89). To get valid and useful data to answer this paper's research question and sub-questions, the semi-structured interview method was chosen and used.

3.2 Data collection

To gain wide understanding of Finnish master's degree programs' current place and actions toward co-creation of value in social media, two data collection methods were chosen in this study. Primary data was collected through interviews of students who had started their master's studies in the past two years, and interviews of Finnish master's degree programs' Facebook page administrators. Secondary data was collected online from Facebook and universities' websites, to gain a wider perspective of the phenomenon.

Interviews were done by random selection of students, who had started their studies in the past two years in Finnish university in the field of business, and to Finnish master's degree programs' Facebook pages' administrators. All of the interviewed students were from the generation Y which offered more value for this research. Interviews were held via phone and each person was interviewed individually. All interviewees received the research topic and questions before hand so they were able to get familiar with the questions and understand the research topic, and the value of the interviews. Interview details are presented in two tables (see table 4 and table 5) to offer more information about the interviews.

Table 4. Students' interview details.

Interviewee	Starting year of studies	Date of the interview	Interview style	Duration	Language interview was conducted in
STUDENT 1	2015	17.01.2016	Phone	22min	Finnish
STUDENT 2	2015	20.01.2016	Phone	15min	Finnish
STUDENT 3	2014	28.01.2016	Phone	16min	Finnish
STUDENT 4	2014	29.01.2016	Phone	17min	Finnish
STUDENT 5	2015	01.02.2016	Phone	15min	Finnish
STUDENT 6	2015	02.02.2016	Phone	20min	Finnish

Table 5. Universities' Facebook page administrators' interview details.

Interviewee	Position	Date of the interview	Interview style	Duration	Language interview was conducted in
ADMINISTRATOR 1	Student	17.01.2016	Phone	22min	Finnish
ADMINISTRATOR 2	Program director	20.01.2016	Phone	18min	Finnish
ADMINISTRATOR 3	Student	28.01.2016	Phone	20min	English
ADMINISTRATOR 4	Education coordinator	29.01.2016	Phone	17min	Finnish

All the interviews were conducted between January and February of 2016 at arranged times which were discussed beforehand with all interviewees via email. This made it possible to have a relaxed and unhurried environment to gain quality answers and a full understanding of each interview that was held. Interviews were held predominantly in Finnish, but one interview was held in English that was the only common language that allowed dialogue with the chosen administrator. All the interviewed people and their answers are handled as anonymous in this thesis, because of the request of the interviewees. Because of this, all the data from the interviews were treated in confidence. Based on the theory and findings online, semi-structured interview questions were created for administrators and students, who are the potential users of these sites, to gain better understanding of the current phase of co-creation actions in social media (see appendix 2 and 3).

In addition to data collected through interviews, data was collected from websites and Facebook to gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon of co-creation of value in social media. This data was used to see how Prahalad and Ramaswamy's four building blocks of co-creation of value are being utilized currently in the context of universities

and students in Finland. By using this data, this research was able to have important additional data along with the interviews of students and administrators of universities' programs' Facebook pages. The four building blocks; dialogue, access, transparency, and risk-benefits; were the areas that were studied online. Access to information through Facebook was studied first, even before the interviews, because this way it was possible to see and study how many master's degree programs are on Facebook and how they can be found. Second, transparency of the information shared on found Facebook pages was studied. Facebook walls, having a public or closed page, and information shared on these pages generally were studied. Third, existence of dialogues and their progression on these Facebook pages was one studied area. Lastly, risk-benefits of students and universities regarding on being and co-creating value on Facebook was researched.

The primary data that was gathered through the interviews and the secondary data that was gathered online, offered a wide understanding of the phenomenon's current stage. By using these data collection methods it was possible to attain the best possible insights, and offer answers for the research question "how to co-create value in social media". However, during the data collection some difficulties faced made the process challenging. First, finding and measuring the existence of Finnish master's degree programs in English in business on Facebook was challenging because of the naming of these pages. Only couple of the programs had mentioned these pages on their websites but otherwise I needed to use my own skills to try to find possible existing pages on Facebook. This can affect to the gathered data because it is possible that there are more Facebook pages existing that were not found during the data research. Second, I did not receive response to some of my interview requests sent via email (see appendix 1), not even when I tried to reach them second time. Also, because some master's degree programs were going to close down the program's Facebook page, a couple of the potential interviewees from universities did not want to take part in this study to share the reasons and experiences. Because of these mentioned reasons the number of interviewees from universities was not as high as anticipated. Third, many found Facebook pages seemed to be unofficial which also was lower than anticipated.

