Henna Järvi

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT, A FRIEND OR A FOE?
INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND
VALUE CO-DESTRUCTION
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INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND VALUE CO-DESTRUCTION

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Abstract

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Customer engagement has become a central issue in academic and managerial communities because it enables the relationship between a firm and a customer to evolve to a personal level. Customer engagement refers to the intensity of customers’ participation in and connection with an organisation’s offerings or organisational activities, and it is manifested affectively, cognitively, socially, or behaviourally. Customer engagement can offer numerous benefits for firms and customers, and in line with this, previous research has investigated the positive outcomes of customer engagement and how customer engagement can result in value co-creation. However, the literature also indicates that this might not always be the case. Only a few studies have addressed the negative impacts of customer engagement, namely value co-destruction instead of co-creation. This was the initial assumption adopted by the author of this thesis, and in line with this assumption, this thesis explores how customer engagement can influence the manifestation of value co-destruction.

This thesis adopted the qualitative research approach, and the empirical data were obtained from 2 qualitative studies involving 31 interviews across 8 organisations, 15 reflective diaries from consumers, and 344 on-line hotel reviews. This thesis includes five publications, all of which investigate the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement or the antecedents of value co-destruction. The results of this thesis suggest that customer engagement can influence the manifestation of value co-destruction through firm-, joint-, and customer-originated reasons: the firm’s failure to serve customers (firm-originated), insufficient level of communication and turmoil in the relationship (joint-originated), and excessive or unjustified expectations and disruptive behaviour (customer-originated reasons). These reasons can be attributed to negative behaviour or provision of negative resources. In addition, the thesis unveiled the antecedents of customer engagement, positive outcomes of engagement, and the antecedents of value co-destruction, all of which either complement the relevant literature or offer novel insights into customer engagement or value co-destruction.

This thesis contributes to the customer engagement literature by identifying the antecedents and positive and negative outcomes of customer engagement across different relationships: business-to-consumer (B2C), business-to-business (B2B), and business-to-government (B2G). This multi-relationship approach is novel in the customer
engagement literature, which is heavily focused on B2C relationships. This thesis contributes to the value co-destruction literature by suggesting four larger antecedent categories to validate and expand the current understanding. Additionally, this thesis explores the temporality of value co-destruction and suggests that value co-destruction can be initiated before, during, or after interaction. Finally, the thesis contributes to the marketing literature by proposing five reasons why customer engagement influences value co-destruction. The marketing literature, in general, has focused on the positive outcomes of such relationships, and this thesis highlights that engagement and collaboration can have concrete negative outcomes. The main contribution of this thesis lies in exploring the dark side of customer engagement and suggesting how it can influence the manifestation of value co-destruction.

In addition to the theoretical contributions, this thesis has managerial relevance. Long-lasting and mutually beneficial customer relationships are crucial for firms, and this thesis offers insights into the different ways to achieve customer engagement as well as the benefits of customer engagement. Additionally, this thesis discusses how customer engagement can be negative and how, in general, collaboration between a firm and customers can result in negative outcomes instead of positive ones. Hence, this thesis offers insights for managers regarding the different actions and behaviours of firms or their customers that can have negative outcomes.

**Keywords**: Customer engagement, customer disengagement, marketing, negative customer engagement, script theory, service, service experience, theory of social exchange, value co-creation, value co-destruction
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Every journey has a beginning, a middle, and an end. When I started this doctoral dissertation journey, I was excited about what was to come, and I had no worries about the future. I wanted to learn and experience many things. This excitement was quickly replaced by the doctoral dissertation’s long middle part, also known as ‘the deep swamp of despair’. During this time, I could not see the beginning or the end; I only had the middle. I wished that this journey would end soon. After years of hard work, the end grew nearer. I was excited about the possibility of an end, but also terrified at the same time. Regardless of the tears I shed in this journey, it had become my home and it was time to say goodbye to my home. I was not sure if I was ready to part ways. Now that the end is here, and this journey is almost completed, I am ready to move on.

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Henna Järvi
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Helsinki, Finland
“Neo, sooner or later you are going to realise, just as I did, there is a difference between knowing the path and walking the path.”

Morpheus, The Matrix
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AUTHOR’S CONTRIBUTION

Publications I–III

The present author was the sole author and collected and analysed the data used in the publication.

Publication IV

The present author was responsible for designing the study and collecting and analysing the data and was responsible for writing the analysis and findings. The introduction, literature review, methodology and discussion were created in cooperation with the co-authors.

Publication V

The present author was responsible for designing the study and collecting and analysing the data and was responsible for writing the analysis and findings. The literature review and discussion were created in cooperation with the co-authors.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

Firms are increasingly focusing on building close and long-term relationships with their customers (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; van Doorn et al., 2010). Social media has enabled firms and customers to come closer than before, and firms can be part of customers’ everyday lives on a different level. This close connection enables firms to convey their message through brand strategies (Dube & Helkkula, 2015). Thus, customers are building close connections with firms or brands, which is referred to as customer engagement (van Doorn et al., 2010). Firms can involve their engaged customers in different co-creation projects and request feedback, which can build and foster engagement (e.g. Minkiewicz, Evans & Bridson, 2014). Hence, in order to achieve customer engagement, firms must be aware of how and in what ways they need to interact with their customers.

Academic discussions on customer engagement have been abundant and lively, and multiple authors have recognised the importance of companies understanding the benefits of customer engagement (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Vivek, Beatty & Morgan, 2012). Customer engagement is defined as a “customer’s behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers” (van Doorn et al., 2010, p.254). Customer engagement occurs when a customer desires to be connected to a particular firm or brand (Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold & Carlson, 2017). It is a larger phenomenon than a single experience through the use of services and products, and it entails behavioural manifestations, such as speaking about a company’s offerings on social media or protesting publicly against a company (Harmeling et al., 2017; Minkiewicz et al., 2014). However, firms need to be aware of how to engage their customers in order to create long-lasting relationships. Some customers are engaged because of suitable and quality services, whilst others are truly seeking an emotional connection with firms (Bijmolt et al., 2010; Kunz et al., 2017). Firms need to identify the reasons why different customers engage to establish long-lasting engagement.

Once customer engagement is established, it can lead to positive outcomes for the customer and firm (Bowden, Gabbott & Naumann, 2014; Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Islam and Rahman, 2016). The positive outcomes for the customers are, for example, a feeling of belonging through a co-creative project and receiving new products and services before they are launched in the market (Beckers, van Doorn & Verhoef, 2016; Brodie, Hollekeek, Juric & Ilic, 2011; Gummerus, Liljander & Pihlström, 2012). For firms, customer engagement can be a source of competitive advantage (e.g. Islam & Rahman, 2016) because engagement facilitates a close relationship between the firm and the customer. Engaged customers are more likely to promote a firm’s products and services and offer more feedback at quantitative and qualitative levels than non-engaged customers (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Kumar et al., 2010). These actions are also known as customer engagement behaviours (Van Doorn et al., 2010). When customers express these behaviours, they are offering resources for firms, such as information and status.
(Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). These resources, alongside the nature of engagement, link customer engagement to value co-creation (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014).

The results of customer engagement might not always be positive, as engagement can lead to negative outcomes for the customer, the firm, or both. However, this facet of engagement has remained relatively unexplored in the current literature (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Islam & Rahman, 2016). For example, word-of-mouth (WOM) can be negative, resulting in damaging consequences for a firm’s image (Kumar et al., 2010; Sparks, So & Bradley, 2016). On the other hand, a firm can have a close relationship with a customer, but the customer may only focus on monetary benefits of the engagement (Bijmolt et al., 2010; Kunz et al., 2017). Thus, the firm experiences the customer’s opportunistic behaviour (Harmeling et al., 2017). In these cases, customers express negative customer engagement behaviours that have a negative effect on the firm (Juric, Smith & Wilks, 2016). This is because the expressed behaviour or offered resources are negative from firm’s perspective. These negative customer engagement behaviours can result in value co-destruction instead of value co-creation (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Islam & Rahman, 2016).

Value co-destruction implies that not all of the relationships and interactions result in positive or value-creating outcomes; sometimes, the relationships even result in negative outcomes (Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Plé & Cáceres, 2010). Value co-destruction is defined as “an interaction process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the system’s wellbeing (which given the nature of the service system can be individual or organizational)” (Plé & Cáceres, 2010, p.431). Building and maintaining engagement requires close interactions between the firm and the customer and if either or both parties experience engagement negatively, the end result can be value co-destruction. The whole collaboration can suffer and end, not just an individual interaction within the collaboration. The actors may experience value co-destruction through resource loss if they perceive, for instance, that a collaboration has been a waste of time or money (Smith, 2013). On the other hand, value co-destruction occurs when actors misintegrate the resources they possess (Plé & Cáceres, 2010; Robertson, Polonsky & McQuilken, 2014). Researchers have suggested that value co-destruction occurs, for example, when actors experience absence of trust or inadequate communication or they perceive the collaboration to result in more costs than benefits (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Vafeas, Hughes & Hilton, 2016). Value co-destruction can have crippling effects on future collaborations between actors (Mele, 2011; Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). Next, the identified research gaps in customer engagement and value co-destruction literature will be discussed.

1.2 Research gaps

Despite growing interest in both customer engagement and value co-destruction literature (Brodie et al., 2011; Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2015; Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Vafeas et al., 2016), avenues requiring research still remain. Current research has
1.2 Research gaps

focussed on how customers perceive and demonstrate their engagement but not so much on how suppliers perceive this engagement or how they are trying or would want to engage their customers (Kumar et al., 2010). Firms and customers may have very different perceptions of what customer engagement actually is, how customers can demonstrate engagement, and what kind of outcomes engagement can have. Additionally, the literature is separated into different streams such as brand engagement (Harrigan, Evers, Miles & Daly, 2017), social media engagement (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014), and a general understanding of customer engagement (Juric et al., 2016). This shows the lack of clear consensus on what engagement actually is, and more research is needed in order to understand the whole picture of customer engagement (Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2016).

Customer engagement literature has explicitly stated how customer engagement can result in value co-creation (e.g. Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Islam and Rahman, 2016; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). The negative consequences of customer engagement have been mostly overlooked despite its importance being noted by scholars (Bowden et al., 2014; Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Islam & Rahman, 2016). Some researchers have even noted that “engagement researchers have tended to focus their attention on the positive aspects of relationships. This focus has been at the expense of an understanding of the negative and problematic aspects of service relationships” (Bowden et al., 2014, p.24). Previous research shows that engagement could be connected with value co-destruction (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Islam & Rahman, 2016). These implicit links were the motivation for this thesis. The author of this thesis developed an assumption that certain situations or behaviours result in customer engagement leading to value co-destruction, instead of value co-creation. Thus, the main purpose of this thesis is to investigate the relationship between customer engagement and value co-destruction. Five different research gaps related to customer engagement, its outcomes, and value co-destruction were identified and investigated with four research questions. These gaps are elaborated next.

**Gap 1: Lack of empirical research on the antecedents of customer engagement.** The current research proposes that customer engagement is based on customer-based factors, for example, consumption goals, perceived costs/benefits, and trust (So, King & Sparks, 2014; van Doorn et al., 2010). Conversely, firm-based antecedents are, for example, brand characteristics, information, and offerings (Nguyen, Chang & Simkin, 2014; Vivek et al., 2012). Despite these findings, empirical research on the antecedents is still not sufficient enough to understand all the aspects of customer engagement’s antecedents (Hollebeek, Conduit & Brodie, 2016; Leckie, Nyadzayo & Johnson, 2016; Vivek, Beatty & Hazod, 2018). Customer engagement is context specific, so the limited amount of empirical evidence, especially from a limited number of industries, hinders generalisability. Lack of empirical research can skew the understanding of customer engagement’s antecedents.

**Gap 2: Lack of research on customer engagement in B2B and B2G relationships.** The literature on customer engagement has focused heavily on business-to-consumer (B2C) relationships (Chathoth, Ungson, Harrington & Chan, 2016; So, King & Sparks, 2016;
van Doorn et al., 2010), where engagement is related to customers’ behavioural motives (van Doorn et al., 2010) and desire to co-create experiences (Minkiewicz et al., 2014). Customer engagement should not be seen as a phenomenon occurring only between firms and their consumers, but it occurs between firms as well (Vivek, Dalela & Beatty, 2016). However, customer engagement has received little attention in business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-government (B2G) relationships, despite calls for it (Brodie et al., 2011; Reinartz & Berkmann, 2018; Vivek et al., 2016). B2C, B2B, and B2G relationships are fundamentally different; hence, insights from B2C studies cannot be transferred directly to the B2B or B2G setting. Further empirical research is required to acquire a sufficient level of understanding of customer engagement in B2B and B2G relationships.

Gap 3: Lack of research on the negative outcomes of customer engagement. Customer engagement is largely seen to have positive outcomes, but its possible negative consequences have been overlooked in current research (Alexander & Jaakkola, 2016; Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Islam & Rahman, 2016). It is important to understand and identify both the positive and negative outcomes of customer engagement. For example, firms want to utilise their customers as social influencers; however, it is difficult for firms to control what their customers might say about their brand or products. Then, engagement can become harmful for firm because they will lose control over their marketing actions (Harmeling et al., 2017). If the negative outcomes of customer engagement are not researched, then a complete picture of customer engagement cannot be obtained. This also hinders the understanding of how customer engagement is connected with other concepts, such as value co-destruction.

Gap 4: Lack of empirical research on the antecedents of value co-destruction. Value co-destruction refers to a failed interaction process that results in a decline in an actor’s wellbeing (Ple & Caraeres, 2010). Specific antecedents, such as opportunism, absence of trust, customer misbehaviour, or role-conflict (Chowdhury, Gruber & Zolkiewski, 2016; Kashif & Zarkada, 2015; Vafeas et al., 2016), can initiate an interaction process that ultimately fails. The research on value co-destruction is emerging and the understanding of the antecedents of value co-destruction is still limited (Echeverri & Skalen, 2011; Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Smith, 2013). Current research is still focusing only on how customer actions result in value co-destruction and this will provide a partial understanding of the bigger picture. It is equally important to understand how suppliers can engage in behaviour that results in reduced wellbeing for the customers and, eventually, value co-destruction (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016).

Gap 5: Lack of empirical research on how time influences value co-destruction. Value co-destruction is closely connected with value co-creation, which entails three processes: provider processes, customer processes, and joint process, i.e. the service encounter (Payne, Storbacka & Frow, 2008). This implies that the provider and customer must prepare for the interaction in their own processes, execute the interaction, and perform post-interaction tasks. Thus, value co-creation happens over time (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Recent studies suggest that value co-creation and co-destruction can exist simultaneously (Chowdhury et al., 2016), indicating that value co-creation can happen
1.3 Research questions and objectives

Before, during, or after the interaction as can value co-destruction. However, which antecedents of value co-destruction initiate value co-destruction at different time points of the collaboration is still unclear. Adopting a temporal lens can help develop a richer understanding of a phenomenon, value co-destruction in this case, because this lens can enrich our understanding of change and provide a new mechanism of interest (Kunisch, Bartunek, Mueller & Huy, 2015).

To summarise the discussion on the research gaps, Figure 1 depicts the five identified gaps and their connection with each other and with the main concepts of this thesis, customer engagement, and value co-destruction.

![Figure 1. Illustration of the research gaps and their connection with the main concepts](image)

1.3 Research questions and objectives

Considering the identified research gaps, the purpose of this thesis is to offer an in-depth understanding of customer engagement, its antecedents and outcomes, how negative outcomes of customer engagement are linked with value co-destruction, and how value co-destruction emerges. Thus, the main research question addressed in this thesis is:

*How does customer engagement influence value co-destruction?*
The main research question is separated into four sub-questions. Through this approach, it was possible to study the phenomenon, i.e. the relationship between customer engagement and value co-destruction, from different angles. The four sub-questions cover the main research question by exploring the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement, the outcomes of value co-destruction, and the temporal nature of value co-destruction. The sub-questions and the objective of each sub-question are presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Gap #</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Supportive literature</th>
<th>Publ. #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Why does value co-destruction emerge?</td>
<td>Gap 4</td>
<td>To identify the different antecedents behind value co-destruction and how they differ across multiple contexts</td>
<td>(Echeverri &amp; Skålen, 2011; Prior &amp; Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Smith, 2013)</td>
<td>Publ. IV &amp; V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When does value co-destruction happen?</td>
<td>Gap 5</td>
<td>To analyse the identified antecedents of value co-destruction through a temporal lens</td>
<td>(Chowdhury et al., 2016; Grönroos &amp; Voima, 2013; Kunisch, et al., 2015)</td>
<td>Publ. IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first research question aims to identify the antecedents for achieving customer engagement, and this was studied across different contexts and relationships. This research question is discussed in the first three publications. The second research question explores the positive and negative outcomes of customer engagement in different relationships, which is addressed in publications I, II, and III. Regarding positive outcomes, the focus was on the outcomes as perceived by the firm because customer-perceived outcomes have been studied quite extensively. The third question covers the antecedents of value co-destruction and how they differ across multiple industries and relationships. This theme is addressed in publications IV and V. The fourth research question investigates the temporal dimension of the antecedents of value co-destruction, which is discussed in Publication IV.
This thesis contributes to the current academic discussion by identifying the different reasons that lead to customer engagement having negative outcomes and how these negative outcomes can be of such great magnitude that they cause the relationship between the firm and customer to suffer extensively or even end. With this perspective, this thesis empirically proposes that customer engagement and value co-destruction are connected, either through provision of negatively loaded resources or through negative behaviour, depending on the reasons. The relationship between customer engagement and value co-destruction is a novel topic and this thesis offers insights into this topic. This is an important topic for managers. If the negative outcomes of customer engagement are left unexplored, then managers and academics alike might not be able to perceive customer engagement as a phenomenon that has both positive and negative aspects. This can result in poor customer relationship management decisions, actions, and consequences, all of which can result even in value co-destruction. In addition to investigating the relationship between customer engagement and value co-destruction, this thesis offers empirical evidence on customer engagement’s antecedents and outcomes in light of three different relationship types: B2C, B2B, and B2G.

1.4 Positioning of the research and key concepts

This thesis is positioned in the intersection of two literature streams: marketing and service literature. These bodies of literature are used as parent literature and certain focus points and concepts are adopted from them.

Marketing literature contains different approaches and streams, but in the end, it all boils down to customer needs, firms’ offerings, and customer satisfaction (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Han & Hyun, 2015; Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997). Two different focus points of marketing literature are adopted here: customer relationship marketing stream and value creation stream. Customer relationship management (CRM) refers to strategic management of customer relationships (Anderson, 1995; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995; Sheth, Parvatiyar & Sinha, 2015). Customer engagement is situated in the CRM stream (Chen, Yu, Gentry & Yu, 2017; Dessart et al., 2016), thus adopting this stream is justified. The other focus point of marketing literature is the value creation stream. The value creation stream, as the name states, focuses on investigating value creation for customers (Berger & Nasr, 1998; Gummesson & Mele, 2010). This is similar to the study of marketing in itself, which can be defined as “the process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return” (Armstrong, Kotler, Harker & Brennan, 2009, p.7). The customer relationship management and value creation streams of marketing literature provide the basis for understanding how customer engagement emerges and how it creates value for both firms and their customers.

Service literature emphasises that value is not solely created with products but also with the services provided to customers (Vargo & Lusch, 2008b). In the past decade, the discussion in the service literature has centred on service-dominant logic (Akaka, Vargo
Schau, 2015; Lusch & Vargo, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2008a) and service logic (Grönroos, 2008; Grönroos & Gummerus, 2014; Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Both logics emphasise the role of service at the heart of value co-creation, but they have fundamental differences, especially concerning the role of the customer in value co-creation. Service-dominant logic and its assumption that services and value are always co-created between the firm and the customer gave rise to the current value co-creation discussion (Aarikka-Stenroos & Jaakkola; Andreu, Sánchez & Mele, 2010). Value co-creation’s counterpart, value co-destruction, emerges from service literature (Plé & Cáceres, 2010). Service literature emphasises that services are created in collaboration, thus adopting this literature offers the base for understanding how this collaboration can be successful or unsuccessful.

By combining these literature streams, customer engagement’s relationship with value co-destruction can be studied. Customer engagement is a collaborative process between firm and customer and more likely to emerge when customers are purchasing services rather than products. This is because purchasing services require more customer participation than purchasing products (e.g. Bowden et al., 2014). Additionally, customer engagement can have both positive and negative outcomes, meaning value can be co-created or co-destroyed. Thus, the combination of service literature with marketing literature offers the basis for understanding how customer engagement emerges, what are its outcomes, and how it is related with value co-destruction. The above discussion is summarised in Figure 2.

![Figure 2. Positioning of the research (CRM = customer relationship marketing)](image-url)
Customer engagement

Different definitions of customer engagement have been proposed. They differ with regard to perceiving engagement either as a behavioural, practical, or multi-constructional concept (e.g. van Doorn et al., 2010; Brodie et al., 2011). In this thesis, the following definition is adopted: “customer engagement is the intensity of an individual’s participation in and connection with an organization’s offerings or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiates. The individuals may be current or potential customers. Customer engagement may be manifested cognitively, affectively, behaviourally, or socially” (Vivek et al., 2012, p.133).

Service experience

Service experience can be seen as a process “that creates the customer’s cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses, resulting in a mental mark” (Dube & Helkkula, 2015, p.226). This is also how service experience is defined in this thesis. Some authors use customer experience and service experience interchangeably. However, they are not entirely the same because customer experience implies that the person experiencing the service is a customer with a user perspective, when in fact, the actor can be a representative of a service company and thus not the ‘user customer’ of that service (Jaakkola, Helkkula, & Aarikka-Stenroos, 2015).

Value and value creation

Value and value creation have been defined in different ways in business literature. In this thesis, the broad definition of value is a benefit that increases the well-being of a particular actor (Lusch & Vargo, 2014). In detail, value defined as “interactive, relativistic preference experience” (Holbrook, 1994, p.27). Value is defined as an experience and it is based on the interactions between a subject, for example a consumer, and an object, for example a product or a service. Value is comparative, meaning, it varies between objects for different people (Gummerus, 2013; Holbrook, 1994) and value is a personal assessment, meaning what is valuable for one person might not be valuable for another (Eggert & Ulaga, 2002; Holbrook, 2006). Thus, value creation is seen through experiences (Gummerus, 2013) and it is always context specific (Holbrook, 1994).

Value co-creation

Value co-creation consists of three processes: supplier, customer, and service encounter process (Payne et al., 2008). Both the supplier and customer work in their respective processes and utilise their processes, practices, and resources in order to manage their own action and prepare for the encounter process, where the actual value co-creation takes place (Andreu et al., 2010; Payne et al., 2008). A detailed definition states that value co-creation is a resource integration process happening between the firm and the customer (Aarikka-Stenroos & Jaakkola, 2012). These definitions are adopted in this thesis, meaning both parties prepare for the resource integration process in their respective
processes, execute the resource integration in the service encounter, and return to their respective processes.

*Value co-destruction*

Value co-destruction refers to a failed interaction process that decreases the wellbeing of one or more actors (Plé & Cáceres’s, 2010). It is caused by different antecedents. Another definition states that value co-destruction emerges through the actors’ perceptions of goal prevention or net deficits (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016), and this definition, alongside Plé and Cáceres’s (2010) definition, is adopted in this thesis. This hybrid definition implies that co-destruction consists of three parts or steps: the antecedents, the failed interaction process triggered by these antecedents, and the outcome of this failed interaction process, meaning a decline in the actor’s wellbeing. Actors can experience this decline in wellbeing through goal prevention (when the collaborating actors do not achieve their desired goals) and net deficit (when they face excessive costs whilst doing so).

1.5 **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis has two parts: the introductory section and the research section, which includes the five publications. The introductory section provides an overview of the topic, and the research section presents the five publications that addressed the previously discussed research questions.

Chapter 1 of the introductory part identified the gaps and the research questions objectives of this study. In chapter 2, the main concepts, customer engagement and value co-destruction, will be discussed. This chapter also presents the theoretical background of this thesis, i.e. theory of social exchange and script theory, and discusses how these theories have been used in this thesis. Chapter 3 describes the selected research methods. Chapter 4 summarises the five research publications and briefly reviews the objectives, results, and contributions of these publications. Chapter 5 reviews the results obtained, proposes theoretical and managerial implications, outlines the limitations and proposals for future research, and concludes the first part of this thesis.
2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the main concepts of this thesis, customer engagement and value co-destruction, are discussed. This is followed by the presentation of the underlying theories, theory of social exchange and script theory, which were used to understand the relationship between customer engagement and value co-destruction.

2.1 Customer engagement

2.1.1 Background

The concept of customer engagement has been inspired by other ‘engagement’ concepts. In the business context, the term engagement initially referred to employee engagement (So et al., 2014). Employee engagement refers to the work-related state of mind, which is characterised by “vigour, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p.295) and “the investment of an individual’s complete self into a role” (Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010, p.617). Customer engagement refers to a customer’s deep emotional connection with a brand or a firm, and this perspective is very similar to employee engagement. Understanding the roots of customer engagement can help researchers understand the concept better.

In B2B literature, engagement is used to refer to stakeholder engagement. It refers to the actions companies are required or morally obligated to take for the benefit of their stakeholders (Bal, Bryde, Fearon & Ochieng, 2013; Noland & Phillips, 2010). Stakeholder engagement is sometimes seen as a firm’s practical sustainability action through different sorts of information it chooses to share with the stakeholders (Bal et al., 2013). Stakeholder engagement can promote dialogue between the firm and its stakeholders; however, engagement as such does not provide wide benefits, and the dialogue must still be actively promoted (Passetti, Bianchi, Battaglia & Frey, 2017).

2.1.2 Differences in definitions

Customer engagement literature presents several definitions on the concept, and there is no consensus on the definition (Dessart et al., 2016). The most commonly used definitions are presented in Table 2.

What is common amongst the different definitions is the “fundamental assumption that customers are valuable to a firm in many ways in addition to his or her transactions” (Venkatesan, 2017, p. 290). For some scholars, customer engagement is a behavioural construct (Bijmolt et al., 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010), whilst for others, it is a multidimensional construct that involves both psychological and behavioural aspects (Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2012). For example, Brodie et al. (2011) and Vivek et al. (2012) defined customer engagement through the words co-creation experiences and ‘intensity of individual’s participation’, arguing that customer engagement is something
very practical, and possibly in-line with customer participation and customer involvement. On the other hand, van Doorn et al. (2010) referred to customer engagement as a behavioural manifestation, which speaks for a higher-order definition than ‘simple’ participation in experience-creation. In this thesis, Vivek et al.’s (2012) definition is adopted: customer engagement “is the intensity of an individual’s participation in and connection with an organization’s offerings or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiates. The individuals may be current or potential customers. Customer engagement may be manifested cognitively, affectively, behaviourally, or socially” (p.133).

Table 2. The most commonly used definitions of customer engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Customer engagement as a process includes: 1) The formation of a state of calculative commitment for new customers which is considered to be a largely cognitive basis for purchase, 2) increased levels of involvement concomitantly supported by increased levels of trust for repeat purchase customers, and 3) the development of affective commitment to- ward the service brand which is considered to be a more emotive basis for purchase and which may ultimately eventuate in a state of enduring brand loyalty.”</td>
<td>(Bowden, 2009, p. 65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Customer engagement behaviours go beyond transactions, and may be specifically defined as a customer’s behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers.”</td>
<td>(van Doorn et al., 2010, p. 254)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Customer engagement (CE) is a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g. a brand) in focal service relationships. It occurs under a specific set of context-dependent conditions generating differing CE levels; and exists as a dynamic, iterative process within service relationships that co-create value.”</td>
<td>(Brodie et al., 2011, p. 260)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“CE is the intensity of an individual’s participation in and connection with an organization’s offerings or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiates. The individuals may be current or potential customers. CE may be manifested cognitively, affectively, behaviourally, or socially.”</td>
<td>(Vivek et al., 2012, p. 133)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.3 Comparison of different relationship marketing concepts

In spite of the different definitions, there is consensus about customer engagement going beyond traditional customer management concepts, for example, satisfaction and loyalty (Beckers et al., 2016). Customer engagement is closely related to customer participation; nonetheless, they are not synonymous (e.g. Dong and Sivakumar, 2017). Table 3 shows the differences between these different concepts. Per the academic community, before 2010, customer engagement was more or less a synonym of customer participation (Füller, 2006; Sawhney, Verona & Prandelli, 2005). The influential papers by van Doorn et al. (2010) and Brodie et al. (2011) redefined our understanding of the concept, and since then, customer engagement has been seen as a different concept and not a synonym of customer participation. Customer engagement is seen as a higher concept because
involvement and customer participation are positively associated to customer engagement with a firm or brand (Vivek et al., 2012).

Table 3. Comparison of customer engagement with other relationship marketing concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Comparison to customer engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer participation</td>
<td>Customers’ physical interference in production or a product or a service (Levitt, 1972; Mustak et al., 2013).</td>
<td>Customer participation refers to practical and physical involvement, whereas engagement refers to a customer’s emotional connection to the firm (van Doorn et al., 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer involvement</td>
<td>“Customer involvement in service innovation refers to the extent to which service producers interact with current (or potential) representatives of one or more customers at various stages of the new service development process” (Carbonell et al., 2009, p.537).</td>
<td>Focus on customers’ practical involvement in service/product innovation. Thus, customer involvement describes what happens before and during interaction, and positive interaction can result in engagement, which results in engagement behaviour (Pansari &amp; Kumar, 2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>“Commitment is the customer attitude that managers are seeking to influence in the hope of engendering increased purchase behaviours” (Keiningham et al., 2017, p.12).</td>
<td>Commitment implies a positive or neutral connection to the firm, and customer is committed to take part in a project, for example. Engagement refers to the customer’s emotional connection to the firm (Pansari &amp; Kumar, 2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer satisfaction</td>
<td>“A judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment, including levels of under- or over fulfilment” (Oliver, 1997, p.13).</td>
<td>Satisfaction is an antecedent of customer engagement, thus not the same concept. Satisfied customers may repurchase from the firm but not necessarily express customer engagement behaviour, for example, WOM (van Doorn et al., 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer loyalty</td>
<td>Loyalty comprises three drivers: value equity (“customers’ objective assessment of what is given up for what is received”), brand equity (“customers’ subjective assessment of brand image”) and relationship equity (“customers’ overall assessment of their interaction quality with firms”) (Ou et al., 2017, p. 336)</td>
<td>Similar to satisfaction, loyal customers can return for purchases; however, they might not necessarily express customer engagement behaviour, for example, WOM (Pansari &amp; Kumar, 2017). In customer engagement, the emotional connection and willingness to engage in engagement behaviours, such as referral behaviour, are key aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer retention</td>
<td>“Customer retention aims at repeat-purchase behaviour that is triggered by the marketer’s activities; thus its study focuses on the managerial aspects.” (Hennig-Thurau &amp; Klee, 1997)</td>
<td>Both concepts can be enforced by the management to some extent. Retention is usually measured by purchases whereas engagement includes the emotional connection and willingness to, for example, engage in on-line word-of-mouth (Pansari &amp; Kumar, 2017).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.4 Different streams of customer engagement literature

Customer engagement literature can be divided into streams of brand engagement, social media engagement, service-centric engagement, and B2B (partner) engagement. Brand engagement refers to customer engagement with a brand, and engagement is expressed by cognitive processing, affection, and activation behaviour (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie et al., 2016). Brand engagement may be expressed by a customer’s behaviour on social media, for example. Therefore, brand engagement is usually discussed alongside social media engagement.

Social media has become an essential part of commerce in recent years, since it has revolutionised how firms and customers interact with each other. Some firms are using social media to establish their company website rather than just as a communication platform (Oviedo-García, Muñoz-Expósito, Castellanos-Verdugo & Sancho-Mejías, 2014). Social media has changed the role of customers from that of passive recipients to that of “highly active and engaged partners in value creation” (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014, p. 154). Firms need to be present at places where customers are on-line; hence, different social media platforms offer a natural connection place for a firm and its customers, i.e. social media engagement (Oviedo-García et al., 2014). Social media also offers the possibility of engaging customers in different physical places (Bernhardt, Mays & Hall, 2012). Interactions between a firm and its customers are key to achieving engagement, and social media offers a suitable platform for this: firms can stay in touch with multiple customers, both current clients and possible future clients (Bernhardt et al., 2012; Oviedo-García et al., 2014). Social media engagement enables customers to share their experiences with other customers (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014), and this might impact their decisions to purchase from a particular firm (So et al., 2016; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). Social media engagement also takes into consideration that engagement happens beyond one purchase (So et al., 2014; van Doorn et al., 2010).

A new addition to customer engagement literature is engagement in the B2B setting. B2C and B2B relationships are fundamentally different; hence, insights of customer engagement as such cannot be transferred from B2C studies to the B2B context. Both B2B and B2C relationships have elements of problem solving; however, B2C relationships are about meeting certain emotional desires that consumers might have (Hollebeek, 2011), compared to business relationships, which focus on creating solutions (Tuli, Kohli & Bharadwaj, 2007) or finding an answer to a larger-scale problem (Jaakkola & Hakanen, 2013). Additionally, B2B relationships are longer than the relationships between a firm and its consumers, and the switching costs might be higher (Lam, Shankar, Erramilli & Murthy, 2004). B2B partner engagement (B2B-PE) has been defined as “episodes of intense inter-organizational resource and social exchanges between two independent or interdependent business entities, directed towards common outcomes” (Vivek et al., 2016, p.56).
2.1 Antecedents of customer engagement

Customer engagement is based on customer- and firm-based drivers. For example, satisfaction, consumption goals, and perceived costs/benefits are customer-based antecedents to customer engagement (van Doorn et al., 2010). When customers are satisfied with the received product, service, brand, or interactions with the firm, customer engagement can occur. Additionally, if customers have specific consumption goals that are realised, and they experience higher benefits than costs, they perceive the interactions favourably, and this results in customer engagement. Moreover, customer involvement has been identified as an antecedent of customer engagement (Leckie et al., 2016). This is because when customers are involved in, for example, different co-creation projects, they work closely with the provider and can receive a tailored experience. Trust is a customer-based antecedent, which is important in all kinds of relationships (Alexander & Jaakkola, 2016; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Füller, 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010). Trust in B2B and B2G relationships can be achieved by working closely for a long time (Doney & Cannon, 1997).

Firm-based antecedents are, for example, brand characteristics and firm performance (van Doorn et al., 2010). When customers feel connected to a specific brand, for example, because the brand allows them to express themselves or the brand represents high-quality products, customers become engaged and want to demonstrate their engagement. This is closely linked with the offerings of the firms, i.e. services and products, which play a key role in initiating engagement (Vivek et al., 2012). However, researchers have proposed that customers are not seeking to purchase products or services, but rather seeking experiences that products and services offer them (Akaka et al., 2015; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). The service experience can be seen as a process “that creates the customer’s cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses, resulting in a mental mark” (Dube & Helkkula, 2015, p.226). The service experience is not limited solely to B2C relationships; even the B2B context may be characterised by the service experience. In the B2B context, the customer or service experience is not supposed to be thrilling or moving but is expected to focus on solving the business customer’s problems (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). However, the literature has shifted to an experience-based method of doing business with purchasing companies (Jaakkola et al., 2015). Finally, information plays a vital role in achieving engagement because it increases the opportunities for dialogue, sharing knowledge, and creating personalised service experiences (Jayachandran, Sharma, Kaufman & Raman, 2005; Nguyen et al., 2014). For example, social media offers the same options for communication and feedback for B2B and B2G partners as it does for firms and their consumers (Vivek et al., 2016).

2.1.6 Customer disengagement

An important topic to cover when discussing customer engagement is customer disengagement. The literature on customer disengagement is emerging, and currently, it is understood as the opposite of customer engagement (Bowden et al., 2014; Naumann, Bowden & Gabbott, 2017a).
Customer disengagement refers to a passive, slightly negative physiological orientation towards a service relationship (Bowden et al. 2016). Customer disengagement occurs because of service failure, which causes customers to emotionally or physically distance themselves from involvement in the service process (Bowden et al., 2014). According to Evanschitzky, Ramaseshan, Fazlul and Brock (2012), disengagement can happen in three stages: disillusion, disaffection, and crossroads. Disillusion may occur when the brand fails at communicating “what it can and cannot deliver” (Evanschitzky et al., 2012, p. 274). In the disaffection stage, feelings of frustration that are caused by the brand’s inability to deal with negative events emerge. This leads to customers looking for other brands. The final stage is cross-roads, where customers lose interest in the brand and express feelings of indifference. A competitor’s brand and offerings are more attractive in the eyes of the customer, and the customer is contemplating the idea of switching to another brand (Evanschitzky et al., 2012).

Customer disengagement is likely in the so-called functional and utilitarian services, such as transport, telecommunication services, and any kind of standard services, where customer engagement is weak. However, the possibility for customer disengagement is high due to attribute failure. When it comes to participative and co-creative services, such as hairdressers, personal trainers, and hotel services, customer engagement is strong and customer disengagement low. However, the impact of customer disengagement can be higher on participatory services than on functional services because participatory services usually have a large emotional load owing to the participation factor (Bowden et al., 2014). Customer disengagement is closely connected with service recovery. If customers do not complain about a negative service or product experience, the firm cannot commence service recovery, which could rectify the negative service experience by solving the problem or offering compensation (Cheung & To, 2016; Edvardsson, Tronvoll & Höykinpuro, 2011; van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher, 2016).

Disengaged customers are customers who do not take action against a service provider by, for example, complaining directly to the service provider (Anderson et al., 2013). Studies have estimated that as many as 50–60% of the customers fall into the disengaged category (Bowden et al., 2014; Chebat, Davidow & Codjovi, 2005). However, they might still engage in destructive engagement behaviours, such as boycotting a firm or expressing negative WOM (Chebat et al., 2005). Hence, disengaged customers can demonstrate negative engagement behaviour (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; van Doorn et al., 2010), but at the same time not express engagement behaviour by not complaining or expressing feedback about a negative service or product experience (Bijmolt et al., 2010; Bowden et al., 2014). Therefore, customer disengagement is a slightly paradoxical phenomenon because it involves and does not involve aspects of customer engagement. Next, this thesis addresses the different outcomes of customer engagement.
2.2 Outcomes of customer engagement

This chapter addresses the different outcomes that customer engagement can have. Before discussing them, an important underlying assumption needs to be addressed. Most scholars recognise that customer engagement is beneficial for firms (e.g., Dong & Sivakymar, 2017; Kumar et al., 2010; Romero, 2017). What remains debatable is the benefits that customers may experience. Some scholars state that engagement can be beneficial for the customer as well (e.g., Minkiewicz et al., 2014; Gummerus et al., 2012; Bijmolt et al., 2010), whilst others state that customer engagement is beneficial solely for the firm (e.g., Dong & Sivakymar, 2017). In this thesis, the first viewpoint is adopted; customer engagement can be beneficial for both the firm and customer. Customer engagement produces different benefits for other stakeholders as well; however, this is not the focus of this thesis, and hence, these benefits are discussed briefly.

2.2.1 Positive and negative outcomes of customer engagement for customer

Positive outcomes for customers range from emotional benefits to practical benefits (Beckers et al., 2016). Engagement can result in a very strong connection between a firm and its customers; hence, customers can experience emotional bonding with a firm or its brand (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2013). In service situations, once a customer is engaged with a firm, both the customer and the firm learn more about each other (Gummerus et al., 2012). When a customer is engaged, he or she is likely to revisit the service provider; hence, the firm’s staff get to know the customer better and are able to offer personalised services to that particular customer. Therefore, engagement results in tailored services that the customer gets to experience (Minkiewicz et al., 2014). This close connection allows the customer to know the service provider and its staff well; hence, engagement can become even deeper because the customer and staff can create an intimate connection with each other (Bijmolt et al., 2010).

Engaged customers are offered new services and products earlier and, generally, offered more information than customers who use the firm’s services and products rarely and without engagement (Gummerus et al., 2012). When customers take part in different co-creation projects and activities, they feel a sense of belonging and participation (Beckers et al., 2016; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). Engagement can be fostered with loyalty programmes. These loyalty programmes can offer direct monetary benefits to the customer, for instance, through discounts and service upgrades in hotels and airlines (Beckers et al., 2016; Gummerus et al., 2012; Rehnen, Bartsch, Kull & Meyer, 2017).

Engagement can result in customer-to-customer benefits as well. When customers demonstrate their engagement through WOM, it is beneficial to other customers because they have a chance to read other customers’ experiences with a certain firm. This can also be seen as a social benefit, where customers help one another by spreading information and experiences (Gummerus et al., 2012). For example, in very interactive services, such as hotel services, WOM can have a major impact when customers are choosing their hotels (So et al., 2016; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009).
Despite the above-mentioned positive outcomes of engagement, customers can experience their engagement negatively. Customers become engaged for different reasons. Some customers become engaged for quality services and products that satisfy and possibly excel their needs (Vivek et al., 2012). These customers become engaged because they receive what they needed from the interaction and might not develop any deeper emotions towards the firm (Bijmolt et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012). This can contradict the firm’s wishes. A firm could be looking for very connected and passionate customers that share their experiences about the brand and its offerings in social media (Harmeling et al., 2017). If a firm pushes these need-based engaged customers to contribute to online content, for example, they may find this repulsive and undesirable (Heinonen, 2018). Then, the firm’s engagement efforts fail, and this can have a long-term impact on the customer’s perception of the firm.

Positive outcomes of customer engagement for firm

Once customers become engaged, they demonstrate their engagement through different behaviours (e.g. Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Bijmolt et al., 2010). This is known as form or modality (van Doorn et al., 2010), which refers to the resources customers use, such as money, meaning the customers demonstrate purchasing behaviour (Kumar et al., 2010; van doorn et al., 2010). Customers can also offer resources, such as information, namely knowledge dissemination or referral behaviour (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Kumar et al., 2010). Some scholars label these as positive or negative customer engagement behaviours (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; van Doorn et al., 2010) whilst others refer to them as positive or negative outcomes of customer engagement (Beckers et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2010). The latter is the viewpoint adopted in this thesis. Thus, the author of this thesis argues that customer engagement behaviours, such as purchasing or negative WOM, are the behaviours that a firm perceives as positive or negative outcomes of customer engagement (Chen et al., 2017; Kumar et al., 2010). This is also known as valence (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). The behaviours and how they are beneficial for firms are discussed next.

Firstly, engagement is beneficial through customer purchasing behaviour (Kumar et al., 2010). Engaged customers bring revenue to firms, and engaged customers are valuable for firms (Schmitt, Skiera & Van den Bulte, 2011). According to recent studies, retaining current customers is about five times more profitable than acquiring new customers (Chiu, Hsu, Lai & Chang, 2012); hence, engaged customers are essential for firms because such customers are likely to return and repurchase (Han & Hyun, 2015). Some scholars argue that customer engagement is a bigger phenomenon than a single purchase (van Doorn et al., 2010); hence, customer engagement should be understood as a larger issue than individual purchase moments. Other scholars argue that purchase is in fact a key aspect of engagement because purchase and especially repurchase demonstrates to a firm that a customer keeps coming back – this can be interpreted as engagement (Kumar et al., 2010). In this thesis, purchase is indeed seen as a part of customer engagement because it is a demonstration of customer engagement, and purchase should be seen as a positive outcome for the firm. Customer engagement offers monetary value for firms as
2.2 Outcomes of customer engagement

well as for shareholders (Beckers et al., 2016). For example, third-party product reviews can impact investors and their decisions regarding a firm (Chen, Liu & Zhang, 2012).

Secondly, engaged customers are valuable for firms because of their network and communication with this network through referring and influencing behaviour (Kumar et al., 2010), which refers to WOM (Chu & Kim, 2011; Romero, 2017; Verleye, Gemmel & Rangarajan, 2014; Wei, Miao & Huang, 2013). For example, engaged customers express their positive experiences through WOM, which in practice, makes customers part-time marketers (Harmeling et al., 2017; Kumar et al., 2010). Previously, firms focused on teaching customers how to find and use a certain product or a service; presently the focus is on educating customers how they can contribute to the firm’s marketing functions (Harmeling et al., 2017). WOM has been found to drive a company’s sales (Chintagunta, Gopinath & Venkataraman, 2010); hence, firms should encourage their customers to express WOM. However, it is not enough for the firm to encourage their customers to express WOM; the firm must act on the online feedback. For example, current research has found that hotels which respond to guests’ online reviews about their stay are in a better position for engaging their customers and gaining competitive advantage than hotels which do not respond to online reviews (Park & Allen, 2013).

Thirdly, customer engagement is beneficial for firms through customer knowledge behaviour (Kumar et al., 2010). Customers offer feedback regarding their experience; hence, they offer knowledge to the firm, which can be used in designing and developing current services and products further (Brodie et al., 2011; Alexander & Jaakkola, 2016; Kumar et al., 2010). Firms should encourage their customers not only to express WOM on different social media sites but also to offer feedback to the firm directly. Feedback is important for firms because it allows them to reflect on how well they are satisfying their customers, learn what their customers want and need, and discover what the firm already knows about the market and about their customers (Celuch, Robinson & Walsh, 2015; Pansari & Kumar, 2018; Verleye et al., 2014)

Fourthly, customer engagement leads to positive outcomes for firms through collaboration (Carlson, Rahman, Voola & Vries, 2018; Verleye et al., 2014). Engaged customers are invested in the relationship with the provider. They want to take part in service creation, they want to influence the direction that the brand or firm will take, and they also want to help other customers (Carlson et al., 2018; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2016; Romero, 2017). They want to take part in designing and redesigning products and services as opposed to new customers, and firms should allow this to happen. Engaged customers possess essential information regarding the usability of these services and products and how to possibly change them (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Romero, 2017). Here, the role of feedback is evident, and firms should encourage their customers to express it freely (Celuch et al., 2015).