To sum up, data gathered from the interviews and online is analyzed in the upcoming chapter. Data from the interviews is analyzed by using direct quotes from the students or administrators. Used quotes are to help show the current situation of the phenomenon and also, to show how similar or different comments interviewees gave to same questions. Different quotes and individuals are marked after each used quote, for example as Student 1 or Administrator 1, to show who provided the used comment. Used quotes can be partly

fixed on their linguistic form so they can be understood correctly by everyone. The secondary data gathered from online is used as support next to the primary data from the interviews.

3.3 Validity and reliability

The factors of validity and reliability play essential roles in gaining a good research status. It is said that validity and reliability attempt to guarantee the quality throughout the whole research (Saunders et al. 2009: 156 – 157). No matter if the study is quantitative or qualitative these two factors need to be guiding the making of the study. Some scholars hold the view that the concerns towards observations of reliability and validity only can arise within the quantitative studies, while many other scholars think that without showing reliable procedures and valid conclusions in any kind of research done there is little point to even make a research dissertation. (Silverman 2000: 175 – 188; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 290 - 294.)

Reliability tells about consistency to gain same or similar results by different observers or by the same observer on changed occasions (Silverman 2000: 175 – 188), and reliability was achieved in this study in many ways. Firstly, research of the topic was reviewed well in the literature review. Second, all the interviews were recorded and written down on a paper for later data analysis. Thirdly, all the secondary data was documented throughout the process. Gathering information through multiple ways in qualitative research method, like for example through interviews and data collection online, it is possible to describe and understand phenomenon's current stage (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 5; Tucker, Powell & Meyer 1998: 383 – 387). To understand value co-creation in context of university and students, interview questions were semi structured questions about the research topic so the information was useful and met the need of this research. To gain the best possible knowledge about the phenomenon, information was also gathered online from universities' websites and from Facebook. With the combination of interviews of individuals and online data research, the description of the phenomenon's current stage was higher in quality.

Validity is essential in good research, because it measures if the research findings are accurate, to explain and reflect the phenomenon of the study. The role differs between

quantitative and qualitative studies, because this study was a qualitative study, it is important that the findings address the phenomenon they are supposed to measure. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). Also, validity can be said to be another word for truth (Silverman 2000: 175 – 188), and it was achieved in many ways in this study. First, interviews used semi-structured questions which were about the research topic represented in the literature review. This way collected data answered and explained the studied phenomenon. Second, all the interviewed people were from studied focus groups so the findings described the studied phenomenon. Thirdly, to gain better knowledge about the phenomenon, online data was collected from universities' websites, but mainly, from universities' programs' Facebook pages. This way this study was able to gain better knowledge about the phenomenon.

4. UNIVERSITIES' CO-CREATION OF VALUE ON FACEBOOK

In the following chapter the empirical results from the interviews of students and administrators of master's degree programs' Facebook pages, as well as, the results gathered online from Facebook and universities' websites are presented and discussed. The results are presented by using the main themes of the literature review: dialogue, access, risk-benefit, and transparency. The empirical results aim to show where the co-creation of value in social media is, at the moment, in university context, and also insights to enhance universities' value co-creation process in social media. However, before the empirical results of the four building blocks, the results regarding master's degree programs are presented.

4.1 Master's degree programs in Finland

There are 323 different master's degree programs in English in Finland (11/2015) and 69 of them are in the field of business and management according to the website www.Mastersportal.eu that has listed available master's degree programs worldwide. By going through the websites of each university the result of 69 master's degree programs in Finland conducted in English was verified. Master's degree programs in English were chosen for this research because of the language used in this study. To reduce the amount of programs, only 38 of these were chosen because all of them are master's in science programs in the faculty of business, and because they are programs in universities, and not in universities of applied sciences (see figure 6). This thesis is made for the faculty of business which affected the motivation to study master's degree programs in business. Moreover, the research was done using 10 different universities' and their 38 master's degree programs in English in business.