All of the previously discussed positive outcomes that both firm and customers can experience lead to value co-creation. Jaakkola and Alexander (2014; 2016) propose that customer engagement’s role in value co-creation refers to customer’s provision of
resources during an interaction that will affect how both firm and customer perceive the interaction. When customers demonstrate their engagement with different behaviours, they are offering resources to the firm, such as information, money, or positive WOM (e.g., Kumar et al., 2010). Thus, both the customer and provider perceive the collaboration or engagement favourably – the customer for the different benefits received and firm for the resources being offered. The link between customer engagement and value co-creation has been proposed by other scholars as well. Minkiewicz et al. (2014) argue that engagement is one dimension of co-creation. When customers engage in creating experiences, they engage in co-creation. According to Bijmolt et al. (2010) customers demonstrate their engagement by co-creation, namely taking part in different collaborative efforts. However, despite all the efforts to create and sustain engagement, sometimes the outcomes of customer engagement can be negative.

2.2.3 Negative consequences of customer engagement for firms

The collaboration between the customer and the provider is not always positive, and the same applies to customer engagement. The current literature has largely overlooked the negative consequences of engagement (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Islam & Rahman, 2016; Naumann et al., 2017a). Owing to the scarcity of literature on the negative side of customer engagement, this chapter is built on three different viewpoints: negatively valenced customer engagement, negative customer engagement, and the absence of beneficial customer engagement behaviours, which were discussed previously. By combining these three perspectives, the author aims to provide a more comprehensive picture of the possible negative outcomes of customer engagement.

Negatively valenced customer engagement (van Doorn et al., 2010) and negative customer engagement (Bowden et al., 2016; Juric et al., 2016) are very similar phenomena and the difference between these viewpoints is somewhat fuzzy. When customer engagement is negatively valenced, customers engage in actions which are negative for the firm, such as boycotting its products and services and posting negative WOM (Naumann et al., 2017a; van Doorn et al., 2010). On the other hand, negative customer engagement refers to a “goal-directed process, which involves dedicated and targeted expression of negative emotions, attempts to co-op to others to adopt a particular attitudinal and/or behavioural position, as well as, in some cases direct and indirect attempts to retaliate and seek revenge” (Bowden et al., 2016, p. 268). This refers to deliberate actions that customers take, for example posting a negative review, which will influence the firm’s image and influence how other customers perceive the firm. Hence, both negatively valenced customer engagement and negative customer engagement refer to behaviour that is harmful for firms. The difference is that negative customer engagement is deliberate, in the sense a customer would post a negative review, for example, in an attempt to harm the firm’s image or to rally up other people to boycott the firm (Bowden et al., 2016; Juric et al., 2016). Negatively valenced customer engagement, on the other hand, refers to customers’ expression of frustration by posting a negative review on TripAdvisor, for example (van Doorn et al., 2010).
2.2 Outcomes of customer engagement

Firstly, research suggests that one way in which customers can express negatively valenced customer engagement is negative brand attitude (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). Brand attitude refers to an “individual’s internal evaluation of an object such as a branded product” (Mitchell & Olson, 1981, p. 318). Brand attitude can be positive, meaning the customer has a favourable attitude towards a specific brand, or negative, meaning the customer has an unfavourable attitude towards a specific brand (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). A customer’s negative brand attitude will affect his or her behaviour towards that brand. The customer is less likely to purchase products of this brand and is more likely to express negative WOM about this specific brand (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Naumann et al., 2017b). Customers can express pure anger and hatred towards a service provider that let them down (Naumann et al., 2017a; Naumann et al., 2017b). Hence, negative brand attitude can be harmful for a firm because this attitude changes the customer’s behaviour towards the firm.

Secondly, firms are hoping that their engaged customers demonstrate their engagement through referring and influencing behaviour, which as discussed, could refer to customers sharing their positive experiences with their network of acquaintances in different ways (Kumar et al., 2010). With the rise of social media, customers have more avenues for sharing their experiences with their networks (He & Harris, 2014; Karakaya & Barnes, 2010). However, customers do not always experience positive service or product experiences and are willing to share these negative experiences with their friends and social media connections (Pee, 2016; Sparks et al., 2016; Wilson, Giebelhausen & Brady, 2017). Current research proposes that negative electronic (e)-WOM is a negative outcome of customer engagement because it negatively affects the firm’s image in the eyes of other customers, either current or potential future ones (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). Additionally, negative WOM can adversely impact a firm’s sales (Beckers et al., 2016; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Ofir & Simonson, 2001). Hence, negative e-WOM can be either negatively valenced customer engagement or negative customer engagement, depending on the customer’s underlying goals. Negative WOM does not always have to be expressed on social media or online in general, as WOM or complaining can happen offline, and multiple people can complain together, as was identified in a study on social services (Naumann et al., 2017b).

Thirdly, firms can use loyalty programmes, which offer monetary benefits to customers, as a tool for engagement. However, a purely monetary benefit as an engagement method may not result in a long-term relationship because engagement that is based on a customer receiving monetary benefits tends to be short lived and leads to opportunistic behaviour (Harmeling et al., 2017). Then, the engagement efforts turn against the firm because the customer is not interested in offering, for example, information or new ideas to the firm. Customer is purely interested in his/her own personal gain, thus demonstrating opportunistic behaviour.

Fourthly, when customers face a problem, or they have questions about services or products, firms expect their customers to express these questions or offer feedback, i.e. engage in knowledge behaviour (Kumar et al., 2010). Especially, if a customer perceives
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a negative service or product experience, the firm expects the customer to report it; they can take the necessary measures to turn the negative experience into a positive one (Bijmolt et al., 2010). If a customer does not complain and explain why he or she was unsatisfied, the firm cannot provide customer satisfaction (Celuch et al., 2015). In other words, customer knowledge behaviour does not take place, resulting in a situation the firm cannot rectify.

To summarise, the desire to build or establish engagement between a firm and a customer does not automatically result in positive outcomes (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; van Doorn et al., 2010). The positive outcomes of customer engagement were found to result in value co-creation because positive customer engagement behaviours relate to resource provision from customer to firm. Per this logic, the negative outcomes of customer engagement, i.e. negative customer engagement behaviours or the absence of positive behaviours can result in value co-destruction (Bowden et al., 2016; Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Islam & Rahman, 2016). This happens because, for example, deeply invested customers take brand failure personally (Juric et al., 2016). If they are deeply affected by this, they can retaliate and express negative customer engagement behaviour, such as negative WOM. In other words, customers provide resources that are negative for the firm. Then, negative WOM damages the firm’s reputation (Morrongiello, N’Goala & Kreziak, 2017). Customer engagement can also be negative for behavioural reasons. This cycle of events damages the engagement or collaboration between the parties, which can be considered to be value co-destruction. Thus, this thesis further discusses value co-destruction, which is the second important concept herein.

2.3 Value co-destruction

The focus of relationship marketing literature, in general, has recently shifted towards understanding the negative aspects of relationships, such as disengagement and value co-destruction. Value co-destruction implies that not all relationships result in positive outcomes and that they might result in negative outcomes (Plé & Cáceres, 2010). In this chapter, the definition and antecedents of value co-destruction are discussed.

2.3.1 Definition

Value co-destruction has been defined as “an interaction process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the system’s wellbeing (which given the nature of the service system can be individual or organizational)” (Plé & Cáceres, 2010, p.431). Hence, the concept of value co-destruction consists of two parts: the interaction process and the outcome (decline in wellbeing). Value co-destruction can emerge when actors lose a resource during the collaboration (Smith, 2013). For example, if a customer finds that taking part in a collaboration was a waste of money, the experience would be perceived as a loss of resources (money), leading to a decline in his or her wellbeing (Plé & Cáceres, 2010). If actors fail to integrate the operant resources they possess, value co-destruction can occur (Plé & Cáceres, 2010; Robertson et al., 2014). Operant resources
2.3 Value co-destruction

refer to resources that can be valuable on their own, such as knowledge and skills (Vargo & Lusch, 2008b). They differ from operand resources that are usually tangible resources not valuable on their own (Vargo & Lusch, 2008a). For example, an automobile is an operand resource. An automobile in itself is not very useful if one does not possess the knowledge (operand resource) of driving it.

As another example, if a provider offers information (resource) on a specific topic, such as a changed shop address, but the customer does not search for this information to be used as knowledge (resource) when making decisions, then he/she will not find the shop because he/she was looking for it at the old address. Then, the customer experiences a decline in wellbeing in the form of frustration and inability to achieve his/her goal, thus resulting in value co-destruction (Plé & Cáceres, 2010; Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). The resource-integration process can also result in a somewhat neutral outcome, value no-creation, which sits between value co-destruction and co-creation. Value no-creation implies that the resource-integration process will not always have a positive outcome (value co-creation) or a negative outcome (value co-destruction), but the value remains unrealised (Makkonen & Olkkonen, 2017).

A recent definition sees value co-destruction emerging through actors’ perceptions of goal prevention or net deficits (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016), and this definition, alongside Plé and Cáceres’s (2010) definition, is adopted in this thesis. In more specific terms, this thesis adopts the viewpoint that value co-destruction consists of three parts or steps: the antecedents, the failed interaction process triggered by these antecedents, and the outcome of this failed interaction process, i.e. a decline in the actor’s wellbeing. Actors can experience this decline in wellbeing through goal prevention (when the collaborating actors do not achieve their desired goals) and net deficit (when they face excessive costs whilst doing so). The realisation of specific outcomes, goal prevention, or net deficit is then moderated by specific actor behaviours or engagement styles (Prior, 2016; Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016), which are regulated by norms and rules associated with specific social contexts (Edvardsson, Tronvoll & Gruber, 2011; Marcos & Prior, 2017). This suggests that the failure to anticipate the availability of and/or an actor’s willingness and capability to contribute resources to collaborative interaction have a major influence on the value perceptions of service experiences.

2.3.2 Value co-destruction versus value destruction

Another concept similar to value co-destruction is value destruction. In service literature, value destruction has been discussed in light of the service failure. Service failure refers to “service performance that falls below a customer’s expectations” (Hess, Ganesan & Klein, 2007, p. 80). It can lead to a decline in customer confidence, customer defection, dissatisfaction, and increased costs (Cheung & To, 2016; Lewis & McCann, 2004; Sánchez-García & Currás-Pérez, 2011; Zhu & Zolkiewski, 2015). In the case of service failure, the providing firm expects the customer to report this failure so that they can initiate the service-recovery process (Edvardsson et al., 2011). Naturally, the customer expects the firm to have a service-recovery strategy to rectify the situation (Lewis &
McCann, 2004). Thus, if service failure occurs, value destruction can occur, but if service recovery is initiated after service failure, the end result can be neutral or even value creation.

The difference between value destruction and value co-destruction can be attributed to the different nature of services. Services can be roughly classified into two main categories: functional and utilitarian services (e.g. transport, telecommunication services and any kind of standard services) and participative and co-creative services (e.g. hairdresser, personal trainer, and hotel services) (Bowden et al., 2014; Lindgreen & Pels, 2002). Functional and utilitarian services do not require much customer participation in service creation; hence, if these kinds of services are not successful, customers will experience value destruction. Participative and co-creative services, as the name states, require a much greater intensity of customer and firm participation in service co-creation (Berry, Wall & Carbone, 2006; Morosan & DeFranco, 2016; Vargo & Lusch, 2008b). Thus, if service creation in these co-creative services fails, it results in value co-destruction instead of value destruction. If service co-creation fails, one or both parties will find that the entire interaction between the actors fails (Plé & Cáceres, 2010). Hence, value co-destruction focuses on collaboration amongst actors and how both parties behave, not on one-way delivery of the provider’s products to the customer. This collaborative emphasis of value co-destruction suggests that each actor plays an important role in the value co-destruction processes (Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016).

2.3.3 The antecedents of value co-destruction

Value co-destruction literature is mainly divided into two schools of thought: the behavioural concept or resource utilisation concept. The behavioural concept school (e.g. Echeverri & Skålen, 2011) assumes that value co-destruction emerges because of specific behaviours. The resource utilisation school assumes that value co-destruction emerges because of resource misalignment or resource misuse (e.g. Plé & Cáceres, 2010). The difference between the schools is not absolute because many scholars argue that resource misuse or misalignment can be expressed through different behaviours or the behaviours that lead to value co-destruction are initiated by resource misuse. For example, Chowdhury et al. (2016), Kashif and Zarjada (2015), and Stieler, Weismann and Germelmann (2014) describe value co-destruction as a concept that entails aspects of both viewpoints – this is the perspective that is adopted in this thesis. Since the resource side has already been discussed while defining value co-destruction, the more behaviour-centric antecedents are discussed here.

Several different antecedents have been identified in the process of value co-destruction. These antecedents lead to the failed interaction process that results in a decline in the wellbeing of a firm, customer, or both, thus leading to value co-destruction. In this chapter, antecedents related, for example, to trust, power, expectations, communication, and role adaptation are discussed. These antecedents touch upon the different aspects of
2.3 Value co-destruction

An interaction process between two parties can fail if *power imbalance* and different *power plays* are present (Chowdhury et al., 2016; Vafeas et al., 2016). If the relationship or collaboration between the provider and customer is not balanced in terms of power, value co-destruction can emerge (Chowdhury et al., 2016). For example, customers can assume that in order to keep a project running and to end on schedule, they must engage in power play to control how the provider is operating. Similarly, a provider can engage in power play by, for example, using the parent firm to prevent the customer from having access to information or activities. Power can be seen as a source for conflict, but in certain situations, power can also boost actions to ensure that the project, for example, is completed on schedule (Chowdhury et al., 2016).

In line with power-related antecedents, value co-destruction can emerge in the absence of *trust*. If collaborating actors do not trust each other, the customer is, for example, less inclined to follow-up on advice given by the provider, and this can be risky (Vafeas et al., 2016). Absence of trust can also hinder creativity, which is harmful especially for industries that are heavily based on creativity, such as the media industry (Makkonen & Olkkonen, 2017; Vafeas et al., 2016). Value co-destruction can occur because of *opportunism or the fear of it*. If one or both collaborating actors assume the counter-actor is behaving in an opportunistic manner, the trust, and by that the whole collaboration, is bound to suffer because one actor is driving its interests (Vafeas et al., 2016). Opportunism may appear when, for example, a customer is asking or even forcing the provider to carry out additional tasks without paying for them or when the provider is asking or even forcing a customer to sponsor an event or promote the supplier in a way that is not in the client’s best interests (Chowdhury et al., 2016).

Communication plays a crucial role in all collaborations, and research suggests value co-destruction can occur when actors notice *inadequate communication* (Robertson et al., 2014; Vafeas et al., 2016). When collaborating actors do not share information, the actors feel that they are not heard or are being given inaccurate information; generally, when communication is unsuccessful or missing, actors can experience value co-destruction (Vafeas et al., 2016). This happens because the lack of information and communication causes misunderstandings, so projects are prolonged, and the actors are faced with increased costs and an inability to achieve their desired goals (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Vafeas et al., 2016).

In collaboration, a key aspect is expectations. If consumers’ *expectations are excessive or unjustified*, the service provider is unable to fulfil those expectations (Ojasalo, 2001; Smith, 2013); thus, both the customer and the provider fail to achieve their goal (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). Additionally, if a customer fails to clearly express his or her expectations for the collaboration or service creation, it is almost impossible for the firm to meet those expectations (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). However, the service provider can also fail in fulfilling a customer’s justified expectations, which can result in
value co-destruction (Johnson, Olsen & Andreassen, 2009; Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). Actors might have very different expectations or goals, which makes it hard for all of the parties to achieve their goals, especially if they are conflicting. This might lead to the co-existence of value co-creation and co-destruction: one party is able to achieve its goals whilst the other party is not (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). Thus, value co-creation and co-destruction can exist simultaneously (Chowdhury et al., 2016). When the goals are the same or similar, value co-creation is a likely outcome (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016).

Value co-destruction can emerge when role conflict is present. In service situations, actors have different roles to play and engage in specific practices with one another (Akaka & Chandler, 2011; Erasmus et al., 2002). Both the customer and individual employees must embrace their roles within the firm and in certain service situations (Chowdhury et al., 2016). Role conflict can occur when the customer refuses to perform his/her tasks and forces the firm and its employees to perform these activities. For instance, some of the tasks previously performed by firms are now performed by customers before or after the purchase process. These changes require the provider and customers to modify their actions and behaviour accordingly; for example, customers have embraced self-service (Grissemann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Hollmann, Jarvis & Bitner, 2014). However, if the customer refuses to embrace this change, then employees experience role conflict, because they are forced to adopt a role that is not theirs to play. This causes job stress and other negative emotions, which can impact the future relationships between the firm and this particular customer (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). On the other hand, if the provider does not consider emerging consumer trends and change according to them, consumers will receive products and services that they find undesirable (Jones, Brown, Zoltners & Weitz, 2005).

In line with role conflict, research has proposed that especially in the consumer market, customer misbehaviour is an antecedent of value co-destruction (Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Kashif & Zarkada, 2015). If consumers misbehave during a service encounter and cause mental stress to the company’s front-line employees, then the customers contribute to value co-destruction (Echeverri, Salomonson & Berg, 2012; Kashif & Zarkada, 2015). The rise of social media and the ease of reviewing an experience in negative and positive ways are shifting the power from firms to consumers (Chintagunta et al., 2010; Karakaya & Barnes, 2010). Previously, firms had better control over what was said about their products and services, and negative comments were mainly passed on orally among friends and family (Pee, 2016). However, social media has changed how consumers review products and services. These reviews are easily accessible, and firms have little power to control these reviews (Ahmad & Laroche, 2017; Pee, 2016). These antecedents discussed above demonstrate that value co-destruction can occur for multiple different reasons. The described antecedents can initiate the failed interaction process at different time points during the interaction. This avenue is discussed next.
2.3 Value co-destruction

2.3.4 The temporal nature of value co-destruction

Value co-destruction is connected to value co-creation (Chowdhury et al., 2016). One viewpoint on value co-creation is that it can be seen as a process consisting of three parts: the customer process, the service encounter or joint value creation process, and the provider process (Grönroos & Gummerus, 2014; Payne, et al., 2008). In the provider process, the provider utilises resources, processes, and practices to manage its business and the relationships the provider has with customers and other relevant stakeholders (Payne et al., 2008). Activities performed by the provider in the provider sphere result in outputs the customers may use in their value creation process (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). In the customer sphere, customers “independently create value and may socially co-create value with actors in their ecosystem” (Grönroos & Gummerus, 2014, p. 209).

Value creation in the customer sphere can be referred to as sole or independent value creation (Grönroos, 2011). In the joint sphere (or the encounter process), the provider and the customer interact and, hence, engage in value co-creation (Grönroos & Gummerus, 2014; Payne et al., 2008).

Because value co-creation consists of three different processes, it can be argued that both the customer and the provider should prepare for the encounter in their spheres before the encounter process, engage in the encounter, and then perform post-encounter actions again in their spheres. In other words, the customer and the provider prepare for collaboration and execute collaboration at different time points: before, during, and after (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). For example, the service provider must make certain preparations before receiving the customer, such as purchasing required goods and making sure that they have enough staff (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Payne et al., 2008). These are the provider’s actions that should be performed before the encounter or collaboration. On the other hand, customers should prepare for the encounter by finding out information about the service provider’s services and location (Andreu et al., 2010; Payne et al., 2008), in order to be prepared for the encounter. Furthermore, if the customer experiences a problem during the service, such as a hotel stay, or was left disappointed after a project collaboration, the service provider expects the customer to report this experienced problem or disappointment during or after the encounter (Celuch et al., 2015).

Current research proposes that value co-creation and co-destruction can exist at the same time (Chowdhury et al., 2016), implying that if value co-creation can be initiated before, during, and after collaboration, value co-destruction can also be initiated in these time points. For example, if the customer were to have unjustified expectations, they can emerge before the collaboration owing to previous encounters with the provider or other experiences with other providers (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). Then, the customer is contributing to the emergence of value co-destruction before the encounter takes place.

On the other hand, the firm can contribute to the emergence of value co-destruction before the service encounter by, for example, not offering valid information about what services they offer (Vafeas et al., 2016). During the service encounter, if role conflict or power imbalance is present, value co-destruction can emerge (Chowdhury et al., 2016). In the
customer process stage (Grönroos, 2008; Payne et al., 2008), the customer may destroy
the value by performing actions on the product that the provider did not anticipate, such
as not maintaining a purchased automobile properly or storing a sensitive food item
incorrectly. The customer, hence, may negatively affect the provider’s value offerings
outside of the provider’s reach after the interaction has taken place.

If value co-destruction can be initiated before, during, and after collaboration, it could be
argued that time plays a role in the occurrence of value co-destruction because both
parties need to prepare for the collaboration, beforehand, and in the end, the customer
exists the collaboration with a product or in general, an experience, which was either
positive or negative. Adopting a temporal lens can help one develop a richer
understanding of a phenomenon, here value co-destruction, because it can enrich our
understanding of change and provide a new mechanism of interest (Kunisch et al., 2015).
Next, the multiple-theoretical-lens perspective utilised in understanding customer
engagement, value co-destruction, and their relationship, is presented below.

2.4 The theoretical lenses used for studying customer
engagement and value co-destruction

This thesis employs two theoretical lenses: theory of social exchange and script theory.
The chosen theories are summarised next, followed by a discussion of how they are
combined to investigate the relationship between customer engagement and value co-
destruction.

2.4.1 Theory of social exchange

The theory of social exchange is rooted in anthropology (Firth, 1967), social psychology
(Gouldner, 1960; Homans, 1958), and sociology (Blau, 1964). Theory of social exchange
has evolved during its existence, and different streams have emerged. In this thesis, the
focus is on the sociological aspect (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1987).

Theory of social exchange explains why people take part in exchanges and relationships.
It argues that humans take part in different interactions in order to gain something, and
more specifically, to maximise profits or benefits that can be gained from those
interactions (Chibucos, Leite & Weis, 2005). In other words, actors undertake a cost-
benefit analysis when deciding whether to commence a collaboration or not (Beckers et
al., 2016). Actors engage in relationships as long as they perceive them to be valuable,
meaning the actors expect to receive different benefits (Beckers et al., 2016; Cropanzano
& Mitchell, 2005). Hence, it can be said that customers interact with producers and take
part in, for example, co-creative actions because the customers are expecting a reward in
the end (Emerson, 1981; Füller, 2006; Homans, 1958). An interaction is rewarding if the
perceived subjective benefit is greater than the experienced effort (Füller, 2006).
2.4 The theoretical lenses used for studying customer engagement and value co-destruction

A key concept of the theory of social exchange is reciprocity or in other words, social transaction (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Molm, 1994). Reciprocity may be described as a transactional pattern of interdependent exchanges and reciprocity, as a moral norm (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960).

Interdependent exchanges are exchanges based on a combination of both parties’ efforts. In independent and dependent exchanges or interactions, only one party gives, for example, only the customer or the provider (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In interdependent exchanges, both parties have to take part, and this is the defining characteristic of social exchange (Molm, 1994). Reciprocal interdependence emphasises that the exchange is contingent, meaning one actor’s actions should result in a response from the other actor (Molm, Peterson & Takahashi, 1999). Interdependent exchanges can develop into self-reinforcing cycles, where after giving, receiving follows leading again to giving. Because each actor makes his or her decision individually to act in a reciprocal manner or not, benefits flow unilaterally (Molm, Takahashi & Peterson, 2000).