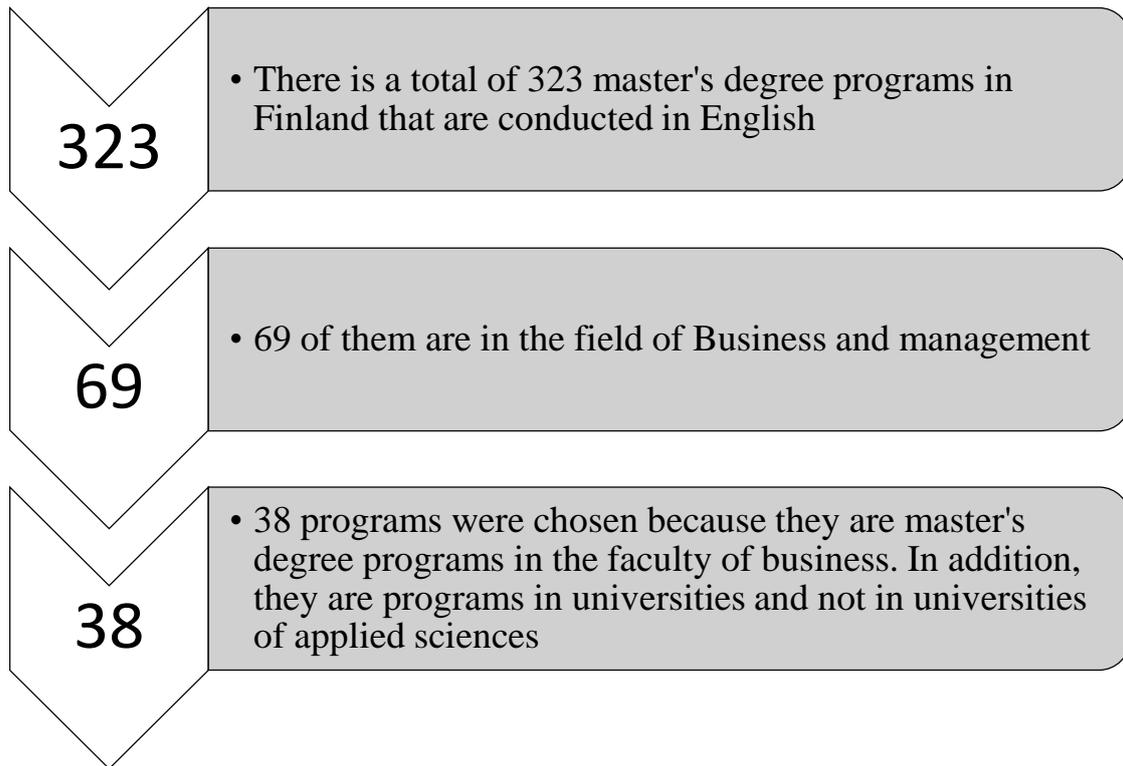


Figure 6. Studied master's degree programs.

All interviewed administrators are from the 38 studied programs, which offer better capture of the studied topic. The chosen social media site in this study is Facebook, because of its large volume of users and great possibilities for interactions. Also, empirical results showed that Facebook was the only common social media site that all of the interviewees are utilizing at the moment. Students' reasons to use Facebook were because their friends are there, it offers multiple ways to interact in one place, and it offers a lot of important and current information and news. Administrators' reasons were similar to students', and they are using Facebook because it is a widely used channel that allows the reach of wide number of people, it allows multiple ways to share information, and interestingly they said that if you are not on Facebook you are behind others. These results show that Facebook is a social media site that master's degree programs should utilize because it is an excellent channel to reach students and individuals, and it offers an excellent value co-creation space.

Based on the research done on universities' websites and their master's degree programs' Facebook pages it seems that only small number of Finnish master's degree programs in

English in business are utilizing Facebook for value co-creation at the moment. The next subchapters will show the results and discuss how the four building blocks of interactions are utilized on master's degree programs' Facebook pages to show the essential factors and insights in value co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004a; 2004c). The four building blocks are discussed in the following order: dialogue, access, transparency, and risk-benefits.

4.2 Dialogue

Dialogue is one of the four building blocks that plays an essential role in value co-creation. Through dialogue consumers are able to share, offer, and get valuable information between them and a firm, among other consumers and between other organizations. Dialogue offers firms possibilities to have co-creating experiences of value with consumers (Ramaswamy 2008: 9 -11).

Online research showed that existing official or unofficial master's degree programs' pages on Facebook barely have any dialogue among the users, or between users and administrator of the page. The data gathered online and through interviews supports this result. When asking about dialogues, all the received comments were the following:

"...I read university's updates so that I know what is happening but I do not communicate there at all"

- Student 4

"...I have not posted comments or shared anything on universities' Facebook pages."

- Student 2

"... Facebook has not been as interactive as we first thought. "

-Administrator 2

“...Unfortunately we have few interactions on our Facebook page. Sometimes we get a couple of comments, but mainly people just like our updates.”

-Administrator 4

Students having dialogue on degree programs' Facebook page is not something that they prefer to do. Instead of using Facebook to have dialogue, students prefer the old ways of communication with their degree programs, for example using email or having face-to-face meetings. There were no significant differences in administrators' answers regarding the existence of dialogue, because they did not see Facebook as an interactive forum to have dialogue.