When looking at reciprocity as a moral norm, the focus is on how people should behave. Norms are the building blocks of society and culture, and they create unspoken rules that most people accept (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). Norms relate to, for example, paying for a received service or product and behaving in a social situation in an acceptable manner. Reciprocity as a moral norm states that “1) people should help those who have helped them, and 2) people should not injure those who have helped them” (Gouldner, 1960, p.171). However, not all individuals behave in a similar fashion. Individuals have a different perception of exchange orientation. For some, it is high, and for others, it is low. Persons with a high exchange orientation are more likely to return a good deed than those with a low exchange orientation. Additionally, for some people, reciprocity represents quid pro quo propensities, whether positive or negative. When a person is negatively reciprocity orientated, he or she has a tendency to return negative treatment for negative treatment. Similarly, a person who is positively reciprocity orientated returns positive treatment for positive treatment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

2.4.2 Script theory

Script theory is rooted in sociology and psychology (Erasmus et al., 2002; Solomon et al., 1985). It has been introduced to marketing and service fields, and the theory has been applied in understanding the roles and behaviours of customers and employees during a service encounter (e.g. Erasmus et al., 2002; Victorino, Verma & Wardell, 2013). The advantage of using script theory in marketing and services literatures is that it can be used to “reflect specific types of consumer/buyer behaviour” and to shed light on customers’ expectations and situational decision making and behaviour (Erasmus et al., 2002, p.1).

Script theory explains that in a service situation, actors follow a certain script, meaning actors can foresee each other’s actions and act accordingly to produce a satisfactory result for all of the actors (Erasmus et al., 2002; Solomon et al., 1985). Scripts, or cognitive scripts, are memory structures of a certain situation, and they guide our everyday life
A script encodes a bundle of information about a specific goal-directed event which includes standard conditions, such as entering the event, the event’s sequences, normal outcomes, and roles that actors play (Hubbert, Sehorn & Brown, 1995). In another words, a script can be defined as “a coherent sequence of events expected by an individual in a particular context, involving him either as participant or as an observer” (Puto, 1985, p.404). Script theory is closely linked with role theory (Mohr & Bitner, 1991; Solomon et al., 1985) that states actors need to adopt the correct role during the interaction. Role theory focuses on three major aspects: role behaviour (the way a person occupies a particular position), social position (the role that is assumed by social participants), and role expectation (the standard behaviour linked to that particular role). Hence, a specific script includes certain roles (Mohr & Bitner, 1991).

Scripts function as the basis for expectations (Hubbert et al., 1995). An expectation is based on the customers’ needs and wishes, but it is also influenced to a substantial extent by the company’s reputation or image, the customers’ previous experience of the company, the company’s marketing, and other aspects (Dean, 2004; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Ojasalo, 2001). Expectations are not static; they change over time as a result of the changes in a customer’s wishes (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996). Expectations and needs are culturally bound; thus, they change from one context and culture to another (Hietanen, Andéhn & Bradshaw, 2017). Expectations are not possessed only by consumers; companies also have expectations of how certain service situations are going to take place (Bitner, Booms & Tetreault, 1990; Pugh, 2001). When a firm and customers share a common understanding of how a situation is going to unfold, it can be called mutual understanding (Mohr & Bitner, 1991).

Scripts are valuable because they converse effort (Hubbert et al., 1995). A script enables action because the steps of a specific situation have been learnt before. Scripts allow almost an automated process to take place owing to the information the actors already possess regarding a service situation. Thus, a situation triggers the proper script and guides an actor’s behaviour as the script entails the specific information for that particular event. Scripts are also an individual phenomenon; hence, two people can have different scripts of the same situation. Scripts are always developed through interaction with the environment; thus, the script each actor develops for a certain situation is slightly different because actors have different experiences (Erasmus et al., 2002).

2.4.3 The multiple-theoretical-lens perspective for studying customer engagement and value co-destruction

The multiple-theoretical-lens perspective, as the name states, refers to the utilisation of a combination of multiple theories rather than using one theory. The multiple-theoretical-lens perspective allows researchers to see things which might not have been recognised previously (Carlile & Christensen, 2004). It can offer a solution for the research community’s tendency “to create isolated silos of knowledge” (Okhuysen & Bonardi, 2011, p. 6). The multiple-theoretical-lens perspective can bring these isolated silos together within and across disciplines by highlighting areas of overlap or
2.4 The theoretical lenses used for studying customer engagement and value co-destruction

Complementarity and displaying sites of contradiction. Thus, the multiple-theoretical-lens perspective can result in integration of the theories (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Okhuysen & Bonardi, 2011). In this thesis, the theory of social exchange and script theory are combined in order to understand how customer engagement influences value co-destruction. The next section explains how these theories were used to investigate and understand the influence of customer engagement on value co-destruction.

The theory of social exchange is used to understand the antecedents and positive outcomes of customer engagement. Customer engagement literature argues that customers can receive different benefits from their engagement with a firm, such as financial (e.g. rewards), physiological (e.g. having fun), social (e.g. feeling like belonging to a community), and technological benefits (e.g. learning to use a new product) (Beckers et al., 2016). Customers receiving highly regarded benefits from a relationship with a firm will in return develop positive thoughts, recommendations, attitudes, and behaviours towards a firm’s marketing object, such as the product, service, experience, or the firm itself (Beckers et al., 2016; Blau, 1964; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). Per the terms of theory of social exchange, customers reciprocate the benefits they receive by giving back; thus, theory of social exchange in fact explains customer engagement behaviour and the benefits that firms perceive (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Kumar et al., 2010). Firms can enforce this engagement by keeping close contact with the customer and offering new benefits (Beckers et al., 2016; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The theory of social exchange argues that actors take part in interactions as long as it is valuable for them (Chibucos et al., 2005). If customers feel that an engagement is no longer beneficial for them, they ‘terminate’ their engagement or at least become disengaged, thus acting on the basis of the assumptions of the social exchange theory.

A combination of the theory of social exchange and script theory is utilised to understand the negative outcomes of customer engagement. As discussed previously, for some people, reciprocity represents quid pro quo propensities, whether positive or negative. When a person is negatively reciprocity orientated, he or she has a tendency to return negative treatment for negative treatment. If a customer experiences a negative service experience, and if this customer is negatively reciprocity orientated, he or she could engage in negative influencing and referral behaviour, i.e. negative WOM. This goes against reciprocity as a moral norm. Norms are the unspoken rules of society that most people accept (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). Here, the theory of social exchange can be connected to script theory. Script theory explains that in a service situation, the actors follow a certain script, meaning the actors can foresee each other’s actions and act accordingly to produce a satisfactory result for all of the actors (Erasmus et al., 2002; Solomon et al., 1985). Thus, scripts are created on the basis of previous service experiences, service experiences emerge from specific service situations, and those specific service situations follow the social norms which the involved actors assume that the counter-actor has also accepted. In other words, the theory of social exchange and script theory are connected on how people should behave. When, for example, a customer experiences a negative service experience, the firm expects the customer to report this negative experience; they would then be aware of a possible problem and engage in
service recovery. However, if the customer does not engage in knowledge behaviour (i.e. reporting the problem) and instead engages in negative referral and influencing behaviour (i.e. writing a negative social media review), the customer acts in a way that the firm was not anticipating. The customer acts against the norm and the script. Thus, the theory of social exchange and script theory can be combined because they share similar assumptions, i.e. social norms and how actors should behave in service situations (Okhuysen & Bonardi, 2011).

The script theory is used to understand the antecedents of value co-destruction. Scripts are always context specific, and the customers and firm must employ the correct script for that particular situation (Hubbert et al., 1995). For example, in the case of a low-cost hotel, the service provider chooses an engagement style that emphasises reactive interaction and anticipatory attention or avoidance and expects customer expectations to be in line with the hotel’s quality, whereas at a premium hotel, customers expect much attention from the service provider (Blocker, Flint, Myers & Slater, 2011; Gwinner, Bitner, Brown & Kumar, 2005; Prior, 2016). However, if the actors’ scripts do not match or the actors are unable, intentionally or unintentionally, to follow their expected scripts, then unsatisfactory outcomes are likely to occur (Surprenant & Solomon, 1987; Hubbert et al., 1995). Thus, it can be argued that the actors’ inability to follow their expected script functions is the basis for value co-destruction. In fact, the script theory has been proposed as a suitable theoretical lens for studying value co-destruction (Lefebvre & Plé, 2011; Plé & Cáceres, 2010). The script theory has been employed for understanding service encounters and why they might fail (Bitner et al., 1990; Mohr & Bitner, 1991), the similar or different expectations that the customer and provider have for a certain service situation (Hubbert et al., 1995), and interactive value creation (Eichentopf, Kleinaltenkamp & van Stiphout, 2011).

Figure 3 summarises the discussion above and demonstrates how the concepts were studied through the lenses of theory of social exchange and script theory.
2.4 The theoretical lenses used for studying customer engagement and value co-destruction

**Figure 3.** The multiple-lens perspective for studying customer engagement and value co-destruction
3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the ontological, epistemological, and methodological choices that have guided this thesis. This section presents the research approach, data collection and data analysis methods, and evaluation of research quality.

3.1 Research approach and design

The research design consists of three main parts: ontology, epistemology, and methodology, all of which are guided by a paradigm (Greene, 2007). A paradigm indicates the basic beliefs or claims of the world (Godfrey-Smith, 2003).

Marketing research, in general, follows two different paradigms: an objectivist, empiristic or positivist view of knowledge or a subjectivist, interpretivist or social constructionist view of knowledge (Hanson & Grimmer, 2007; Marsden & Littler, 1996). The positivist paradigm asserts that objective reality is out there to be found (Godfrey-Smith, 2003; Hanson & Grimmer, 2007). Positivists measure and analyse causal relationships between two or more variables (Perry, Riege & Brown, 1999). This positivistic approach has been criticised because it places strong emphasis on objectivity and ignores the subjective experiences of individual people as well as the subjective nature of reality (Belk & Kozinets, 2005; Marsden & Littler, 1996; Perry et al., 1999). Here, the counter-argument towards positivism is social constructionism that is based on the assumption that reality is subjective and that knowledge is not only shared amongst individuals but also created in interaction (Hibberd, 2005). Social constructionists employ qualitative research methods in order to understand a given phenomenon in its context and gain an in-depth understanding of that phenomenon (Hanson & Grimmer, 2007; Marsden & Littler, 1996). Social constructionism is the paradigm adopted in this thesis.

Social constructionism is a collection of multiple theories; however, what they share is the viewpoint of the constitution of social life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hibberd, 2005). Social constructionism implies that knowledge, concepts, and behaviours are created in a social interaction with others (Burr, 1995). It emphasises the context-dependence and socio-linguistic nature of knowledge that it is generated and sustained in social interactions (Burr, 1995; Hibberd, 2005). Social constructionism itself is not a definition provided by one author – it is a collection of different thoughts created together by scholars (Gergen, 2009).

Of note, social constructionism is not the same as social constructivism. Social constructivism focuses on an individual human’s learning that takes place in a small group or in overall society (Doolittle & Hicks, 2003), whereas social constructionism emphasises that knowledge and our collective understanding of the world are created in social interactions (Burr, 1995; Hibberd, 2005).

Since the purpose of this thesis is to understand how customer engagement influences value co-destruction and to offer both theoretical and managerial insights into this
phenomenon, the author employed the paradigm of social constructionism. Both customer engagement and value co-destruction require a collaborative effort in order to emerge (although they can have very different outcomes). The understanding of successful engagement and collaboration is based on interactions happening between the firm and the customer, which then are transferred to other interactions, creating social knowledge of how to achieve a positive outcome. In addition, the surrounding social structures should be taken into account in order to co-create value (Lusch & Vargo, 2014). Experiences of customer engagement and value co-destruction are always subjective, meaning the firm and the customer can perceive different customer engagement or value co-destructive actions differently (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Makkonen & Olkkonen, 2017). Thus, the processes of customer engagement and value co-destruction are socially constructed because the firm and the customer interact in the hopes of co-creating value; however, for different interactive reasons, the outcome can be value co-destruction instead.

3.1.1 Ontology and epistemology

Ontology refers to the existence of the world and its social entities (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) or in other words, “whether or not we think reality exists entirely separate from human practices and understanding – including the research we conduct to find such things out – or whether we think it cannot be separated from human practices, and so knowledge is always going to reflect our perspectives” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.27). Objectivism and subjectivism are two main ontological perspectives, and in studies focusing on social actors, subjectivism is often referred to as constructionism (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). In line with the chosen paradigm, this thesis follows the subjectivism or constructionism perspective of ontology. The chosen ontological standing point guides the epistemological choices, as will be discussed next.

Epistemology refers to knowledge: what is legitimate knowledge, what is possible to know (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As with ontology, epistemology has two perspectives, subjectivist and objectivist, and they can be divided into different perspectives on reality, one of them being the constructionist perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Constructionist epistemologies argue that what we know about the world, i.e. the knowledge we have, is constructed through multiple discourses we have with each other. There is not one knowledge; there are several knowledges (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thus, the constructionist approach is not strictly subjectivist or objectivist, rather a middle-ground between the two (Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010), and this moderate aspect of epistemology, the constructionist approach, is adopted in this thesis.

The chosen ontological and epistemological standing points guide the selection of the appropriate methodologies. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how in-depth relationships or collaborations emerge and what outcomes they bear. Each relationship is a unique and highly subjective phenomenon and different factors affect its emergence and lifespan. Thus, it is necessary to choose a paradigm, epistemology, and ontology which speak for the subjectivist approach. In line with these, the chosen methodology should follow the same subjectivist perspectives, as will be discussed next.
3.1 Research approach and design

3.1.2 Methodology

Methodology refers to the “chosen framework within which our research is conducted” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.31). Methodology includes the chosen methods used to carry out the research. The chosen ontological and epistemological approaches guide the methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

This thesis focuses on investigating how customer engagement influences value co-destruction. The investigated phenomenon is highly subjective and context dependent; thus, the chosen methodology is qualitative by nature. The qualitative research approach was considered as an adequate choice for several reasons.

Firstly, it provides the flexibility to explore complex, sensitive, and subjectively experienced issues in a real-life social context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Given that this thesis focuses on understanding the influence of customer engagement on value co-destruction, both of which are highly subjective and complex concepts, the qualitative research approach was perceived as the adequate choice. The qualitative research approach allows the researcher to identify how individual actors perceive the researched topic in their subjective way.

Secondly, qualitative inquiry is adequate when the focus is on gaining in-depth understanding of a given topic (Hyde, 2000; Creswell, 2013), as here the focus is on understanding customer engagement and how it influences value co-destruction. Thus, with the qualitative research approach, it is possible to investigate customer engagement as a holistic concept, i.e. studying both its antecedents and outcomes and at the same time and studying customer engagement in different contexts. Quantitative research might not offer the same possibilities to understand the importance of the context (Braun & Clarke, 2013), especially how customer engagement and value co-destruction can differ amongst different contexts.

Finally, this thesis focuses on investigating research avenues that are novel and unexplored; therefore, this study follows the qualitative research methodology. Specifically, the chosen approach was exploratory qualitative research, meaning the purpose is to clarify the understanding on a certain issue (here, the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement and the antecedents of value co-destruction) and find new insights into this phenomenon, here the influence of customer engagement on value co-destruction (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). If the negative outcomes of customer engagement are left unexplored, the research community will be left with a partial picture of customer engagement as a phenomenon. This poses a challenge in understanding all possible outcomes of relationships, including value co-destruction (Plé & Cáceres, 2010; Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016).
3.2 Reasoning

The two main reasoning logics in research are deductive and inductive logic. *Deductive reasoning* is theory driven; the research commences with existing theories and concepts (Gummesson, 2000). Thus, the initial source of knowledge in deductive reasoning is theory (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Deductive research typically is about testing the theory. In quantitative research, hypotheses are developed based on theory that are tested in an empirical setting, and in qualitative research, a conceptual framework is developed from theory or previous literature, and data are collected and analysed following this framework (Hyde, 2000; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

*Inductive reasoning* is the mirror image of deductive reasoning. Whilst deductive reasoning commences with theory tested in an empirical setting, inductive reasoning begins with real-world data (Gummesson, 2000). Inductive reasoning is perceived as the theory-building process that commences with empirical observations of specific instances, and it seeks to establish generalisations about the investigated phenomenon (Hyde, 2000). With inductive reasoning, the aim is to produce knowledge about a real-life phenomenon and to understand why things worked or happened the way they did (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

*Abductive reasoning* is a reasoning logic that combines aspects of deductive and inductive reasoning. Abductive reasoning refers to “fruitful cross-fertilization where new combinations are developed through a mixture of established theoretical models and new concepts derived from the confrontation with reality” (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 559). Abductive reasoning relies on the notion that the most interesting and important advances in science are not produced by following purely deductive or inductive reasoning; the results are generated by a mixture of these logics (Fischer, 2001). Research is a creative process, and shifting from data to theory and theory to data can foster this creativity (Kovács & Spens, 2005).

When employing abductive reasoning, the research can commence either with a real-life observation or with some level of theoretical knowledge and preconceptions, depending on the researched phenomenon (Kovács & Spens, 2005). What differentiates abductive reasoning from deductive reasoning is that even if previous theories explain the studied phenomenon, when the empirical findings are not in line or do not match the previous theories, then theory matching commences in order to find a new theoretical perspective to explain the identified results (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Kovács & Spens, 2005). In inductive reasoning, theory is built from the data after they have been analysed, whereas in abductive reasoning, data collection and theory building are simultaneous processes (Creswell, 2013). This creates the ‘back and forth’ movement between theory and data, which is the main characteristic of abductive reasoning. This comparison process between the results and literature allows the researchers to identify which aspects of the results are generalisable and which results pertain to the specific situation from which they stem. The researcher’s previous experiences inform the researcher’s choice of the aspects of the results that can be generalised (Kovács & Spens, 2005).
This thesis employed two reasoning logics: abductive and inductive logic. The main reasoning logic of this thesis is abductive reasoning, and it was used in publications I, II, IV, and V. Customer engagement, its antecedents and positive outcomes, and the antecedents of value co-destruction have been studied previously; hence, current understanding of these phenomena exists. Abductive reasoning was considered the appropriate approach, because a prior understanding of these concepts was obtainable; the identified results could be compared to existing literature, and the final results would emerge from this cross-fertilisation process. Abductive reasoning is a continuous process, and it takes place in all phases of a research process (Dubois & Gadde, 2014). In line with this note, the process of abduction is described in the following chapters concerning data collection and analysis. A detailed presentation of the overall abductive reasoning process is presented in Figure 5. Inductive reasoning was utilised in publication III, owing to the novelty of the studied phenomenon, i.e. customer engagement and sustainability.

3.3 Data collection

The empirical data for this thesis was collected from two studies. In study 1, the objective was to investigate customer engagement and value co-destruction amongst multiple firms operating in various contexts, in order to gain rich insights into the two phenomena and their relationship. Study 2 focussed on one firm and its customers, and how the firm and its customers perceived customer engagement, value co-destruction, and their relationship. This approach was chosen because conducting two different studies allows the researcher to compare the similarities and differences of customer engagement and value co-destruction in different contexts and in different relationships. After study 1 was completed, the findings and insights of that study guided and reshaped the second study. Publications II and IV originated from study 1, and publications I, III, and V originated from study 2.

Before commencing the data collection, an understanding of the literature on customer engagement and value co-destruction was obtained; thus, an awareness of the existing literature and the aspects requiring further investigation existed. Based on this literature familiarisation, it became evident that the abductive research approach was the proper approach because the literature streams offered information on, for example, the antecedents of customer engagement. However, empirical evidence on the antecedents and negative outcomes of customer engagement and their connection with value co-destruction was lacking. Thus, there was a need to study the phenomenon empirically in order to understand it fully; the literature offered a reference point for the results.

The main data collection technique in both studies was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews entail a fixed set of questions; however, additional questions can be introduced in the discussion to further elaborate on a given topic (Cachia & Millward, 2011). Semi-structured interviews are favoured over structured because they allow more leeway to follow-up on the angles that are considered important by both the interviewer and the interviewee (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In addition, semi-structured interviews allow
the interviewer to have a greater say in the conversation (Leavy, 2014). A more detailed
description of the interviews is given in the following chapters. Additionally, study 2
included other data-collection techniques which are discussed in chapter 3.3.2.

3.3.1 Study 1

The first study focused on investigating customer engagement and value co-destruction
amongst seven different organisations, all of which operate in Finland. The purpose of
this study was to investigate the antecedents and outcomes, both positive and negative, of
customer engagement, and how value co-destruction emerges from the provider’s
perspective. Additionally, the aim was to study customer engagement in the B2B setting,
which is a novel research stream within the customer engagement literature. Publications
II and IV emerged from this study.

The seven firms or organisations were part of a larger research programme that focused
on sustainability and innovativeness. In total, the project included nine
firms/organisations. Initially, the nine firms/organisations were selected for the project
because sustainability and innovativeness played a major role for their businesses, so they
were seen as very fruitful data sources. Additionally, these organisations represent
different parts of the Finnish business environment, so they provided multiple
perspectives on how innovativeness and sustainability are handled in different
firms/organisations. Out of these nine firms or organisations, seven were chosen for this
particular study. Firm number eight proposed such an interesting research topic that an
individual study, study 2, was designed for it. Firm number nine was excluded from study
1 purely for scheduling conflict.

The seven organisations represented public as well as private firms ranging from
construction to food providers. The chosen organisations represented five types of
relationships: government-to-consumer (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), business-
to-government (B2G), B2B, and B2C. Different organisations based on both industry and
relationship type were chosen because the aim was to study the phenomena of customer
engagement and value co-destruction amongst different organisations to yield insightful
results. Additionally, by studying customer engagement amongst different relationship
types, the researcher obtained multiple viewpoints on the topic. Thus, the aim was to
choose organisations that operated in B2C, B2B, and B2G relationships; hence, the
differences and similarities between industries and relationship types could be compared.
Therefore, the sampling strategy was purposeful sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015;
Sandelowski, 2000). Table 4 depicts the industry and relationship type of each
organisation.

The chosen interview respondents were involved in supply- and marketing-related tasks
in their respective organisations. The informant sampling followed purposeful sampling
logic (Palinkas et al., 2015; Sandelowski, 2000), with the aim of selecting information-
rich informants. Supply and marketing personnel interact in different intensities with the
organisations’ customers. Therefore, these personnel possess different understandings of
3.3 Data collection

customer engagement and value co-destruction. By selecting informants from different positions, the researcher developed richer insights into the studied phenomena by comparing similarities and differences in the respondents' answers (Salonen & Jaakkola, 2015). Interviewing multiple respondents also provided an opportunity to confirm information from other sources, thus increasing the validity of the results (Golden, 1992).

Once the decision was taken to interview supply and marketing personnel, the author of this thesis contacted the supply managers of each chosen organisation directly, given the existing contact with them. After the supply managers agreed to act as informants, they were requested to propose a suitable marketing person, such as a brand manager, a customer relationship manager, or a service development manager, from their organisation with a short description of the person’s job description. The author of the thesis then either accepted this proposal or requested another one if the particular person was found to work on tasks that were not relevant to the organisation’s customers. After proposals from all seven organisations were received, the marketing persons were contacted, and all of the contacted individuals agreed to give an interview. A list of the participants is presented in Table 4.

The interviews were conducted in two rounds; in the initial interview round, in the spring of 2015, all 14 informants were interviewed. The interview guide for the initial round was focused more on customer engagement from several angles, such as the ways in which the participants felt the customers could be engaged and what different benefits customer engagement could have for them and for their customers. The negative outcomes of customer engagement and value co-destruction were also addressed in the interview guide briefly. This was done because the author was not certain how the informants would react to such a negatively loaded topic. During the interviews, it became clear that the informants were willing to discuss negative issues as well; thus, questions outside of the interview guide were added during the interview. A follow-up interview was deemed necessary to ensure the collection of rich and rigorous data especially on value co-destruction, and during the data analysis of these initial interviews, several questions about value co-destruction were created. These follow-up interviews took place between January and February 2016. The interview guides from both interview rounds can be found in Appendix 1. Five follow-up interviews were conducted with the marketing personnel from five organisations because in the initial interview, it was found that these individuals had the best knowledge about this topic. The interviewee from organisation 1 had a hectic timetable, so a follow-up interview was not feasible for him. Additionally, the interviewee from organisation 7 had relocated to a different firm, so he was not available for an interview. Hence, in total, 19 interviews were conducted, and they lasted between 55 minutes and 95 minutes. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.
### Table 4. Interviews in study 1 (RT = relationship type)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Org#</th>
<th>Characterisation</th>
<th>RT</th>
<th>Interviews, 1st round</th>
<th>Interviews, 2nd round</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>G2C, G2B</td>
<td>Sourcing Manager, City Engineer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Public service provider</td>
<td>B2G</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Public service provider</td>
<td>B2G</td>
<td>Sourcing Manager, Head of Branch Solutions, Contract Attorney</td>
<td>Head of Branch Solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Industrial application provider</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>Material Management Manager, Marketing Manager</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>B2B, B2C</td>
<td>Head of Consumer Experience Development, Head of Residential Construction’s Profit Center</td>
<td>Head of Residential Construction’s Profit Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Aviation service provider</td>
<td>B2B, B2C</td>
<td>Corporate Sourcing Manager, Head of Service Development</td>
<td>Head of Service Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Food industry provider</td>
<td>B2B, B2C</td>
<td>Senior Sourcing Manager, Brand Development Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Information provided: customer engagement**
- Employed customer engagement strategies, customer engagement behaviours, engagement’s benefits, how customer engagement can be harmful for firm and biggest challenges related to customer engagement.
- Deeper investigation of the initial round’s themes.

**Information provided: value co-destruction**
- General investigation, how firm and customer can act in a way that is perceived negatively by the other actor.
- Products, situations and services that customers are disappointed with, how both parties can initiate value co-destruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data items</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>March–May 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>January–February 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.2 Study 2

In study 2, customer engagement and value co-destruction were studied in the hotel context. The purpose of this study was to investigate the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement and how value co-destruction emerges from both the provider’s and the customer’s point of view. The hotel industry was chosen as the empirical context for two main reasons. Firstly, customer engagement plays a considerable role in the hotel industry because customers tend to rely on customer engagement activities (e.g. previous experiences or the firm’s social media presence) when making purchase decisions (Bowden et al., 2014; So et al., 2016). Hence, the hotel industry was chosen as the empirical context. Secondly, hotels by nature entail multiple interactions between customers and firms, which occur before, during, and after the hotel stay. Hotel stays offer multiple opportunities for hotel guests and staff to interact, thus offering multiple interaction points that can influence the final outcome (Berry et al., 2006; Morosan & DeFranco, 2016). A hotel visit consists of the long overall service experience and shorter sub-experiences, such as breakfast service and gym service (Berry et al., 2006). These separate interactions constitute the entire hotel stay and can influence both positively and negatively how both consumers and hotel staff perceive the final outcome (Berry et al., 2006; Morosan & DeFranco, 2016).

The author engaged in a research collaboration with a multinational hotel chain owing to the strong customer-orientation and engagement strategies the hotel chain had employed. Thus, the assumption before the research collaboration was that the firm’s management had successfully employed customer engagement strategies amongst different hotels, meaning rich information on customer engagement could be obtained from this collaboration. Thus, the firm was chosen following the purposeful sampling logic (Palinkas et al., 2015; Sandelowski, 2000).

Data collection in study 2 comprised three stages. Firstly, the researcher conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with different middle-management representatives and staff members from 4 different hotels located in the metropolis of Helsinki. These interviews were conducted from May 2015 to March 2016. By interviewing participants from different positions and different levels of the hotel chain, the author of the thesis was able to gain an insight into various perspectives and customer relationship strategies. The respondents were selected by the snowballing method (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), with the aim of choosing key participants. The initial aim was to interview several managers from each individual hotel, but as the field data had indicated redundancy after 12 interviews, the researcher concluded that theoretical saturation had been reached (Creswell, 2013), which signalled completion of the initial stage. Each interview lasted between 45 and 70 minutes and was digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Table 5 depicts the interviews in a more detailed manner, and the interview guide is attached in Appendix 2.

Secondly, the customer side was accessed through reflective diaries. Diaries are generally used in psychology studies (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003) and healthcare studies (Elg
et al., 2011); however, their usage in business studies is fairly common (Dube & Helkkula, 2015; McColl-Kennedy, Cheung & Ferrier, 2015). Diaries are designed to capture the “little experiences of everyday life that fill most of our working time and occupy the vast majority of our conscious attention” (Wheeler & Reis, 1991, p.340). Diaries allow researchers to examine reported events and experiences in their natural, spontaneous context (Bolger et al., 2003). Hotels 1 and 2, located in Helsinki, Finland, were chosen to facilitate diaries during summer 2016. The customers who had joined the company’s loyalty programme were chosen as the target group, because they visit the hotels often; hence, they might have higher expectations of the service because they are familiar with the firm’s concept and standards. Additionally, customers who stayed longer than two nights in a hotel were asked to fill in diaries. This ensured that customers had multiple interactions during their stay and could thus reflect better on the interactions and how these interactions positively or negatively impacted their stay. The diaries had three sections: background questions, daily reflective diary, and questions concerning guests’ overall stay. The reflective diary is presented in Appendix 2. Hotel guests were provided with general instructions and a daily reflective diary, and questions concerning their overall stay had more specific instructions. Owing to the internationality of the selected hotels, diaries were offered in Finnish, English, and Swedish. In total, 15 diaries were collected by the researcher: 10 from hotel 1 and 5 from hotel 2.

Thirdly, the researcher accessed 344 online reviews that had been written to TripAdvisor concerning hotels 1 and 2. TripAdvisor was chosen as a data source because it is a well-known online review site amongst consumers; the hotels in question are present there and current hotel managers of these hotels respond actively to guest reviews; thus, the hotel and their guests can engage in a dialogue after their stay. The online reviews were used in two ways: 1) to see if the guests bring up issues related to positive or negative service experiences the diaries and/or interviews did not reveal and 2) to corroborate the findings that the reflective diaries and interviews had yielded. Reviews written in Finnish were chosen as the data source because when consumers can express their opinions in their native language, they tend to be more detailed and emotional than when writing in a foreign language (Caldwell-Harris, 2014). The online reviews were accessed and analysed in January 2017. The empirical data collected from study 2 are presented in Table 5. Publications I, III, and V originated from study 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data description</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Diaries</th>
<th>Online reviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in the firm</td>
<td>Country Procurement Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Director of Sales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Director of Marketing &amp; Communications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>District Director 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>District Director 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel 1</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage Manager</td>
<td>10 diaries</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Restaurant Duty Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Executive chef</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel 2</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>5 diaries</td>
<td></td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel 3</td>
<td>Front Office Duty Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel 4</td>
<td>Front Office and Food &amp; Beverage Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data items</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>344</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information provided: customer engagement</td>
<td>What customer engagement strategies firms employ, how customers can demonstrate their engagement, how customer engagement is beneficial for both firm and customer and how customer engagement can be harmful for firm</td>
<td>How positive and negative encounters have affected guest behaviour (gave feedback, engaged in WOM etc.), why they chose this hotel and hotel chain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information provided: value co-destruction</td>
<td>What are typical products, situations and services that customers are disappointed with, how guests can act in a value-destructive manner, how informants perceive that their company can engage in behaviour which is perceived negatively by their guests and what are the biggest challenges related to value co-destruction</td>
<td>Background information, negative experiences encountered during each day of stay, how these negative encounters affected guests’ behaviour (made a claim for compensation, complaint to family etc.)</td>
<td>Reported problems with products and/or services, general perceptions of one’s stay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Data analysis

The data analysis in all five publications was conducted by thematic coding and analysis; categories and themes were originally built from the bottom up by organising data into abstract units of information (Creswell, 2009; Leavy, 2014). All data sources, interviews, reflective diaries, and online reviews were analysed in a similar manner. Specifically, the researcher followed an analytical process, where data are organised into first- and second-order codes and then aggregated into theoretical dimensions. This method is known as the Gioia method, and it is an inductive data analysis method (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2012). Following a clear analytical process enhances qualitative rigour since it demonstrates the progression from raw data to theoretical dimensions (cf. Vafeas et al. 2016; Zimmermann, Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2015).

Given the nature of each individual publication, the data analysis focused on either customer engagement or value co-destruction. In all publications, the data analysis process commenced with the reading of interview transcripts and interview notes, followed by the coding process. Interviews were analysed using the NVivo 10 software. In publications I, II, IV, and V, the initial data analysis framework was compared with existing knowledge and was modified as per the empirical findings and theoretical insights gained during the process; thus, abductive reasoning took place. This process is depicted in Figure 5. Following the abductive approach allowed the researcher to form categories for all the information received from different data sets, get insights from the theory, and reflect back on the empirical findings. Table 6 summarises each publication and its data analysis perspective.

Table 6. Research design of the individual publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Reasoning logic</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Study 1 or 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I: Customer engagement in the hotel industry: perceptions of hotel staff and guests</td>
<td>Abductive</td>
<td>1 organisation; 12 interviews; 15 diaries</td>
<td>Gioia method</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II: Customer engagement in B2B and B2G relationships: antecedents and outcomes</td>
<td>Abductive</td>
<td>6 organisations; 17 interviews</td>
<td>Gioia method</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III: Customer engagement and sustainability: utilising engaged customers in innovating company’s sustainability practices</td>
<td>Inductive</td>
<td>1 organisation; 12 interviews</td>
<td>Gioia method</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV: When value co-creation fails: reasons that lead to value co-destruction</td>
<td>Abductive</td>
<td>7 organisations; 19 interviews</td>
<td>Gioia method</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V: Value co-destruction in a hotel industry: how scripts shape service experiences</td>
<td>Abductive</td>
<td>1 organisation; 12 interviews; 15 diaries, 344 online reviews</td>
<td>Gioia method</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first stage of the coding process focused on identifying the first-order codes. Publications I, II, and III focused on customer engagement. When creating the first-order codes regarding customer engagement data, the focus was on identifying, for example, specific antecedents or ways in which firms are engaging their customers, ways in which customers demonstrate their engagement with the firm, and specific outcomes of customer engagement. In Publications IV and V, the focus was on investigating the antecedents of value co-destruction. During the stage of first-order codes with value co-destruction data, the focus was on identifying an action, place, situation, or other factors that could initiate the value co-destruction process. Publications I and V had reflective diaries as additional data sources. Once the first-order codes from the interviews had been created for both respective publications, the reflective diaries were analysed. The diaries were analysed in a similar thematic coding fashion as the interviews, so the focus was on identifying specific first-order codes that fitted the themes of customer engagement or value co-destruction. Diary data can be analysed in a similar thematic or content analysis style as interview data (e.g. Clayton & Thorne, 2000). Diary data brought up new first-order codes because they represented the customer’s voice. An example of data analysis related to customer engagement is presented in Figure 4 depicting the service experience, which was identified as an antecedent for customer engagement.

During the second stage of the coding process, the purpose was to group similar first-order codes into second-order codes. At this stage the, the first-order codes that had emerged from interview and diary data (Publications I & V) were treated as equals, meaning they were combined into a larger pool of first-order codes out of which the second-order codes were created. With regard to customer engagement data, for example first-order codes concerning WOM and opinions were grouped into a second-order code labelled as ‘Feedback’ (Publication II). The data analysis process focusing on value co-destruction was continued by combining first-order codes relating to lack of trust or openness into a second-order code labelled as ‘Inability to trust’ (Publication IV). Once the second-order codes had been created, an additional data source, 344 online reviews, was introduced in Publication V. Online reviews were analysed manually and their purpose was either to bring new insights or corroborate the existing findings. After all the
reviews had been read, it was evident that they corroborated our previous findings from the two other data sources, thus the reviews served the purpose of triangulation.

The third stage focused on creating the aggregated dimensions based on similar second-order codes. When analysing customer engagement data, the second-order codes regarding communication and feedback were grouped into the aggregated dimension labelled as ‘Dialogue’ (Publication I). With regard to value co-destruction data analysis, an aggregated dimension, labelled as ‘Blaming’ was based on the similarity of the second-order codes concerning complaining and blaming (Publication IV). The identified aggregated dimensions and the second-order codes were compared to either existing customer engagement or value co-destruction literature, and based on the identified results and the literature, the aggregated dimensions were either reformulated or retained. This process followed the abductive data analysis method. Additionally, during the data analysis, the underlying theory that could explain the phenomenon of either customer engagement or value co-destruction was evaluated. For example, in the case of value co-destruction, the initial pre-understanding was that either service-dominant logic or service logic would be the underlying or explanatory theory. The data analysis was conducted with this pre-assumption. However, during this phase, it became evident that neither of the logics was an appropriate match with value co-destruction because they lack the precise focus on the service situation. Thus, a ‘new’ theory was searched in order to find a match, and the script theory was found to be a proper match for value co-destruction. Then, the results were seen through the lens of the script theory, and the result of the abductive research approach was that value co-destruction emerges because of an actor’s inability or failure to adopt the correct script. The abductive data process with the example of value co-destruction is depicted in Figure 5.
3.5 Quality of the research

The quality of a research is typically measured by reliability and validity and also by how generalisable the results are to a wider phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, qualitative business researchers are divided on whether they accept or reject reliability and validity as a proper means of evaluating the quality of research. Especially in constructivist research, the more suitable substitutes for reliability and validity are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

For credibility, the researcher is supposed to question whether he or she is familiar with the researched topic, is the data sufficient enough for the claims made, and can other researchers with the same material achieve relatively similar interpretations and agree with the proposed claims (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Gummesson, 2000). One way to achieve credibility is to discuss the findings with the participants. This was done in Publications IV and V, where the findings were presented to the participating firms, and

Figure 5. An example of the abductive research approach related to value co-destruction
their feedback was requested. Findings from Publications I, II, and III were presented to firms through reports. An important aspect of qualitative inquiry is triangulation, meaning the researcher does not rely on one data source and/or one method. This thesis used triangulation of multiple data sets (Metsämuuronen, 2006). The findings emerged from two different studies; from two different interview sets; and from interviews, diaries, and online reviews.

Transferability refers to the researcher’s responsibility of demonstrating the degree of similarity in the research or parts of it and also the similarity between the conducted research and existing research. The purpose is not to conduct a replication study but to demonstrate similarities between different research contexts (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The two studied phenomena, customer engagement and value co-destruction, were altogether studied in eight different firms and seven different contexts. Publications I, III, and V examined customer engagement and value co-destruction in a single company, and publications II and IV investigated the same concepts in six and seven organisations, respectively. Publications I and II confirmed some of the findings as generalisable between several industries, as did publications IV and V.

Dependability refers to how much information has been offered to the reader concerning the logic of research, traceability, and documentation; hence, the studies can be replicated (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). All publications include a detailed methods section with an explanation of how the research was conducted and an explanation on the need for the research. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed, and both the recordings and the transcriptions were stored properly.

Conformability refers to “linking findings and interpretations to the data” in such a way that it is easy for others to understand (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p.294). In other words, conformability means that the data and interpretations made based on that data are not the product of one’s imagination (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). All of the publications included a detailed methods section with an explanation on how the research was performed. Publications I, II, IV, and V demonstrate the data analysis process through a framework, and the findings are demonstrated in a way that it is clear they emerged from the collected data.
4 THE PUBLICATIONS AND A REVIEW OF THE RESULTS

This chapter discusses the objectives, findings, and main contributions of the five publications that comprise the second part of this thesis. The purpose of this thesis was to investigate how customer engagement influences value co-destruction. Four different sub-questions were asked in order to answer the main research question. The first sub-question investigated the antecedents of customer engagement, and publications I, II, and III shed light on this question. The second sub-question investigated the positive and negative outcomes of customer engagement, and publications I, II and III offered answers to this question. The third sub-question focused on understanding the antecedents of value co-destruction, and publications IV and V investigated this phenomenon. The final sub-question, which focused on investigating the temporal nature of value co-destruction, was explored in Publication IV. The chapter concludes with a summary of the publications’ findings.

4.1 Publication I - Customer engagement in the hotel industry: Perceptions of hotel staff and guests

Objectives

The main objective of this study was to investigate the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement in the hotel industry. Customer engagement plays a specific role in the hotel industry because customers tend to rely on customer-engagement activities (e.g. previous experiences or the firm’s social media presence) when making purchasing decisions. Hotel-specific customer engagement studies are scarce; thus, there is a need for producing more knowledge on hotel industry-specific antecedents.

Main findings

This study identified that customer engagement can be achieved through dialogue, customer engagement strategy, and service experience. These results stress that engagement requires investments from both the firm and the customer. For example, dialogue can happen only if both parties take part in the exchange of information. The results demonstrate that service experience plays a significant role in achieving and maintaining customer engagement because the service experience helps create a very personal relationship between the firm and the customer. Additionally, this publication explored the positive and negative outcomes of customer engagement. Customer engagement benefits firms through monetary benefits, WOM, and loyalty programmes. Even though specific customer benefits were not identified, service experience can be said to be both an antecedent and a customer benefit because it brings the customer and firm close to each other. The negative outcomes of customer engagement relate to service failure that enforces customer engagement. This implies that firms need to have clear service recovery strategies in place to maintain engagement because if customers
experience service failure and a failed or absent service recovery, they can become disengaged. The results also shed light on how engaged customers can use their disruptive status, meaning how customers can turn a close personal and beneficial relationship into a very opportunistic and demanding relationship.

**Contribution**

This publication contributes to current customer engagement literature by studying both the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement empirically. The previous empirical investigations on customer engagement are not extensive. This publication proposed that the antecedents of customer engagement are dialogue, service experience, and customer-engagement strategy. This publication offers empirical evidence on the connection of service experience and customer engagement, an approach which has been moderately addressed in previous studies. Additionally, this study proposed that the negative outcomes of customer engagement are a firm’s enforcement of disengagement and customer’s disruptive actions. Research on the negative outcomes of customer engagement is scarce, and this thesis contributes to current literature by proposing these two outcomes.

### 4.2 Publication II - Customer engagement in B2B and B2G relationships: Antecedents and outcomes

**Objectives**

This study analysed the antecedents of customer engagement and the positive and negative outcomes of customer engagement. The existing customer engagement literature focuses on B2C relationships, and current literature lacks insights into customer engagement from B2B and public relations. Thus, this publication focused on exploring the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement amongst six different provider organisations, operating in B2B and B2G contexts. The study was conducted from the provider’s perspective.

**Main findings**

The findings show that customer engagement can be achieved through reliability, collaboration, communication, offerings, and helping customers achieve goals. These antecedents are mostly firm based, meaning they emerge from the providing firm’s actions. Hence, the providing firm needs to invest into these actions, processes, or services in order to achieve customer engagement. This publication also studied the outcomes of customer engagement. The findings suggest that customer engagement benefits the customer by a personal and close relationship with the providing firm. For the providing firm, customer engagement is beneficial through customer offerings (such as WOM and engaged customers tend to be more forgiving) and monetary benefits. These benefits can be considered once customer engagement has been established; hence, these are the long-term benefits of a relationship built on engagement. On the other hand, the findings
4.3 Publication III - Customer engagement and sustainability: Utilizing engaged customers in innovating company’s sustainability practices

suggest that customer engagement results in negative outcomes when relationship challenges, external challenges, and unhealthy relationships are present, and dialogue is absent. What happens if purchasing customers become too engaged or customers become engaged but do not breathe fire into the engagement? There seems to be a fine line between the positive and negative aspects of customer engagement; engagement needs to be managed in order for it to benefit both the providing firm and the purchasing customer and not just the customer.

Contribution

The main findings contribute to current customer engagement literature in three different ways. Firstly, this publication looked at customer engagement in B2B and B2G relationships, which has been identified as a different engagement phenomenon from B2C engagement. B2B and B2G engagement is a novel approach in engagement literature, but it has received little academic attention. Secondly, it identified reliability, collaboration, communication, offerings, and helping customers in achieving goals as B2B and B2G customer engagement antecedents. Thirdly, this publication proposed that customer engagement has a dark side when relationship challenges, external challenges, and unhealthy relationships are present, and dialogue is absent. Customer engagement literature in general has treated engagement as a positive phenomenon, and this publication introduces four different ways in which the end-result can be negative.

4.3 Publication III - Customer engagement and sustainability: Utilizing engaged customers in innovating company’s sustainability practices

Objectives

This publication looked at how engaged customers can be involved in innovating a company’s sustainability practices. This publication has a more practical nature. The author engaged in a research collaboration with an international hotel chain which is a pioneer in integrating sustainability within its functions in the hotel industry in order to investigate how the hotel chain is already communicating and involving their customers into their sustainability practices and how it could be developed.

Main findings

The publication suggests that the main factor in connecting engaged customers and sustainability is information. The hotel chain in question has implemented sustainability throughout its actions and organisations, and they wish to receive more sustainability-related feedback from their customers. Thus, those engaged customers who value sustainability in the same intensity as the firm should be used as a source for new sustainability ideas. It was proposed in the publication that different events and surveys should be targeted to this customer base in order to find new sustainability actions from the customers. However, not all of the hotel’s customers value sustainability in the same
intensity as the firm, so the firm should identify these customers and why they have become engaged, for example, through general service offerings and good quality. These customers can even be irritated by a strong emphasis on sustainability practices.

**Contribution**

This publication contributes to the current customer engagement literature by offering a practical perspective on the topic and proposing how a firm’s engaged customers can be used as an idea source. This publication also contributes to the avenue of customer disengagement by investigating it in an empirical setting, an approach which has been relatively nascent in current engagement literature. It was identified that customer disengagement can occur when a firm promotes it values which are not aligned with the customer’s values.

### 4.4 Publication IV - When value co-creation fails: Reasons that lead to value co-destruction

**Objectives**

The main objective of this publication was to investigate the antecedents of value co-destruction and the temporal nature of these antecedents. Value co-destruction literature is still emerging, and the insights have been obtained mostly from single-case studies. Thus, this publication aimed to investigate the antecedents of value co-destruction across seven different industries and relationships (B2C, B2B, B2G, and G2C). Additionally, the current literature is lacking information on the connection between time and the antecedents of value co-destruction; hence, this publication focused on exploring when the antecedents emerge.

**Main findings**

This study identified eight antecedents behind value co-destruction: absence of information, insufficient level of trust, mistakes, inability to serve, inability to change, the absence of clear expectations, customer misbehaviour, and blaming. Additionally, these antecedents were analysed through their temporal nature. The publication suggests that absence of information, insufficient level of trust, mistakes, and inability to serve are so-called time-independent reasons, meaning they can take effect at any point of a collaboration. Inability to change and absence of clear expectations were identified as reasons that can initiate value co-destruction before collaboration, whereas customer misbehaviour and blaming can initiate value co-destruction after collaboration.