However, many of these Facebook pages had a small amount of commenting, but most of the comments seen on these pages were only short compliments about published achievements of university or students, like the Figure 7 shows below. The majority of comments on these pages were not interactive and dialogue did not exist.

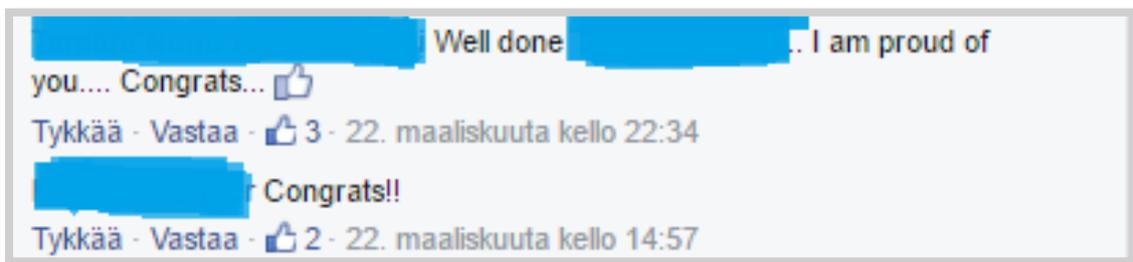


Figure 7. Sample of received comments on Facebook.

However, when asked about the willingness to have dialogue on Facebook, both students and administrators showed interest. Most of the administrators think that they need more communication, and that better communication would offer better value for all stakeholders. When asking about dialogues from students, the main reason why they are not having dialogues on these Facebook pages is because they do not think it is valuable to anyone. Students find it easier to not comment than to comment, because they are unsure if they are expected to comment, and because of that they do not want to be the first to make a

comment. Students said that they could have dialogues on these pages but currently they do not think that it is what is wanted from them nor it is valuable for anyone. The comment below illustrates well the students' point of view according dialogues on these pages:

“... I follow my university's Facebook sites but I do not post there because I do not feel that it is needed or valuable to anyone”

- Student 3

Administrators of these Facebook pages seemed to have issues with how to make changes to the current situation of dialogue that they do not really have. The main issues said according the lack of dialogue on the Facebook page were that they do not have enough time, resources or know-how. Interestingly, the reasons regarding the lack of dialogues differentiated between student administrators and other administrators. Student administrators said that they do not have enough time or resources, but the other administrators who were not students, said that they do not have enough resources or know-how. The significant difference of these results is between the know-how and time, and similarity is the lack of resources.

In addition, another difference between student administrators and other administrators was regarding private messaging on these Facebook pages. Both student administrators said that they have received private messages when the other administrators whom were not students said that they have received none. Also, when talking about having dialogue on master's degree programs' Facebook pages, all of the students said that they could see themselves interacting more on these pages if the administrator would be a student which would make discussion easier and more comfortable for them. As one interviewee said:

“...my interactions depend on the administrator of the page. I would feel more comfortable if one or the only administrator was a student.”

-Student 4

To sum up, master's degree programs are barely having dialogue on their Facebook pages at the moment. One reason is that students do not feel that their interactions toward dialogues would be appreciated or valuable. Another reason is that students would prefer to have dialogues only with other students rather than other administrators who are not students, because it would make them feel more comfortable and it would lower their boundaries to interact.

4.3 Access

Access plays an essential role in co-creation of value, because without access it is difficult to have dialogue, and also transparency of information is difficult without access. Like mentioned before, access allows meaningful dialogue which createa value for all stakeholders (Prahalad & Ramaswamy c2004: 9; Ind et al. 2013: 9 - 10). Social networks, such as Facebook, can function as an arena where organizations and customers interact and co-create value with each other, and offers universities a valuable platform to interact with their customers, but without access for users co-creation of value is impossible (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013: 46).

Access is an essential building block to be successful on co-creation of value, and that is why this study starts its research with the accessibility of universities Facebook pages. Based on the findings made during the study all of the 10 studied universities have general Facebook pages, and they can be found and joined easily. In addition, all of the universities' websites had some kind of logo or portal to their existing Facebook page which made accessing these Facebook pages even easier (see table 6). However, when it came to the universities' master's degree program Facebook pages the story differentiated (see table 7 below). Only five different programs had guidance from the program's website to their official Facebook page. When taking into account that 38 programs were studied, and there are only five official pages on Facebook, that is about 13% of the total number of programs that have the opportunity to utilize Facebook in the co-creation of value process. In contrast, 12 unofficial pages show that there is a need and/or will for official Facebook pages what universities are not utilizing this opportunity to help value creation. Also, based on the empirical research made, 21 of 38 programs or 55% do not have unofficial or official pages on Facebook at the moment. Based on these findings the access to master's degree programs pages on Facebook is limited at the moment.