**Contribution**

This publication contributes to current value co-destruction literature by offering eight antecedents for value co-destruction. Some of them corroborate previous findings, some are in line with other suggested antecedents, and some are new avenues in value co-
4.5 Publication V - Exploring customer- and provider-originated antecedents of value co-destruction in hotel services

destruction literature. Additionally, these antecedents were analysed in light of their temporal nature; hence, this publication contributes to the current literature by proposing that the antecedents can be divided into those emerging before or after collaboration or that they are time-independent, meaning they can take effect at any point during the collaboration.

4.5 Publication V - Exploring customer- and provider-originated antecedents of value co-destruction in hotel services

Objectives

This study focused on exploring value co-destruction in the hotel industry, with the aim of investigating how value co-destruction emerges. In tourism literature, the focus has been on how to mitigate negative service experiences and not on how and why the negative service experiences occur. Hence, in this publication, the negative service experience is studied through the lenses of value co-destruction and script theory.

Main findings

The main findings of this publication present the six identified antecedents of value co-destruction that can be divided into provider-originated (inability to provide a service, contextual rigidity, and incoherent marketing communication) and customer-originated antecedents (excessive expectations, insufficient communication, and inappropriate behaviour). The actors can perceive these antecedents as goal prevention, net deficit, or both. This publication argues that negative service experiences, or in other words, value co-destruction, emerges when collaborating parties behave in a way that the counter-party was not expecting, meaning the party fails to follow a service situation’s script.

Contribution

This publication contributes to tourism management literature by proposing six potential antecedents of negative service experiences, which can be sorted into customer- and provider-originated antecedents. The findings suggest that value co-destruction can emerge because of mismatched scripts between collaborating actors. These antecedents are analysed through a proposed value co-destruction framework of goal prevention and net deficit. This publication contributes to value co-destruction literature by corroborating previous literature, such as excessive expectations and insufficient communication. The findings also offer novel insights into the antecedents of value co-destruction, contextual rigidities, and inability to provide a service.

4.6 Summary of the publications

Table 7 offers a summary of the publications and their findings. Each publication plays an important role in the entire dissertation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Publication I</th>
<th>Publication II</th>
<th>Publication III</th>
<th>Publication IV</th>
<th>Publication V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: What are the customer engagement’s antecedents?</td>
<td>Q1: What are the antecedents of customer engagement?</td>
<td>Q1: How can customer engagement be utilised on improving and creating company’s sustainability practices?</td>
<td>Q1: What are the reasons for value co-destruction from the provider’s perspective?</td>
<td>Q1: How does value co-destruction emerge in hotel services?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: What are the positive and negative outcomes of customer engagement?</td>
<td>Q2: What kind of positive and negative outcomes does customer engagement have?</td>
<td>Q2: When do the identified reasons behind value co-destruction emerge?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical background</th>
<th>Theory of social exchange and customer engagement</th>
<th>Customer engagement and sustainability</th>
<th>Value co-creation and co-destruction</th>
<th>Script theory, service experience and value co-destruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main findings</th>
<th>Publication I</th>
<th>Publication II</th>
<th>Publication III</th>
<th>Publication IV</th>
<th>Publication V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1: Customer engagement can be achieved with dialogue, customer engagement strategy and service experience. F2: Customer engagement offers the firm monetary benefits, engaged customers express WOM and engaged customers are loyal, staying customers. F3: Customer engagement can be harmful for customers when the firm enforces disengagement. Customer engagement is</td>
<td>F1: Customer engagement can be achieved with communication, offerings, reliability, collaboration and the firm helps customers in achieving goals. F2: Engaged customers receive a more personal and accurate service, that suits their needs. For the firm, customer engagement brings monetary benefits and positive WOM.</td>
<td>F1: Engaged customers can be connected to a firm’s sustainability practices by offering them information relating to the firm’s current practices and what aspects the firm would like to achieve in future. Engaged customers should be connected more intensively to the firm, and their opinion should be asked frequently, through various channels.</td>
<td>F1: The antecedents of value co-destruction are absence of information, insufficient level of trust, mistakes, inability to serve, inability to change, absence of clear expectations, customer misbehaviour and blaming. F2: The identified reasons behind value co-destruction can take effect before or after the collaboration or they can be so-called time-independent reasons,</td>
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<tr>
<td>F1: The antecedents of value co-destruction are absence of information, insufficient level of trust, mistakes, inability to serve, inability to change, absence of clear expectations, customer misbehaviour and blaming. F2: The identified reasons behind value co-destruction can take effect before or after the collaboration or they can be so-called time-independent reasons,</td>
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<td>F2: Value co-destruction emerges when actors perceive behaviour from the counter-actor that they were not anticipating to encounter.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.6 Summary of the publications

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2: It identifies two negative consequences of customer engagement.</td>
<td>C2: It identifies the antecedents of customer engagement in B2B and B2G settings.</td>
<td>C2: It also proposes that customer disengagement can emerge when the customer’s and the firm’s values are not aligned.</td>
<td>C2: It also explores the temporal nature of value co-destruction.</td>
<td>C2: It proposes that value co-destruction emerges when actors fail at following a designated script.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F3: Customer engagement can have a dark side when the relationship between the firm and customer becomes challenging, there is not enough dialogue and the relationship evolves into an unhealthy one. Additionally, different external challenges can hinder customer engagement. Meaning they can have a negative effect at any point during the collaboration. In another words, value co-destruction emerges when actors do not follow the script that they are supposed to or the follow the script but behave not according to it.
5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the four sub-questions are answered in order to offer an answer for the main research question. A framework of customer engagement and its relationship with value co-destruction is presented in Figure 6. After the findings of this thesis are discussed, the theoretical and managerial implications are presented, followed by a discussion on the limitations and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Reviewing the answers to the research questions

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the relationship between customer engagement and value co-destruction. In line with this, the main research question of this thesis was:

*How does customer engagement influence value co-destruction?*

In order to answer the main research question, the thesis was structured into four subsection that covered the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement, the antecedents of customer engagement, and the temporality of value co-destruction.

5.1.1 The antecedents of customer engagement

The first sub-question was formulated as follows: How do customer engagement’s antecedents differ between different relationship types? With this question, the purpose was to empirically determine what the antecedents of customer engagement are and how they might differ between B2C, B2B, and B2G relationships. Despite a large body of research on this topic, the antecedents of customer engagement in an empirical setting are still relatively understudied (Hollebeek et al., 2016; Leckie et al., 2016) and limited amount of research exists on how customer engagement and its antecedents differ between B2C and B2B and public relationships (Vivek et al., 2016).

Based on the findings from publications I and III, the antecedents of customer engagement in B2C relationships are *customer engagement strategy, dialogue, information, shared values, and service experience.*

In order to achieve customer engagement, a clear engagement strategy should be designed and implemented. By crafting a customer engagement strategy, the firm focuses on creating and sustaining customer relationships, which can result in long-lasting engagement. When customers feel that a firm is focused on them and on nurturing the relationship that exists between the firm and customer, this can reinforce the engagement. Thus, customer engagement can become a source of competitive advantage (Islam & Rahman, 2016). Current research uses the term ‘customer engagement marketing’ to refer to a firm’s deliberate actions to engage their customers (Harmeling et al., 2017). Engagement strategy and engagement marketing are in line with each other, emphasising the importance of seeing customer engagement as a result of clearly designed actions.
5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Using a strategic approach for engagement is still a relatively new approach, and this thesis offers empirical evidence on its importance.

Different customer segments value different things; thus, in order to achieve engagement, firms should understand how to connect with different customers. One avenue here is shared values. Especially, values relating to sustainability speak to some customer segments (Prud’homme & Raymond, 2013; Aznar, Sayeras, Galiana & Rocafor, 2016), so firms should emphasise their sustainability values and build a relationship with their new or current customers on these shared values. For example, promoting how a firm supports sustainability demonstrates to customers that the firm values similar issues; hence, customers are more likely to become emotionally attached to these kinds of firms (van Doorn et al., 2010). Shared values have been discussed, for example, in brand literature (Jahn & Kunz, 2012), and this is in line with the general customer engagement discussion that customers become engaged with firms they feel connected with (van Doorn et al., 2010).

Information and dialogue play a key role in building customer engagement. Through information, a firm is able to tell customers what they can offer them, and this should take place in different channels, for example, social media and face-to-face communication in the firm’s premises. If potential customers are not aware of what the specific firm has to offer, they most likely will not even become customers, let alone engaged customers. Information sharing should not only be from firm to customer but also from customer to firm; thus, it can become a dialogue. Firms crave feedback from their customers to improve their operations and create new offerings for their customers (Celuch et al., 2015). An on-going dialogue should take place between a firm and customers in order to achieve engagement. When dialogue is sustained between the customer and the firm, the customer feels that he or she is heard, his or her needs are taken into consideration, and that he or she can achieve his or her goals. Information- and dialogue-related antecedents are in line with previous literature on customer engagement in B2C relationships (Jayachandran et al., 2005; Nguyen et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2018).

Especially in B2C relationships, service experience plays a key role as an antecedent of customer engagement. In experience-centric industries, such as hotel, amusement park, and sport industries, service experience plays an essential role in creating not only memorable service moments but also engagement. When a firm focuses on co-creating service experiences with customers, instead of just services, a customer feels that the hotel stay, for example, was tailored to his or her needs. This can foster customer engagement, because the customer experiences a very personal service encounter that translates into a positive memory and emotional response. Service experience by definition refers to a process that creates emotional and behavioural responses to a service (Dube & Helkkula, 2015), whereas customer engagement refers to the emotional connection that a customer wishes to have with a firm (van Doorn et al., 2010). Hence, service experience and customer engagement are very much connected despite research on this connection being limited in current literature (Brodie et al., 2011; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Thus, this thesis empirically proposes a connection between service experience and customer...
5.1 Reviewing the answers to the research questions

engagement and specifically states that service experience is an antecedent of customer engagement.

Antecedents of customer engagement in B2B and B2G were investigated in publication II. The identified antecedents were collaboration, helping customers in achieving goals, communication, offerings and reliability. Customer engagement in B2B and B2G relationships is a novel phenomenon, and empirical research on this topic is limited (Vivek et al., 2016). Thus, the findings in publication II provide empirical evidence on customer engagement in B2B and B2G relationships and on the antecedents that allow this engagement.

The results highlight that achieving customer engagement requires collaborative effort; engagement can be seen as an outcome when the firm and the customer collaborate and when the firm is focused on helping customers achieve their goals. This is in line with the findings of Brodie et al. (2011) – customer engagement is a co-creative effort between the firm and the consumer. This notion emerges from B2C engagement literature. It can be argued that collaboration as an antecedent of customer engagement has even bigger impact on the relationships between firms because the relationships between firms are based on problem-solving and building long-lasting collaborations that will benefit both parties (Reinartz & Berkmann, 2018; Wilkinson, 2008). When a firm’s focus is on enabling the customer to achieve their goals, the customer feels that the firm is interested in the customer’s success. Hence, engagement allows customers to achieve their goals, and this has been proposed as an antecedent in B2C customer engagement (van Doorn et al., 2010). Hence, this thesis expands the notion of collaboration and helping customers achieve their goals from B2C customer engagement to B2B and B2G engagement.

Communication, in line with information and dialogue, plays a crucial role in achieving customer engagement. Continuous communication and dialogue between the customer and the providing firm, regardless of the relationship type, are crucial requirements. Hence, this thesis expands the notion of communication from B2C customer engagement to B2B and B2G engagement.

Offerings was identified as an antecedent of customer engagement in B2B and B2G relationships. Publication I proposed that in B2C relationships, the element of offerings was part of service experience, and thus an antecedent of customer engagement. Offerings is in line with previous literature on customer engagement (Vivek et al., 2012). However, since B2B and B2G engagement is a novel research stream, this thesis empirically proposes that offerings is in fact an antecedent in these relationship types as well. Offerings plays a crucial role in engagement, because the offerings, whether services or products, are what customers require. By offering quality and needs-matching products and services, the firm can contribute to customer engagement by satisfying customer’s needs (van Doorn et al., 2010).

Finally, publication II proposed reliability as an antecedent of customer engagement. Reliability is closely connected with trust which has been proposed to be an antecedent
of customer engagement in B2C relationships (van Doorn et al., 2010). Publication I proposed that in B2C relationships, reliability was identified as a part of service experience, and thus an antecedent of customer engagement. In a relationship, if a customer feels that the provider is trustworthy, he/she is likely to want to continue this relationship because he/she feels that the deals and deadlines are respected. Trust has been discussed in buyer-seller relationships (Doney & Cannon, 1997). To expand this notion, this thesis highlights reliability as a specific customer engagement antecedent in B2B and B2G relationships.

The identified 10 antecedents share similarities between the 3 investigated relationship types (B2C, B2B, and B2G). In all three relationship types, information, dialogue and communication were identified as antecedents of engagement. This highlights the importance of continuous communication between the relationship actors, regardless of the relationship type. Offerings were identified as an antecedent of customer engagement in B2B and B2G relationships, and it was found to be a part of service experience. As with information-related antecedents, offerings play a key role in building and maintaining engagement, because the quality products and services are what customers are seeking for. Additionally, reliability was found to be an antecedent of engagement in B2B and B2G relationships and a part of service experience in B2C. Reliability or trust plays an important role in building and maintaining relationships and also in transferring these relationships to the level of engagement. Thus, this thesis found that information-related aspects of relationship, offerings, and reliability are similar antecedents between the three investigated relationship types.

Customer engagement strategy, shared values, and service experience were B2C relationship-specific antecedents whereas collaboration and helping customers achieve goals were B2B- and B2G-specific antecedents. These antecedents show fundamental differences because the B2C antecedents for customer engagement are more about emotions and personal issues (e.g. service experience), which, to some degree, was expected. The customer engagement literature concerning B2C relationships talks much about the emotional connection between the firm and customers (e.g. van Doorn et al., 2010). On the other hand, the B2B and B2G antecedents emphasise a collaborative problem-solving perspective that is connected with the notions of value co-creation in B2B relationships (Aarikka-Stenroos & Jaakkola, 2012; Gebauer et al., 2010). This is also in line with the proposed definition for B2B engagement; however, the empirical evidence for this has been lacking. Empirical evidence of B2B and B2G engagement is what this thesis offers.

5.1.2 Benefits of customer engagement to firms

The second research question focused on investigating how customer engagement’s outcomes differ between different relationship types. The outcomes of customer engagement have been studied empirically, but the focus has been on customer-perceived benefits. Scholars have argued for an overarching study of the benefits of customer engagement and especially benefits for the firm (Beckers et al., 2016). By using this
5.1 Reviewing the answers to the research questions

approach, it would be possible to understand both the positive and negative outcomes of customer engagement. Customer engagement is largely seen as a positive phenomenon, but its possible negative consequences have been overlooked in current research (Alexander & Jaakkola, 2016; Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Islam & Rahman, 2016). Thus, with this sub-question, the focus was on investigating the benefits that a firm can experience from engagement and the negative outcomes of customer engagement for both the firm and customer. The positive outcomes of engagement are addressed in this chapter, and the negative outcomes are discussed in the next chapter.

In B2C relationships, monetary benefits, WOM, and loyalty programme were the identified benefits for a firm. Publication II discussed the positive outcomes in B2B and B2G relationships which were customer’s offering and monetary benefits. The identified benefits were very aligned with each other. In all investigated relationships, customer engagement was found to be beneficial through monetary means. Thus, customer engagement benefits firms through purchasing behaviour (Kumar et al., 2010). Engaged customers return for purchases, so engaged customers offer firms a stable customer base, bringing in revenue. Monetary benefits have been a much-researched avenue in the B2C customer engagement literature, so this finding is line with the current literature (Beckers et al., 2016). This thesis expands on the notion of monetary benefits from B2C to B2B and B2G customer engagement literature.

Engaged customers also express positive WOM on social media sites and to their friends and family, thus customer engagement benefits firms through influencing and referral behaviour (Kumar et al., 2010). Engaged customers should be seen as influencers, meaning firms should offer engaged customers the avenues to express their opinions about the firm, brand, or service, for example, on the firm’s social media sites or customer’s own social media sites. Thus, the recognition given to engaged customers should be expanded even as far as seeing them as part-time marketers (Harmeling et al., 2017). WOM has been an extensively studied phenomenon, on its own and as part of customer engagement; hence, the findings are in line with previous literature on engagement in B2C relationships (Beckers et al., 2016; Chu & Kim, 2011).

In B2B and B2G, an identified benefit was customer offerings. This refers to WOM as well as customer’s attitude of being more forgiving than new customers. Especially customers who perceive multiple benefits from working together with a particular provider are more forgiving of the mistakes and service failures than new, recently acquired customers. This is in line with the notions of customer engagement in B2C interactions (Bowden et al., 2014) and also the basic assumption of the theory of social exchange, i.e. customers return positive deeds for positive deeds (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This also follows the notion of loyalty in B2B relationships (Čater & Čater, 2010). However, the forgiving nature in B2B and B2G relationships is also impacted by the switching costs perceived by the customers if they choose to change suppliers (Lam et al., 2004). If the switching costs are high, customers are likely to stay in the relationships despite the perceived problems as opposed to in a situation where the switching costs are
low. Thus, this thesis proposes this notion of what customers can offer for firms in B2B and B2G engagement literature.

Finally, in B2C relationships, loyalty programmes offer benefits for firms by ensuring a stable customer base. Loyalty programmes can be seen as a strategic customer engagement antecedent (Harmeling et al., 2017) as well as an outcome. Loyalty programmes bring together the benefits that have been discussed here previously. However, the findings revealed that the customers who belong to a specific loyalty programme and possess a loyalty programme card, which reminds them of the firm’s presence, are more likely to establish an intense and long-lasting relationship with the firm than customers who do not belong to the loyalty programme. The physical card offers them multiple benefits, so it is in their interest to remain engaged with the firm and repurchase from them and not from the competitors. Thus, engagement can be described as a win-win situation; both parties experience benefits by staying in a relationship with each other. Previous research has argued that loyalty cards are beneficial for both the firm and customer if the benefits of the loyalty card extend beyond monetary benefits (Harmeling et al., 2017). Thus, the notion of loyalty card is in line with previous research regarding monetary benefits and also points out to the possible dark side of purely monetary-based loyalty card.

5.1.3 Negative outcomes of customer engagement

Research on the negative consequences of engagement is a novel stream in engagement literature; therefore, this thesis offers insights into a less understood phenomenon. The negative consequences of customer engagement in B2C relationships can be divided into two larger themes: customer disengagement and engaged customers using their status disruptively. The negative consequences of customer engagement in B2C relationships were investigated in publications I and III.

Customer disengagement is related to a firm’s actions that customers perceive negatively, causing the customer to distance him/herself from the firm or ‘terminate’ the relationship completely (Bowden et al., 2016). Customers become disengaged because they perceived the services as dysfunctional or the services did not meet their needs. Through the findings, it can be seen that firms can even enforce disengagement. If a firm has, for example, multiple locations, the customer can interact with different people during the relationship. Then, the firm can contribute to the manifestation of customer disengagement by treating customers differently or by not having a clear service strategy in place. For example, if a firm does not have a clear strategy on how to reimburse certain service failures, staff members will offer different compensations for the same mistake (Edvardsson et al., 2011). If the customer experiences the same mistake or similar mistakes multiple times, he/she will expect the same compensation as the first time. However, if the next time the compensation is smaller or non-existing, the customer experiences failed service recovery (Edvardsson et al., 2011).
Enforced disengagement can also occur if a firm does not serve customers in a way that it has promised (Bowden et al., 2014). In this thesis, this was assumed to happen when a firm has a loyalty programme and a customer joins that loyalty programme; the firm makes certain service promises relating to, for example, the benefits the customers receive when they achieve a certain stage in the loyalty programme. If the firm changes these obtainable benefits without consulting with or informing the customers, they will feel that they are not receiving what was initially promised. Thus, they experience a negative service experience or service failure and can become disengaged (Bowden et al., 2014). The current literature has been discussing the above-mentioned issues through failed service recovery (Edvardsson et al., 2011; van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher, 2016); however, this thesis proposes this issue should be added to the customer disengagement literature too.

Firms can also enforce customer disengagement by emphasising its values and making these values very visible through their communication and operations. If a customer does not share these values and possibly finds them even annoying or against their own values, firms can drive customers away (Barber, Bishop & Gruen, 2014). The above discussed ways of customer disengagement are in line with previous research (Bowden et al., 2016); however, it is a very under researched phenomenon (Evanschitzky et al., 2012). This thesis expands on the customer disengagement literature by proposing that it might not happen because of a firm’s mistake but can even be enforced by the firm.

Another side to the negative consequences in B2C relationships is that engaged customers can express disruptive behaviour. Previous research has suggested that customers can demonstrate negative engagement behaviour by, for example, negative WOM and negative brand attitude (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). The findings of thesis paint a slightly different story. The findings propose that some customers can demand better and faster service and express outrageous demands. Then, the customers contribute to the negative consequences of customer engagement because the firm perceives that the relationship is no longer beneficial for them (Ojasalo, 2001). In addition, especially in a relationship that is built on multiple interactions where the individual staff member and customer get to know each other on a very personal level, the line between professional relationship and friendly relationship blurs. Firms want to build close connections with their customers, and especially in highly co-creative services, they hope that the service relationships evolve into very personal, close relationships (Bijmolt et al., 2010). However, even if the relationship becomes very close and almost friendly, both the customer and firm’s representative need to keep it professional at the same time. If a customer begins to treat the staff members as their friends and as an extreme example, proposes leaving without paying, then the customer ignores his/her role in that relationship. This is a mirror image of the previously suggested negative outcome of engagement where the customer detaches himself/herself owing to the relationship becoming very personal (Bijmolt et al., 2010), whereas the findings of this thesis suggest the opposite phenomenon. The notion of engaged customers expressing disruptive behaviour expands the current customer engagement literature by proposing a new reason why customer engagement can become a negative phenomenon for the firm.
In B2B and public relationships, negative outcomes were found to fall under the themes of *relationship challenges, external challenges, absence of dialogue, and unhealthy relationships*. These outcomes were investigated in publication II. The literature, in general, on B2B and B2G customer engagement is nascent, and negative outcomes have not received much attention.

Engagement represents a very close bond between firms and customers; however, this relationship needs to be nurtured to avoid relationship challenges. The results revealed that when engagement is achieved, it needs to be maintained as well. Firms should have enough time for each engaged customer; hence, customers will perceive that the engagement is in fact beneficial for them (e.g., Beckers et al., 2016). Equally important is the fact that customers invest into the engagement and maintain a close relationship with the firm they are engaging with. Relationship challenges have been discussed in the relationship management literature and in value co-creation (e.g., Jaakkola & Hakanen, 2013; Sheth et al., 2015), and this thesis proposes that relationship challenges should be included in the customer engagement literature, in order to avoid perceiving customer engagement as a solely positive phenomenon (Bowden et al., 2016).