Table 6. Studied universities and their existence on Facebook.

Number of studied Universities	Number of these universities existence on Facebook	Number of universities' that has guidance on their websites to Facebook
10	10	10

Table 7. Studied master's programs and their existence on Facebook.

Number of studied programs	Number of programs that have unofficial or official Facebook page	Number of programs that have guidance on university's website to their Facebook page
38	17	5

One reoccurring finding about accessing these master's programs Facebook pages was that it was a fairly difficult task to do. A couple of these pages were found through universities' general Facebook pages, but most of them took a lot of time trying multiple name combinations to find the pages. By using this method some pages were found but the real number of existing Facebook pages is unknown, because it is possible that the right combination of names was not found during the search. Finding all of the 17 unofficial or official Facebook pages was a difficult task to accomplish which also shows that accessing master's degree programs' Facebook pages is not easy. Based on this research, limited access of master's degree programs' Facebook pages affect students' capability of accessing information about the programs on Facebook before and during studies. Another finding that came along during empirical research, done on Facebook, was that there are a lot of unofficial pages and that there is a need to have more official pages. In addition, even though there was access to these pages some of them did not have interactions at all. Some of the pages have not been updated in the last 1-3 years which can mean that they do not offer any kind of value for users or then only a small amount, because the information is not up to date and interactions do not currently exist. Also, when contacting universities about having an interview about their master's degree program's Facebook page, I received two answers which said that they do not have a person anymore who

takes care of the page and they are planning to close the pages down. The reason behind this was that they do not have enough resources. So based on this knowledge, students can have access to these pages and are able to read and follow them, but it does not mean that the pages are taken care of or that they will offer value that is needed.

To summarize, there are several things that affect value co-creation on Facebook with the help of access. First, the existence of master's degree programs on Facebook is low, especially the number of official pages. Second, accessing these existing official or unofficial Facebook pages is difficult because of the naming of these pages. Third, there can be access to master's degree programs' Facebook pages but however, it does not mean that they are taken care of. The main reasons behind this kind of actions were lack of resources or time, or because of unknown reasoning. All of these reasons effect access and the successful co-creation of value.

4.4 Transparency

Transparency of information is one of the key elements in successful value co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004c: 9). Today, consumers have become more capable, more knowledgeable, and more demanding than before which adds pressure on sharing more and more information (Wikström 1996: 359 – 372), because consumers want to be able to make informed choices (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004a: 8). Hence, transparency of information is important, because without it consumers cannot have needed information that helps them to make informed choices. Also, because of a growing number of social media users, companies must understand to offer enough information on the social media channels that they are using.

Empirical results show that the information shared and given on these Facebook pages is rather limited. All the students said that Facebook does not offer enough information and because of that they still mainly use the universities' websites and email to get needed information regarding programs. Direct quotes from the students show clearly that these Facebook pages do not offer enough value for them:

”...I don't think that Facebook offers enough beneficial information for me”

-Student 1

“...my program’s updates and information given are too general and about upcoming events. They do not offer enough information on Facebook”

-Student 6

“... I cannot get all the needed information from these Facebook pages”

-Student 5

One reason for this is that updates on these Facebook pages are mainly about upcoming events and important news about success or rewards that university have received. So these updates do not offer the transparency that is needed in the value co-creation process. Administrators said that they are using Facebook as a way to inform students about upcoming events or important news regarding the major or university. Interestingly, administrators did not see Facebook as a place where they could offer all information needed, or then once again they did not have enough time or resources to do that. Administrators seem to see Facebook as a place where they only inform students about topics they think are important:

“...we mainly write updates about upcoming events. I would like to do more but I do not have enough time”

-Administrator 2

“...we update about everything that is important for prospective and current students. Facebook is mostly a channel where we inform students about important things.”

-Administrator 3

All of the administrators said that they always offer needed information for individuals on Facebook if they receive messages or comments. However, because these pages barely have any dialogue or any kind of messaging, offering students needed information on Facebook does not happen often. In addition, some of the students said that they could see themselves using Facebook to find information regarding their program if these Facebook pages would offer more information.

In addition, next to updates, master's degree programs on Facebook do not offer much information about the program or university. However, all the official sites and most of the unofficial ones offer a link to their programs' website, which again forces individuals to get their information from somewhere else.