Relationships between firms and customers do not happen in a vacuum; external issues can affect the engagement. Different external challenges, whether changing laws, economical changes, and new competitors, can affect the outcome of customer engagement. These external challenges highlight that even if the relationship between the firm and the customer is close and beneficial, external factors could hinder or affect this relationship. Van Doorn et al. (2010) proposed that external factors can be the antecedents of engagement, and engagement can have external consequences (not relating directly to the relationship’s customer or firm), for example, cross-branding and regulation. The effect of external factors on firms has been discussed, for example, in risk management and sustainable supply chain literatures (Waters, 2007; Lavastre Gunasekaran & Spalanzani, 2011; Hajmohammad & Vachon, 2016). This thesis proposes that external factors can influence engagement, not the other way around, as previous engagement literature has proposed.

This thesis discussed the importance of dialogue and information exchange between the firm and the customer, not only in achieving engagement but also in maintaining it (Nguyen et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2018). Thus, it became evident in publication II that customer engagement can be endangered if there is an absence of dialogue. Neither the customer nor the firm should stop communicating with each other once engagement has been achieved. If a firm stops communicating with its customers, the customers could feel that h/she is no longer important for the firm, resulting in the customer desiring to terminate the engagement. Absence of dialogue can also result in customers feeling neglected. Firms can experience customer engagement negatively if customers stop communicating with the firms. Information and communication play a crucial role in maintaining any relationship, and this thesis proposes that customer engagement can have a dark side if this dialogue is absent.
Finally, the findings proposed that if the relationship between the firm and their customers becomes unhealthy, customer engagement can have negative outcomes. This is very much linked to the notion of customers acting disruptively, as discussed in the negative outcomes of B2C relationships. As in B2C relationships, the relationships between a firm and a customer can become very close and almost intimate. However, some customers can start demanding or expecting firms to do tasks or fulfil parts of the collaboration that previously were fulfilled by the customer. This is connected with role conflict and power imbalance (Chowdhury et al., 2016; Vafeas et al., 2016). Customers can also start showing excessive expectations, as noted in B2C relationships (Ojasalo, 2001).

5.1.4 The antecedents of value co-destruction

The third sub-question explored why value co-destruction emerges. This question boils down to the antecedents that lead to the manifestation of value co-destruction. The antecedents were investigated in publications IV and V and the identified antecedents shared similarities.

In Publication IV, the antecedents of value co-destruction were explored among seven different contexts and across various relationship types. In this setting, value co-destruction was identified to emerge when the absence of information, insufficient level of trust, mistakes, the inability to serve, an inability to change, the absence of clear expectations, customer misbehaviour, and blaming are present. In Publication V, the antecedents of value co-destruction were explored in the B2C setting. Value co-destruction was found to emerge when inability to provide a service, contextual rigidity, incoherent marketing communication, excessive expectations, insufficient communication, and inappropriate behaviour were present. Based on the findings from the two publications, the identified antecedents of value co-destruction can be categorised into themes based on their similarities.

Firstly, value co-destruction can occur because of information- and communication-related issues. The specific identified antecedents were the absence of information, insufficient communication, and incoherent marketing communication. The role of information in a successful collaboration cannot be stressed enough. Information can be absent or insufficient when either the provider fails to provide information to the customer or customer fails to report problems to the firm. These notions are in line with previous research (Robertson et al., 2014; Vafeas et al., 2016). When either party experiences absence of information or insufficient communication, they are not aware of what tasks and responsibilities the collaboration entails. Then, the interaction between the parties can fail, resulting in one of both parties experiencing, for example, frustration and loss of time. Thus, value co-destruction emerges. Publication V proposes that insufficient communication is a customer-originated antecedent and it can make both the customer and firm experience value co-destruction through goal prevention. Publication IV suggests that absence of information can be demonstrated by both the firm and customer, and this thesis argues that both will experience value co-destruction through goal prevention. Firm can also contribute to the emergence of value co-destruction by offering
incoherent marketing communication. If the provided marketing messages are downright false compared to what customers actually receive at the firm’s premises, the firm is creating expectations that cannot be fulfilled. The current value co-destruction literature has not discussed this notion as an antecedent. Incoherent marketing communication has been discussed in other literature streams: for example, how tobacco firms can mislead customers about the tar levels of cigarettes (Cataldo & Malone, 2008), how firms can over emphasise or mislead customers about a product’s sustainable nature (Peattie & Crane, 2005), and how firms can create false expectations of luxurious service for a cheap price (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1991). The thesis highlights that incoherent marketing communication can result in value co-destruction because it creates unattainable expectations for customers, resulting in failed interaction. They can experience this failed interaction as goal prevention (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016), as was presented in Publication V.

The second larger identified theme is related to failed or inadequate service provision. The specific identified antecedents in this theme are inability to serve, inability to provide a service, and contextual rigidity. This theme covers actions solely taken by the provider. When collaborating with a firm, customers expect well-functioning services that are delivered on time and that the firm is prepared to receive each customer (Zhu & Zolkiewski, 2015). The antecedents related to inability to serve have not been proposed as antecedents for value co-destruction as such, but they are in line with the definition for value co-destruction, stating that co-destruction is a failed interaction process. Services are co-created between the firm and customer (Vargo & Lusch, 2008a); thus, if the service co-creation process were to fail owing to a firm’s inability to perform its part in this service creation, value co-destruction can occur because customers experience a failed interaction process that they perceive negatively. Publication V suggests that inability to provide a service is a provider-originated antecedent that will initiate value co-destruction and a customer experiences value co-destruction through goal prevention and net deficit. Publication IV discussed inability to serve and owing to its similarity with inability to provide a service, this thesis argues that inability to serve causes a customer to experience net deficit and goal prevention. Another point of view to this is contextual rigidity that can happen owing to a firm’s internal or external problems that affect how well the staff can serve their customers. This is a more comprehensive picture of failed service provision because it refers to the management’s improper resource allocation and inability to adapt to external pressures, which affects the firm’s ability to serve their customers. When customers cannot receive the service that is in their right to receive, they experience a failed interaction process. In Publication V, it was proposed that contextual rigidity is a provider-originated antecedent, and when value co-destruction emerges because of this antecedent, customers will experience it as net deficit.

The third identified theme covers expectations, and absence of clear expectations and excessive expectations are the identified antecedents. This theme discusses actions taken by the customer. If customers cannot express their expectations clearly or they are not aware of the expectations themselves, it is difficult for the firm to meet their expectations (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). On the other hand, if customers express excessive
5.1 Reviewing the answers to the research questions

expectations that are unjustified, the firm again cannot meet these expectations (Ojasalo, 2001). In both cases, firms cannot meet customers’ expectations, resulting in a failed interaction, which one or both parties can experience negatively. Expectations as an antecedent of value co-destruction has not been viewed as such, but this notion is in line with the actor’s perception of value co-destruction through goal prevention (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). Service and marketing literature has acknowledged, for example, latent needs and unjustified expectations (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Hubbert et al., 1995; Ojasalo, 2001). What the thesis highlights here is that it is important to understand the role and effect of expectations in relationships and how they resonate with the outcome of collaboration, especially if the collaboration is a very long one. If a customer’s expectations are absent or unjustified from the start and the firm cannot influence the customer to accordingly modify them, the collaboration or interaction can fail. Publication IV discussed absence of expectations, and this thesis argues that it causes both parties to experience goal prevention. In Publication V, excessive expectations were found to result in value co-destruction through both the firm and customer experiencing goal prevention.

The fourth identified larger theme covers customer’s behaviour and inappropriate behaviour, customer misbehaviour, and blaming are the identified antecedents. These actions are taken by customers. Customers can express inappropriate behaviour in different ways, including customer misbehaviour, public shaming, opportunistic behaviour, and disrespectful behavioural. Previous research has suggested that value co-destruction can emerge due to customer misbehaviour and opportunistic behaviour (Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Chowdhury et al., 2016). Customers can also engage in blaming behaviour when they blame the provider for no reason or blame the provider in a very public way. When customers are expressing this kind of behaviour, they are behaving in a manner the firm is not expecting, so the firm experiences a failed interaction. If blaming happens on social media, then it is especially harmful for firms, because it will influence how the firm’s other customers will perceive the firm. Research suggests that negative WOM is a negative aspect in relationships (e.g. Hollebeek & Chen, 2014), but it has not been proposed as an antecedent of value co-destruction as such. Customer misbehaviour and blaming were investigated in Publication IV, and this thesis argues that they cause the firm to experience net deficit. Inappropriate behaviour was investigated in Publication V and it was found to cause the firm to experience net deficit.

Additionally, value co-destruction was found to emerge in the presence of insufficient level of trust, mistakes, and an inability to change. These were addressed in Publication IV. Trust is essential in building relationships and insufficient level of trust can cause a collaboration to fail, as the parties cannot trust each other. Then, both parties fail to achieve the goals they were seeking (Vafeas et al., 2016). Insufficient level of trust is in line with previous research (Vafeas et al., 2016), and this thesis argues that when insufficient level of trust is present, both parties experience it as goal prevention.

Additionally, the interaction process between the firm and customer can result in negative outcomes when mistakes are present. Mistakes are natural occurrences in any
relationship, and they are a very clear reason behind value co-destruction. Mistakes can happen with different intensities and during different stages of a collaboration. In particular, mistakes that take place at the very beginning of a collaboration have a higher intensity because they can cause the collaboration to end all together (Rasoulian, Grégoire, Legoux & Sénécal, 2017). Mistakes are hard to avoid; however, their intensity should be controlled as much as possible. Mistakes have been discussed in other service studies (e.g. Chang & Hsiao, 2008; Rasoulian et al., 2017) and, recently, in the failed value co-creation literature (Heidenreich, Wittkowski, Handrich & Falk, 2015). This thesis highlights that especially large mistakes can result in failed interactions, so they should not be taken lightly. This thesis argues that when mistakes are present, the firm and customer can experience value co-destruction through net deficit.

Finally, an important aspect of any relationship is the ability to change. A successful collaboration requires that both the firm and customer embrace changes. Inability to change is closely linked to contingency theory, which explains that successful companies need to adapt their behaviour to perceived changes, i.e. contingencies (Homburg, Jozić & Kuehl, 2017; Volberda, van der Weerdt, Verwaal, Stienstra & Verdu, 2012). Digitalisation and consumer megatrends have made their way into business relationships, challenging relationships to evolve to a new level. This forces the provider to move beyond their operating context and understand different contexts and adopt different behavioural models from these different contexts. If a firm fails to adopt this new way of doing business, a customer can experience a failed interaction because he/she is expecting a different service. In contrast, providers are constantly innovating new products and services that not only make the customers’ lives easier but also reduce costs for the customer and the provider. However, providers count on customers’ willingness to change their behaviour and adapt these new ways of operating. If customers fail to do this, firms will experience value co-destruction because they invest resources into developing their services. This thesis argues that when inability to change is present, it causes both parties to experience goal prevention.

5.1.5 The temporality of value co-destruction

Finally, the fourth sub-question of this thesis covered the temporal dimension of value co-destruction, which was investigated in Publication IV. Specifically, the question addressed was “When does value co-destruction happen?” In Publication IV, it was found that the antecedents of value co-destruction can be categorised into before or after collaboration or as time-independent causes. The antecedents from Publication V were partly similar, so the identified antecedents from these two publications can be combined, as presented in Table 8.

Absence of information, insufficient communication, insufficient level of trust, mistakes and inadequate service provision-related antecedents (which contains the three service-related antecedents) are the so-called time-independent causes. They can have an impact at any time during the collaboration and contribute to the emergence of value co-destruction. For example, antecedents related to inadequate service provision emphasise
the importance of a provider’s processes. Service providers need to make certain preparations before receiving the customer, such as purchasing required goods and making sure that they have enough staff (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Payne et al., 2008). Then, the employees need to execute the service during the collaboration and interaction with the customer, and, for example, in the case of a service failure, the employees will need to engage in service recovery (van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher, 2016). After the collaboration has taken place, the service provider needs to be available for the customer should they encounter a problem after the collaboration or interaction has ended. The time-independent nature of service provision implies that inadequate service provision can result in value co-destruction at any point of the collaboration: before, after, or during collaboration.

Inability to change, absence of clear expectations, excessive expectations, and incoherent marketing messages are before collaboration antecedents, meaning they can initiate the value co-destruction process even before the collaboration starts. In the case of absent or excessive expectations, customers can develop these before the collaboration begins. If the customer enters a service interaction without clearly knowing what he/she needs from that interaction, it is almost impossible for the firm to execute the interaction in a successful manner (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). On the other hand, if a customer has developed excessive expectations based on, for example, previous experiences with other service providers, then, again, the provider will struggle to fulfill these expectations, leading to an unsatisfactory interaction (Ojasalo, 2001). Developing excessive expectations is not solely the customer’s fault, as the firm can contribute to this as well. If the firm offers incoherent marketing messages, they are allowing the customer’s expectations to build up before the interaction takes place. Thus, the seed of value co-destruction is planted even before the collaboration. Once the interaction commences, the customer will see that he/she cannot receive what was marketed by the firm.

Inappropriate behaviour from Publication V, which includes customer misbehaviour from Publication IV was found to be an antecedent that can occur during and after the collaboration. In Publication V, value co-destruction was studied in the hotel setting, where the service encounter lasts for several days. Here, it was identified that customers can behave in a value co-destructive manner during the collaboration; they can destroy the firm’s property and act disrespectfully towards the staff, just to name a few ways. Then, the firm will experience failed interaction with the customers owing to their behaviour, and they will experience different negative outcomes. If customers face service failure during their service encounter, the provider assumes that the customer will report this to them, so that the necessary service recovery measures can be taken. However, if the customer fails to report a problem during the service encounter, the firm has no clue about the perceived problems or ways to address them. Inappropriate behaviour can also initiate value co-destruction after the collaboration. Following the previous example about failed service failure notification, customers can influence a firm’s experience of a failed interaction by complaining publicly and on social media about their service experience. This is in line with the blaming dimension that was identified in Publication IV. If a customer blames the firm on social media for a negative experience that the firm was not
even aware of, then the customer has not given the firm a chance to rectify the situation before it became public knowledge. WOM affects other customer’s purchase decisions, so complaints on social media can have very negative outcomes for firms (So et al., 2016).

In Table 8, the discussion on the antecedents of value co-destruction, how actors perceive these antecedents, and their temporal dimensions is summarised. Next, this thesis moves into answering the main research question.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Explanation of the antecedent</th>
<th>P/C/J</th>
<th>GP / ND</th>
<th>Temporal dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incoherent marketing communication</td>
<td>Provider fails at communicating realistically about available and offered services.</td>
<td>Provider</td>
<td>GP (customer)</td>
<td>Before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to serve</td>
<td>Provider fails to service the customer in a valuable way. This can occur because of, for example, inadequately managing customer relationships or not offering what was promised to the customer.</td>
<td>Provider</td>
<td>GP and ND (customer)</td>
<td>Time-independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to provide services</td>
<td>Provider fails to service the customer in a valuable way. This can occur because of, for example, inadequately managing customer relationships or not offering what was promised to the customer.</td>
<td>Provider</td>
<td>GP and ND (customer)</td>
<td>Time-independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual rigidity</td>
<td>Management’s improper resource allocation and inability to adapt to external pressures, which affects the firm’s ability to serve their customers.</td>
<td>Provider</td>
<td>ND (customer)</td>
<td>Time-independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of information</td>
<td>The provider, customer or both are unable to provide or process information.</td>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>GP (both)</td>
<td>Time-independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient level of trust</td>
<td>If the actors are not able to trust each other, then their collaboration is bound to suffer because, for example, the actors cannot trust that what has been agreed on will be done.</td>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>GP (both)</td>
<td>Time-independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes</td>
<td>Mistakes can result from wrong assumptions and when an incorrect product is sold or purchased.</td>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>ND (both)</td>
<td>Time-independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to change</td>
<td>Either the provider, customer or both fail to adapt their behaviour to meet the changing environment.</td>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>GP (both)</td>
<td>Before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient communication</td>
<td>Customer fails at communicating needs and feedback clearly and proactively.</td>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>GP (both)</td>
<td>Time-independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of clear expectations</td>
<td>When customers do not identify their needs or are unable to express them clearly, it becomes almost impossible for the provider to match those expectations and needs.</td>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>GP (both)</td>
<td>Before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive expectations</td>
<td>Customer has unreasonable and unrealistic expectations.</td>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>GP (both)</td>
<td>Before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer misbehaviour</td>
<td>Customers behave in a way the provider did not foresee and especially in a negative way; this causes unnecessary stress and worries for the provider.</td>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>ND (firm)</td>
<td>During and after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate behaviour</td>
<td>Customer fails at following commonly-shared norms of behaviour and behaves in a way the firm was not expecting.</td>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>ND (firm)</td>
<td>During and after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Customers express their disappointment not directly to the provider but through different public means, such as complaining on social media.</td>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>ND (firm)</td>
<td>After</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2  The influence of customer engagement on value co-destruction

Using the answers to the sub-questions, the influence of customer engagement on value co-destruction can be proposed. The reasons behind this relationship can be divided into three categories: firm-, joint-, and customer-originated reasons.

Firstly, when looking at how engagement can have a negative outcome for the customer, the literature suggests that when a customer experiences service failure, this can lead to customer disengagement (Bowden et al., 2016). The results of this thesis suggest that the firm can enforce customer disengagement. On the other hand, the results propose that value co-destruction emerges when a firm is unable to serve, unable to provide, shows contextual rigidity, and provides incoherent marketing communication. Hence, this thesis argues that customer engagement influences value co-destruction through the firm’s failure to serve customers. When customers feel that they are not receiving what the firm promised them through marketing campaigns, whether targeted at engaged or unengaged customers, they cannot receive parts of a service that are justifiably expected, or they do not receive the service all together, they are experiencing value co-destruction through customer disengagement. This reason can be categorised as a behavioural reason; customers feel that the firm’s behaviour is negative towards them.

Secondly, customer engagement influences value co-destruction through joint-originated reasons. The findings of this thesis depict absence of dialogue as a negative outcome of customer engagement. On the other hand, insufficient communication and absence of information were identified as the antecedents of value co-destruction. Thus, customer engagement influences value co-destruction through an insufficient level of communication. Insufficient or absent information harms the relationship, even if the relationship is already on the level of engagement. Total absence of dialogue and information can lead to a customer wishing to terminate his/her engagement with the firm. On the other hand, even engaged customers can fail at providing sufficient quality or quantity of information, which would be very important for the firm. Hence, this reason can be classified both as a behavioural reason (expressed behaviour is negative) and as a resource reason (resources are not provided or they are negative). Additionally, customer engagement influences value co-destruction through a turmoil in the relationship. The findings from customer engagement suggest relationship challenges as a negative outcome of engagement, which is very much connected with the value co-destruction concept itself. The concept of value co-destruction refers to a failed interaction process, and relationship challenges, especially impactful ones, can result in a failed relationship or interaction. Hence, this reason can be classified both as a behavioural reason (expressed behaviour is perceived negatively) and as a resource reason (resources are not provided or they are negative).

Finally, the two concepts are connected through actions taken by the customer that affect the firm. Customer engagement was found to have a dark side when engaged customers use their status disruptively and when the relationship turns unhealthy. Excessive
5.2 The influence of customer engagement on value co-destruction

expectations was found to be an antecedent of value co-destruction. This thesis argues that customer engagement influences value co-destruction through *excessive or unjustified expectations*. Engaged customers can develop excessive expectations based on their previous interactions, and these expectations can initiate value co-destruction because the firm cannot meet these expectations. Then, both the customer and the firm experience the failed interaction process; the customer cannot receive what he/she was expecting, and the firm cannot satisfy the customer. Hence, this reason can be classified both as a behavioural reason (expressed behaviour is perceived negatively) and as a resource reason (resources are not provided or they are negative). Additionally, when engaged customers are using their status disruptively and unhealthy relationships are present, the customers are connected with inappropriate behaviour, customer misbehaviour, and insufficient level of trust. Then, customer engagement influences value co-destruction through *disruptive behaviour*. When engaged customers take advantage of their engagement status and begin to demand unnecessary things from the firm, they are contributing to the emergence of value co-destruction. If a customer refuses to play his/her part in the relationship and demands tasks be done by the firm, the customer extorts the firm, or refuses to accept the fact that any collaboration will have some level of mistakes that do not need to be reimbursed, the customer is behaving in a disruptive way. Then, the firm will experience failed interaction. Thus, this thesis has answered its main research question. To summarise, this thesis argues that customer engagement influences value co-destruction through

1. Firm’s failure to serve customers
2. Insufficient level of communication
3. Turmoil in the relationship
4. Excessive or unjustified expectations
5. Disruptive behaviour

Altogether, this thesis investigated the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement, the antecedents of value co-destruction, and the influence of customer engagement on value co-destruction. Based on the findings discussed in this chapter, the overall framework for customer engagement and its influence on value co-destruction is depicted in Figure 6.
Figure 6. A framework of the relationship between customer engagement and value co-destruction
5.3 **Theoretical contribution**

The theoretical contribution of this thesis is discussed in light of the customer engagement and value co-destruction literatures and the findings are also connected to the overall marketing literature.

5.3.1 **Implications for customer engagement literature**

This thesis makes several contributions to customer engagement literature, namely to the customer relationship marketing literature stream. Firstly, this thesis investigated customer engagement across three different relationship types: B2C, B2B, and B2G. This comparative perspective has been missing in customer engagement literature (Vivek et al., 2016). By adopting a triple-relationship perspective on engagement, this thesis contributes to current literature by proposing the differences and similarities across these relationships, regarding the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement. By understanding how customer engagement differs or coincides between different relationships, the literature stream can evolve into a holistic literature stream.

Secondly, this thesis investigated the antecedents of customer engagement across three types of relationships: B2C, B2B, and B2G. The findings proposed 10 different antecedents for customer engagement. These identified antecedents validate previously proposed antecedents and offer new ones to the B2C customer engagement literature, mainly that service experience is an antecedent of customer engagement. Service experience (Dube & Helkkula, 2015; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Meyer & Schwager, 2007) and customer engagement have been previously studied as separate phenomena despite their similarities. Scholars have highlighted the importance of studying and understanding the connection between service experience and customer engagement (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), and this thesis offers empirical evidence on this connection. Thus, this thesis fills the gap in current literature by offering empirical evidence on the antecedents of customer engagement in B2C relationships, an approach which is still relatively understudied. Empirical research allows the validation of previously discovered antecedents and also brings new insights into academic discussions. Additionally, the thesis identified five antecedents in B2B and B2G relationships. This thesis contributes to this literature stream by empirically proposing that customer engagement can be achieved through information, reliability, offerings, helping customers in achieving goals, and collaboration, some of which are in line with B2C customer engagement. These highlight the collaborative nature of B2B relationships as opposed to B2C relationships (Vivek et al., 2016). Hence, this thesis fills the gap in current literature by studying customer engagement in B2B and B2G settings and identifies similar and differing antecedents compared to B2C engagement.