Altogether, transparency of master's degree programs' Facebook pages is low. Existing official or unofficial pages do not offer much information for users, and updates are mainly about upcoming events or news about the university or the program. All interviewed students agreed that Facebook does not offer enough value regarding their major, and that they still have to use other channels to get needed information. Also, administrators interestingly see Facebook as a place where they only inform students and users about things that they think are important. They do not feel that there is a need to have more information on Facebook.

4.5 Risk-Benefit

Dialogue, access, and transparency improve students' assessment of the risk-benefits of his/her decision (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013: 51). These three blocks affect to consumers risks and benefits, because through these three blocks organizations and firms are able to co-develop trust through dialogue and co-develop public and private policy choices through transparency (Prahalad & Ramaswamy a2004; Prahalad & Ramaswamy c2004). Universities should use social media sites like Facebook to help prospective and current students in their problematic situations, and also, to have co-creation experiences which would lower universities' and students' risks and would raise the number of benefits (Fagerstrom & Ghinea 2013: 51).

When asked if these Facebook pages offer value for master's degree programs or for students, the answers were not transparent. All interviewed students agreed that these Facebook pages do not offer them value at the moment, but answers from administrators varied. Direct quotes of administrators can be read below:

“...we get value from being on Facebook. Facebook connects students and people together”

-Administrator 3

“...Facebook is a good place to reach and share important information with students. However, we should be more active on there, but my time and our resources to do so are not enough.”

–Administrator 4

“...Facebook definitely offers value for us. I feel that we would suffer if we would not be there. Through Facebook we can reach and inform students.”

–Administrator 2

Existing master’s degree program pages on Facebook seem to bring value and benefits for the programs, but students do not seem to get benefits at the moment. Also, empirical results show that they do not lower risks of students or master’s degree programs because of the following reasons:

“...shared information is really general and there is no communication. I prefer other ways to connect with my university and program because of these reasons.”

–Student 5

Based on the results of the three building blocks of dialogue, access, and transparency, risks are higher for students and master’s degree programs at the moment than benefits. All four building blocks are not utilized well at the moment, which affects risks and benefits. Interestingly, both students and administrators can see and understand what kind of value Facebook pages of master’s degree programs can offer them and that steps need to be taken so these pages are more beneficial for everyone.

Altogether, students and administrators who utilize master’s degree programs’ Facebook pages have more risks than benefits. These Facebook pages are not currently offering enough value especially for students, or master’s degree programs. All the four building blocks of value co-creation need better utilization and understanding. Universities need to take steps toward successful value co-creation so the risks can be lowered and benefits raised.

4.6 Summary of empirical results

Empirical results help to get a broad picture of the studied phenomenon together with the literature review. The main results of co-creation of value in social media in university context can be seen in table 8, where they are categorized inside the four building blocks of value co-creation.

Table 8. The main empirical results of the research

THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH	
DIALOGUE	ACCESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor existence of dialogue between students and universities, or among users on Facebook pages - Not enough steps taken toward existence of dialogue by universities - Students feel that dialogue with them is not valuable + Administrators understand the need for dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor existence of official Facebook pages - Accessing existing official or unofficial pages is challenging - Having access does not guarantee value co-creation + All found official pages have guidance to master's degree program's website
TRANSPARENCY	RISK-BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor amount of shared information on Facebook - Updates do not offer enough information + Administrators understand the need to share more meaningful information for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No actions taken toward lowering risks - Students do not feel comfortable with interaction - Students do not gain value from these Facebook pages + Administrators see and understand the possible benefits that Facebook can offer for all users + Administrators feel that Facebook offers value for the programs

5. CONCLUSIONS

The following chapter will present and discuss the conclusions which are shaped by the literature review and empirical results presented in the previous chapters. This thesis aims to offer insights in co-creation of value in social media in university context, because of the increased attention to co-creation of value in social media and universities' utilization of social media to reach generation Y. Based on earlier studies and raised attention to this topic, this study is current and offers valuable findings. This chapter presents the main findings, managerial implications, and in the end, recommendations and ideas for further studies are presented.

5.1 The main findings

The main research question to be answered in this study is:

- **What is essential for co-creation of value in social media in university context?**

To offer the best possible answers to the research question, two sub-questions were created. The two sub-questions are the following:

1. *What factors affect to co-creation of value in social media?*
2. *How can universities enhance their value co-creation actions in social media?*

To offer clear answers for all of the research questions, they are answered one at a time. This way the empirical results and earlier literature in the field can be combined and used to offer comprehensive answers. To answer the main research question comprehensively, the two sub-questions are answered first.

What factors affect co-creation of value in social media in university context?

Due to interactions between firms and consumers, earlier literature has presented the DART model by Prahalad and Ramaswamy that includes four building blocks of value co-creation. Earlier literature shows the importance of the four building blocks of dialogue, access, risk-benefits, and transparency which play essential roles in creation of quality and successful interactions between a firm and consumers in co-creation of value. In addition, through these four building blocks, value can be created for all stakeholders, even for ones who want to take part in interactions passively, in so called value co-creation space.

Next to the literature review, empirical results show that the four building blocks are essential factors in co-creation of value in social media in university context. Like earlier literature has showed, the four building blocks help to build a system to have co-creating experiences, because without direct interactions between students and university, value cannot be co-created. Also, empirical results made in this study show that lack of utilization of these building blocks has a negative effect on value co-creation in social media in university context. This proves the importance of these factors in co-creation of value in social media; because by meaningful dialogue, by providing access to a place, by lowering risks and raising benefits, and by offering important information, successful co-creation of value is possible in social media. These factors allow value creation in a new way where both university and students are active players, and focus is on experience networks rather than supply and demand.

How universities can enhance co-creation of value on Facebook?

Universities' master's degree programs need to re-think their Facebook actions, so value can be co-created, and all mentioned four building blocks of dialogue, access, risk-benefits, and transparency can be utilized better.

The four building blocks are essential to successful value co-creation in social media, and the results show the lack of their utilization on master's degree programs' Facebook pages could be the reason why co-creation of value is rather limited. First, accessing studied master's degree programs' Facebook pages is rather limited, because of the lack of these

pages' existence. In addition, accessing some of the existing unofficial pages was challenging, because of the naming of these pages made it difficult to find them. Second, the existence of dialogue on master's degree programs' Facebook pages is low or not existing. Reasons for this can be in issues on accessing, or in the quality of updates that did not seem to please students' needs. Also, students feel that their interactions toward dialogue is not needed or wanted, and because of that they are not utilizing Facebook as a communication channel between them and the university. Third, transparency of information is not at a level that allows students to make informed choices which is essential in value co-creation. Students and administrators agree that pages are not currently offering enough information. Fourth, when thinking about the balance of risks and benefits regarding master's degree programs' Facebook pages, it seems that administrators are the only ones who gain some form of value. All of the students however feel that these Facebook pages do not offer them any kind of value.

Findings show that enough work for having dialogues, or especially for having meaningful dialogues is not done, and because of this, updates and communication on the behalf of the university need to be changed. Universities need to encourage students to join and have dialogue with them, because currently they seem to not understand that, that is what is wanted from them. Also, universities need to understand their role in dialogue and the importance of their activeness on them. Through active dialogue with prospective and current students universities are able to create value for all stakeholders who are interested in their master's degree programs. Also, the quality of shared information, especially regarding updates needs to be broader to create value for students, but mainly, so that co-creation of value through interactions would happen.

In addition, empirical results show that there is a need for younger administrators who know how social media, and especially Facebook, works. Students found it easier to communicate and interact with other students rather than with other administrators from the university, because this way they would feel a closer relationship with administrators. Using students as administrators could be a potential way to be successful on Facebook, because most likely they will be from generation Y whom technological competence is excellent. This way, students would feel more comfortable to interact when they know that administrators are students like them.

To summarize, Facebook offers a good space for co-creation of value online, that universities are not utilizing. The existence of Facebook pages by Finnish master's degree programs in English must be higher so that university and student will have an access to co-

creation space. Next, administrators of these pages must pay attention to active and meaningful dialogue with student. Also, information shared on Facebook through updates needs more attention, because students do not currently gain enough value from them and they also affect students' willingness to have dialogue with university. And lastly, steps to lower risks need to be taken, because at the moment there seem to be more risks than benefits for master's degree programs and students.

What is essential for co-creation of value in social media in university context?

As mentioned in the literature review, the best fitting definition for co-creation to meet the purpose of this paper is the following: "*An active and social process where all; firm, consumers and stakeholders, gain value through firm and consumers interactions*". Like many authors in the field have written, co-creation is an active and social process where value is created together.

Value creation has changed, and consumers are seen as active players in the value creation process. Behind the changes in value creation is a service-dominant logic that universities need to understand. All individuals have a valuable role in this process, and together, university and students are able to create better value for everyone through interactions in a co-creation space, such as Facebook. However, to understand the value creation together through interactions there are certain factors that need to be taken into account.

Earlier studies has shown that unique and quality interactions between a firm and consumers are essential for co-creation of value in social media. Earlier literature showed the four building blocks of co-creation of value which are dialogue, access, risk-benefits, and transparency, are essential interactions. Also, empirical results showed the importance of these four interactions which able successful value co-creation for all stakeholders. However, if universities are utilizing the four building blocks, it does not mean that the interactions are successful. Co-creation of value needs to be an active and social process which needs both universities and students' effort, but universities must remember to encourage students to interact with them. Also, offering a place to have meaningful dialogue and sharing valuable information, master's degree programs are able to lower their and students risks.

5.2 Managerial implications

Few managerial implications can be highlighted from the results and findings of this thesis regarding the co-creation of value in social media in university context. First, this study shows suggestions about the factors that need to be taken into account in a successful co-creation of value process in social media. Universities can use the results and findings regarding the four building blocks to enhance their current actions or to start co-creation of value in social media. Also, the role of generation Y and their meaning in use of social media are brought up to help universities understand and acknowledge their existence in today's world.

Altogether, this research helps universities see the changes in the role of today's consumers and how value should be created, especially with people from generation Y. Insights about the role of consumers and changes in the value creation process are presented to offer insights about the new direction of co-creation of value.

This research offers help not only to universities, but also, for all companies on how to utilize social media in the value co-creation process. Most of all, this thesis offers essential insights for all companies about utilizing social media to co-create value for and with all stakeholders with the help of the four building blocks of dialogue, access, risk-benefits, and transparency which are essential in successful value co-creation process.

5.3 Limitations and recommendations for future research

Some limitations occurred during the process of this research. Empirical data collection was limited to Finnish universities' master's programs in English in the field of business, so the results and findings, may not be applicable to other master's programs in Finland or abroad. In addition, the number of interviewees was relatively small, as well as, the gathered data online, because of the lack of data to be collected the results in this research cannot be generalized.

Few recommendations for future research came during the making of this research. Today authors and researchers seem to be more interested in co-creating value in social media, because of generation Y and people's active use of social media. Co-creating value in social media offers many ideas for future research. First, it would be interesting to carry

out research about co-creation of value in social media in different social media channels rather than focusing only on one social media channel. Second, it would be interesting to conduct research about co-creation of value in social media with older generations because they seem to have less knowledge and experience with social media. Third, studying companies who utilize social media successfully in co-creation of value would offer valuable knowledge for companies who are starting to use social media or who are struggling with the use of social media to co-create value.

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Additional references

Some references are not mentioned in the list above, because the administrators preferred to stay anonymous. The used references not mentioned in the list above are the following:

Websites of studied universities (2016)

Facebook pages of Finnish universities' master's degree programs in English (2016)

APPENDIX 1. Cover letter requesting an interview with an administrator.

Hi,

My name is Johanna Peltomäki and I am a student from the University of Vaasa. I am writing my master's thesis about co-creating value in social media where I study universities' and students' current value co-creation on Facebook. I would be interested to interview the person who takes care of your XXXXXXXX program's Facebook page. Interview would happen through a phone and it would take maximum of 20 minutes. Hopefully I could interview this person in the end of January or in the beginning of February. Questions will be sent beforehand which offer opportunity to see what kind of information I need to know for my thesis.

I hope this interview can be organized and I will get valuable information for my work. Thank you for reading my message.

Best Regards,

Johanna Peltomäki

Student from the University of Vaasa

APPENDIX 2. Interview questions for Students.

1. What social media sites are you using and how often?
2. Why are you using social media?
3. Why, or why not, are you following your university's/ your program's Facebook page(s)?
4. From where do you search information about universities and their master's programs? Why?
5. What do you think about universities' current use and updates on Facebook? Why?
6. How do you interact with your university/ master's programs Facebook site? Why?
7. What do you think about Facebook being a communication channel between students and university instead of email and meetings?
8. What do you think about asking and talking about different topics in your universities' Facebook pages? Why?
9. How did Facebook help you to make a decision where to apply? Why is that?
10. Now as a student, does your university or your program offer you value on Facebook?
11. What things would you change that use of Facebook would help in co-creation of value?

APPENDIX 3. Interview questions for universities.

1. Why are you using social media?
2. Why are you on Facebook?
3. To whom are your sites for? (Current students, new student, for everyone?)
4. How do you guide people to your Facebook page?
5. What are the reasons to keep the site open/ closed for public?
6. What kind of information/updates do you share on Facebook? Why?
7. What kind of information do you not share on Facebook? Why not?
8. How do you interact with users/visitors?
9. How often your Facebook page receives comments or questions?
10. How often do you answer comments and/or questions? And how quickly?
11. What kind of value Facebook offers to you?
12. What would you change/improve so that co-creation of value would be better on Facebook?