Thirdly, this thesis expands the current understanding of how the antecedents of customer engagement can be categorised. Previous research proposed that the antecedents are either customer based or provider based (van Doorn et al., 2010). What should be noted is that
customer engagement is not achieved through antecedents that can be divided into solely customer- or provider-based antecedents. Customer engagement has been proposed to be a collaborative effort between a firm and its customers (Brodie et al., 2011; Kunz et al., 2017). Thus, this thesis proposes that a third category, joint-based antecedents, should be added. This thesis identified that customer engagement strategy, helping customers in achieving goals, reliability, offerings, and information are provider-based antecedents. On the other hand, this thesis argues that the service experience, dialogue, communication, shared values and collaboration antecedents should be seen as joint-based antecedents. The service experience is co-created between the firm and customers (Jaakkola et al., 2015), and if it is an antecedent of customer engagement, it should be understood as a joint-based antecedent. Dialogue requires information exchange between a firm and a provider; thus, it should be seen as a joint-based antecedent, rather than solely a customer- or provider-based antecedent. Collaboration by definition refers to something done together; hence, it is natural that it should be seen as a joint-based antecedent. Shared values also depict an antecedent which refers to joint behaviour. Finally, helping customers achieve goals requires collaboration in order for the firm to be able to offer a solution to the customer’s problems. Therefore, this thesis argues that in B2C, B2B, and B2G engagement avenues, customer engagement emerges from joint-based antecedents as well.

Fourthly, this thesis investigated the positive outcomes of customer engagement. The positive outcomes for the firm have been in the shadows of customer-perceived outcomes. The identified positive outcomes are in line with previous findings from B2C studies (Beckers et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012), most of which have been conceptual by nature. Thus, the results of this thesis offer empirical evidence to support previous notions of the benefits of B2C customer engagement for firms. Owing to the novelty of customer engagement in B2G and B2B relationships, this thesis expands the current understanding of this phenomenon and proposes that in these relationships, customer engagement is beneficial through monetary benefits and different customer offerings, such as WOM. Hence, this thesis fills the gap in the knowledge by offering empirical evidence on the positive outcomes of B2C, B2B, and B2G customer engagement perceived by the firms.

Finally, this thesis investigated the negative outcomes of customer engagement. This avenue of engagement literature has been almost neglected because scholars have focused too heavily on the positive outcomes of customer engagement (Evanschitzky et al., 2012; Bowden et al., 2014; Bowden et al., 2016). Additionally, scholars have pointed out to the importance of studying the dark side of behaviours in relationship marketing (Payne & Frow, 2017). Thus, this thesis expands on the current understanding of customer-engagement literature by studying the negative outcomes of customer engagement in an empirical setting. The identified negative outcomes can be sorted into actions or processes that take place because of a firm’s actions (firm enforces customer disengagement), both parties’ actions (relationship challenges and absence of dialogue), or the customer’s actions (engaged customers use their status disruptively and an unhealthy relationship). Additionally, external challenges can affect both parties in a way that they experience
5.3 Theoretical contribution

engagement negatively. Hence, this thesis fills the gap in empirical research on the negative outcomes of customer engagement by identifying two ways in which customer engagement can be negative in B2C relationships and four ways in which it can be negative in B2B and B2G relationships. The findings, alongside with previous studies (Bowden et al., 2016; Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Juric et al., 2016), emphasise that customer engagement is not solely a positive phenomenon. It is crucial for the research community to investigate the negative aspects of engagement as well in order to fully understand the different sides of customer engagement.

5.3.2 Implications for value co-destruction literature

This thesis contributes to current knowledge on customer co-destruction in three ways. Firstly, this thesis identified several antecedents that can launch the failed interaction process, resulting in negative outcomes. The identified antecedents can be sorted into four main categories: information-related antecedents (absence of information, incoherent marketing communication, and insufficient communication), service provision-related antecedents (the inability to serve, inability to provide a service, and contextual rigidity), customer misbehaviour-related antecedents (customer misbehaviour, blaming and inappropriate behaviour), and expectations-related antecedents (the absence of clear expectations and excessive expectations). The four larger themes expand the provider and joint customer-originated reason framework proposed by Vafeas et al. (2016). Additionally, three other antecedents were identified: insufficient level of trust, mistakes, and an inability to change. Value co-destruction can emerge from purely provider-originated reasons (service provision-related antecedents) and purely customer-originated reasons (customer misbehaviour- and expectations-related antecedents) and joint-originated reasons (information-related antecedents). Thus, this thesis identifies four specific larger themes of the antecedents of value co-destruction. These four larger themes complement and expand on current literature (Echeverri et al., 2012; Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Vafeas et al., 2016). The findings emphasise the different faces of value co-destruction and how they may emerge. Value co-destruction, meaning the failed interaction process that results in a decline in an actor’s wellbeing can originate from all of the discussed antecedents.

Secondly, this thesis investigated the underlying reasons behind value co-destruction. Publication V proposed that value co-destruction emerges because of mismatched scripts between collaborating actors. In specific terms, this means that collaborating actors, the provider and the customer, do not follow the script (i.e. demonstrate the behaviour) the other actor is expecting. This inability to follow the correct script can happen unintentionally or intentionally. By adopting the script theory as a theoretical lens, this thesis proposes that value co-destruction emerges from an actor’s failure to adopt the correct script. A link between value co-destruction and the script theory has been proposed before; however, the link has not been studied empirically (Lefebvre & Plé, 2011; Plé & Caceres, 2010).
Thirdly, this thesis investigated the temporality of value co-destruction, which has been a nascent avenue of value co-destruction research. The temporality of value co-destruction was discussed in Publication IV, and in this thesis, temporality was expanded to include the antecedents from Publication V as well owing to similarities in the identified antecedents. This study proposed that value co-destruction can be initiated specifically before, during, or after the interaction or at any point of the interaction. Hence, value co-destruction does not only take place during the interaction or service creation but also before or after the interaction. This thesis points out that value co-destruction can be initiated before the interaction when inability to change, absence of clear expectations, excessive expectations, and incoherent marketing communication are present. These are the before-collaboration antecedents because they set the tone for the interaction process. For example, incoherent marketing communication creates expectations for customers that cannot be fulfilled, thus causing them to experience a failed interaction process. Inappropriate behaviour, which includes customer misbehaviour, can initiate value co-destruction during and after the interaction. This refers to different behaviours that customers can express during or after the interaction, that affect the firm’s perception of the interaction process (Kashif & Zarkada, 2015). Blaming has been identified as an after-collaboration antecedent, and this refers to the offline or online blaming behaviour customers express that causes the firm to experience a failed interaction process. Finally, absence of information, insufficient communication, insufficient level of trust, mistakes, and service-related antecedents were identified as time-independent antecedents. They can take effect at any time during the interaction and can cause either one or both collaboration parties to experience a failed interaction. Thus, this thesis contributes to the current literature by proposing that value co-destruction does not emerge solely because of actions taken during the interaction but actions and responses initiated before or after the interaction have an impact as well.

Finally, this thesis proposes that value co-destruction should not be seen as a mere concept but as a phenomenon that consists of four aspects: the antecedents, their temporal nature, the failed interaction process, and the outcome of this failed interaction. Value co-destruction has been defined by Plé and Caceres (2010, p. 431) as “an interaction process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the system's wellbeing”.

This was the initial definition and sparked the discussion on value co-destruction. Based on the conducted research, the author of this thesis perceived that the definition could be improved to involve all four aspects: the antecedents, their temporal dimension, the failed interaction process, and the outcome of this failed interaction. Thus, the author proposes that value co-destruction should be understood as a failed interaction process between service systems (that can be individual or organisational), which can be initiated by an actor’s inability to adopt a service situation-specific script, which can take the form of customer-, provider-, or joint-based antecedents. These antecedents can initiate the failed interaction process before, during, or after the interaction and cause an actor or actors to perceive a decline in wellbeing through a net deficit or goal prevention. This definition synthesises the works of Plé and Caceres (2010), Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016), and Vafeas et al. (2016) and argues that value co-destruction should be understood as a phenomenon that has different dimensions, i.e. the dimension of the origin of antecedents,
5.3 Theoretical contribution

the dimension of the antecedents’ temporality, and the dimension of the perceived value’s co-destruction outcome.

5.3.3 Implications for marketing literature

Overall, this thesis contributes to the marketing literature, by bridging customer engagement and value co-destruction closer to each other, in order to understand how close customer relationships can lead to negative outcomes. Research has offered suggestions that just as customer engagement can result in value co-creation, it can also result in value co-destruction (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Islam & Rahman, 2016). This thesis identified that customer engagement can influence value co-destruction through provider-, joint- and customer-originated reasons, which were elaborated in the discussion section.

Firstly, it was proposed that customer engagement and value co-destruction are connected through the firm’s failure to serve the customer, which is a provider-originated reason. Firms can fail at servicing already engaged customers or new customers, which can cause disengagement, which customers can perceive as value co-destruction. Services by their nature are co-created (Vargo & Lusch, 2008b), and customers can perceive the service-creation process as a failure, if they cannot receive what they purchased. Secondly, this thesis argues that customer engagement and value co-destruction are connected through an insufficient level of communication and turmoil in the relationship, that are joint-originated reasons. If engaged customers and the firm towards which this engagement is targeted at fail at communicating after the engagement has been created, this can cause one or both parties to experience value co-destruction. Additionally, if engagement partners perceive that their relationship is becoming difficult and not beneficial for one or both parties, then they can experience value co-destruction, indicating that engagement needs to be maintained for both parties to experience it positively. Thirdly, this thesis argues that customer engagement and value co-destruction are connected through excessive or unjustified expectations and disruptive behaviour, which are customer-originated reasons. Engaged customers can develop excessive expectations based on their relationship with the firm or in other ways to take advantage of their engagement status, and express disruptive behaviour, which will make the firm experience value co-destruction.

These identified ways that customer engagement influences value co-destruction contribute to marketing literature by proposing that customer engagement influences the emergence of value co-destruction though negative customer engagement behaviour and negative or absent resource provision. This thesis proposes that firm’s failure to serve customer and disruptive behaviour are caused due to negative behaviour. Additionally, insufficient level of communication, turmoil in relationship and excessive expectations are caused both due to negative behaviour and provision of negative or absent resources. These reasons and their classification into resource and behaviour related reasons offer insights into an emerging discussion on the relationship between customer engagement and value co-destruction. Marketing literature in general has very much focused on the
positive sides of relationships (Bowden et al., 2014; Evanschitzky et al., 2012) and on value (co-)creation (Lusch & Vargo, 2014; Morosan & DeFranco, 2016; Ordanini & Pasini, 2008), despite that researchers have emphasised the need to investigate the negative consequences of relationships and collaboration (Bowden et al., 2014; Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Vafeas et al., 2016). This thesis contributes to marketing literature by suggesting that customer engagement can indeed have a negative side which can be so drastic that it influences the emergence of value co-destruction.

5.4 Managerial implications

The results of this thesis offer insights for managers as well. This thesis investigated customer engagement in B2C as well as in B2B and B2G relationships. In B2C relationships, engagement represents an experience- and emotion-based connection which a customer has with a firm. This is evident in, for example, hotels and amusement parks, characterised as experience-centric industries. In these but also in other B2C industries, firms should not focus on offering merely services to their customers but experiences that can create engagement towards the service provider. In order to achieve engagement, firms should focus on making themselves visible, offering correct and easily accessible information in different channels and, most importantly, offering services and products that customers can perceive as satisfying. Consumers are interested in firms’ values and looking for firms that share similar values. Customers are more likely to engage with a firm that is building its business on values that resonate with them than with firms that do not have similar values as their customers.

In B2B and B2G relationships, engagement is more about partnership and working together for a common goal than about emotional connection. Then, managers and firms should focus on demonstrating to the customer that the firm wants to help the customer achieve their goals. This thesis found that B2B and B2G engagement emerges for similar reasons as in B2C (e.g. offerings and reliability) but also different reasons, mainly collaboration-related reasons. This implies that in B2B and B2G relationships, engagement should be about partnerships and that the firm and the customer should work closely together.

The outcomes of customer engagement were studied in light of both their positive and negative sides. The identified positive outcomes offer insights for managers on the attainable benefits that customer engagement can foster. The identified benefits between B2B, B2G, and B2C relationships were in line with each other. The benefits depend on the engaged customer’s behaviour; thus, managers need to focus on providing a reason for customers to become engaged and also the means and platforms to express these behaviours, such as WOM and monetary benefits.

The negative outcomes of customer engagement and their relationship with value co-destruction was at the heart of this thesis. This study found that customer engagement has a negative side, and managers should recognise this. Five different ways in which customer engagement can influence value co-destruction were identified. These findings
were sorted into firm-, joint-, and customer-originated reasons, meaning that the firm and its customers can influence how engagement can have a negative outcome. Managers should analyse the actions and processes of their firms to avoid provider- or joint-originated reasons that can turn customer engagement into a negative phenomenon. On the other hand, managers should be aware that customers can turn an engagement from positive to negative. If the engagement is based solely or heavily on monetary benefits, customers can become opportunistic and expect bigger and better benefits from their relationship with the firm. Managers should be aware that customers are expecting a certain level of monetary benefits from engagement; however, the level cannot be too high because then the engagement itself can turn negative for the firm. Additionally, customers are expecting that once they become engaged, they shall receive other benefits, such as pre-releases of information and offerings. This again is an aspect which should be managed so that customers do not expect more and more throughout the relationship, and engagement does not become a double-sided phenomenon, where the customer experiences engagement positively and firm, negatively.

As a summary, this thesis emphasises that customer engagement can indeed be beneficial for a firm and its customers; however, it also has a very real dark side. Customer engagement should be managed in order that it, firstly, can be achieved, and secondly, that the positive outcomes can be maximised and the negative outcomes can be minimised.

5.5 Limitations

This thesis, as any other, has limitations. The findings of this thesis emerged from two different qualitative studies that had employed three data collection methods: interviews, reflective diaries, and online reviews. Even though all of the data collection methods are well respected in their own right, the findings cannot be generalised in a statistical sense. Case research such as this does not aim to produce findings which can be generalised in a statistical sense, but as Yin (2003) suggested, they are valuable in an analytical sense because they clarify and extend the understanding of the existing theory, which was the aim of this thesis. Moreover, the abductive research approach does not focus on generalisations but rather is concerned with the particularities of specific situations (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 2005; Kovács & Spens, 2005). Thus, even if this thesis does not produce statistically generalisable findings, the findings are valuable in an analytical sense.

Secondly, these methods rely primarily on retrospective data and may suffer from subjective and time-lagged bias. Especially for a value co-destruction investigation, this chosen methodological perspective may have resulted in leaving certain actions or events uncovered. Value co-destruction is a highly subjective matter; what one actor perceives as value co-destructive behaviour, another might not. Thus, the chosen data collection methods might not have revealed all aspects of the reasons that spark value co-destruction.
Thirdly, the data analysis in the five publications was primarily carried out by the author of this thesis. The co-authors and supervisors had provided valuable feedback that pushed the analysis forward. However, since the data analysis was mostly conducted by one person, the findings demonstrate the viewpoint of one researcher. Other researchers could see different avenues in the same data; thus, the identified findings may not be all encompassing.

Finally, an important limitation to cover is the scope of the research. The thesis had a wide scope since it focused on identifying antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement, the antecedents of value co-destruction, and how they are connected. However, owing to the novelty of both concepts and especially their relationship, this thesis focused on providing initial empirical evidence for the relationship between customer engagement and value co-destruction, which can initiate further research in several different directions.

5.6 Avenues for further research

Customer engagement and value co-destruction have both established their place in marketing literature; however, research is still needed to fully understand them both (Kunz et al., 2017; Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016).

Firstly, further research should focus on the negative outcomes of customer engagement, which is still a relatively fuzzy and underdeveloped topic. Bowden et al. (2016) proposed the concept of negative customer engagement, Juric et al. (2016), another concept called negative customer brand engagement, and van Doorn et al. (2010) discussed negatively valenced customer engagement. The latter refers to behaviour which can be accidental or less deliberate, whereas the other two refer to a customer’s deliberate actions against a firm or its brand by negative WOM or revenge-seeking behaviour (Bowden et al., 2016; Juric et al., 2016). The difference is that one scholar speaks for actions against the firm whilst the other speaks about actions against the firm’s brand. Thus, the difference between customer engagement and brand engagement remains somewhat unclear. Future research should focus on identifying the specific negative outcomes of customer engagement and how they can be mitigated.

Secondly, to continue on the previous point, customer engagement as a concept is still under development. The different streams of engagement, namely customer engagement, brand engagement, social media engagement, and brand engagement in social media, pose the following question: what actually is engagement? Much more investigation is needed in order to understand customer engagement as a higher-level concept and brand and social media engagement as sub-concepts of customer engagement. Future research should focus on building a conceptual consensus and defining what aspects, actions, and behaviours form the concept of customer engagement. With this approach, the scholarly community could continue the work on engagement, and fully establish it as one of the cornerstones of marketing research.
5.6 Avenues for further research

Thirdly, this thesis did not sort customers into different groups, and this poses an interesting avenue for future research. For example, in hotel services, different customer groups, such as business and leisure travellers, have different needs, and therefore, the groups value different things. Business travellers might value more a quiet room and an early breakfast, and leisure travellers, time to explore what the hotel has to offer. Future studies should conduct experimentations with different loyalty programme options to accommodate the needs of different customer groups. For example, the experiments could involve different scenarios where business travellers are offered a quiet room, early breakfast, and free Wi-Fi, whereas leisure travellers could be offered brunch-type of breakfast and late check-out. With this approach, the subjective engagement preferences could be explored.

Fourthly, this thesis investigated customer engagement across three relationship types: B2C, B2B, and B2G. B2B and B2G engagement is a novel stream and has received little attention in the research community. Scholars have argued that engagement in B2B setting might have more impact as opposed to B2C customer engagement owing to the more collaborative nature of B2B relationships. Thus, future research should continue the investigation of engagement in B2B and B2G relationships, in order to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Fifthly, previous marketing research was focused on value co-creation, and this approach was challenged by value co-destruction. The newest addition is value no-creation (Makkonen & Olkkonen, 2017). This offers an intriguing avenue for research because in real life, things rarely are either or. The nexus of value co-creation, no-creation, and co-destruction should be investigated further. This could offer interesting insights into the dynamic nature of relationships and value; in a long relationship, parties can experience value co-creation, no-creation, and co-destruction in a fluctuating manner. Additionally, value co-creation and co-destruction are subjective experiences, since one actor can experience co-creation whilst the other, co-destruction. This also provides an interesting avenue for future works, i.e. to identify the specific situations where this ambivalent experience of value presents itself.

Finally, the concept of value co-destruction should be addressed in future studies. The concept remains perplexing to the academic community, especially what the concept actually entails. In this thesis, it was argued that value co-destruction should entail the antecedents, the temporality of these antecedents, the failed interaction process, and the outcomes. Further research should investigate how parties can experience value co-destruction. The work of Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016) offers important insights into the actor’s perceptions of value co-destruction; however, more research on this topic is needed in order to fully understand the causes and consequences of value co-destruction.
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Appendix A: Study 1, interview guide

INITIAL INTERVIEW

Background information

1. Could you please tell shortly what is the industry of this firm?
2. What is your position in this firm?
3. Who are your customers?

Customer engagement

4. What your brand is telling your customers?
5. How do you acknowledge customers in your own work?
6. How does your firm communicate with your customers?
7. In what situations does your firm meet your customers ‘live’?
8. How does your firm utilise social media with your customers?
9. How does your firm utilise social media with your suppliers?
10. How does your firm create value for your customers?
11. If the consumers of your B2B customers wish for new services from your customer, how is this information taken into consideration?
12. If your services are sold to B2B customers, in what ways do you consider the value creation for the final consumer?
13. What can a B2B customer offer for you?
14. What can a consumer offer for you?
15. In what ways do you recognise your purchasing customer’s needs?
16. In what ways do you recognise your consumer’s needs?
17. How does your firm track the changes happening in consumer markets?
18. How does your firm take into consideration consumers’ changing needs?

Value co-creation and co-destruction

19. Are you collecting new ideas from your customers in a systematic manner?
20. Have you co-created services and/or products with your customers?
21. If yes, what these co-creation projects were about?
22. Are you currently co-creation new services with your B2B or B2C customers?
23. How supply management is taking into consideration the consumer’s needs?
24. How the changing needs and wishes of purchasing customers reach supply management?
25. What do you perceive as the actions that customer can negatively affect his/her/its experience when purchasing or using your services?
26. What do you perceive as the actions that customer can negative affect your value formation?
FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW

Customer engagement

1. How would you define customer engagement in your own words?
2. In what ways can the customer demonstrate his, her or its engagement towards your firm?
3. In what ways are you engaging your customers at the moment?
4. How would you like to engage your customers in future?
5. How does customer engagement benefit your firm?
6. How does customer engagement benefit the customer?
7. In what ways can customer engagement be harmful for you?

Value co-destruction

8. How would you define value co-destruction in your own words?
9. What is a typical situation where customer has been disappointed with your firm’s actions?
10. What is a typical service or a product that your customers have been disappointed with?
11. In what ways customers are demonstrating their disappointment?
12. What services and products generate the largest amount of negative feedback?
13. Would you consider, that some firm’s functions are invaluable for your customers?
14. What actions taken by your firm can result in failed collaboration?
15. What do you think are actions that can negatively affect customer’s value creation?
16. What customer’s actions can result in failed collaboration?
17. In your opinion, what is a typical way that customer can negatively affect your firm’s value creation?
18. What is a typical situation, where customer can negatively affect your firm’s value creation?
19. What kind of customer typically negatively affects your firm’s value creation?
20. What would you consider to be the biggest challenges relating to customer engagement and value co-destruction?
21. How these challenges can be tackled?
Appendix B: Study 2, interview guides and reflective diary

MANAGEMENT LEVEL, INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background questions

1. What is your role in this firm?
2. How long have you been in this position?

Customer engagement and value creation

3. Who are the customers of your department?
4. What is the customer’s role when thinking about your firm’s business?
5. What can your customers offer for you?
6. How do you recognise customers in your work?
7. In what ways does your firm make sure that your guests come again?
8. How does your firm’s loyalty programme work?
9. In what ways are you recognising your customers’ needs?
10. How is your firm tracking changing customer needs?

Sustainability

11. What does sustainability mean in your organisation?
12. What issues drive sustainability in your organisation?
13. Who is in charge of sustainability in your organisation?
14. How does sustainable business create value to your organisation?
15. What kind of challenges relating to sustainability have you personally or your organisation faced recently?
16. What kind of business risks does sustainable business help to mitigate or prevent?
17. What kind of risks can sustainable business pose for your organisation?
18. How do you communicate with your customers about sustainability?
19. How does sustainable business create value for your customers?
20. How do you think that customers feel about sustainability?
21. Do you think that consumers are willing to pay for sustainability?
22. Do you see customer segment differences in willingness to pay?
23. How is sustainability co-created with your customers?

Value co-creation and co-destruction

24. Are you collecting new ideas from your customers in a systematic manner?
25. Have you co-created services and/or products with your customers?
26. If yes, what these co-creation projects were about?
27. Are you currently co-creating new services with your customers?
28. What do you think are actions that customers can take which will negatively affect their experience whilst staying in your hotel?
29. What do you think are actions that customers can take which will negatively affect your value creation whilst staying in your hotel?
30. Do you perceive that some firm’s actions are invaluable for your customers?
31. What actions that your firm can take that will negatively affect customers’ value creation?

HOTEL STAFF, INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background questions

1. What is your role in this firm?
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. How long have you been in part of working life?

Customer engagement

4. In your own words, what does customer engagement mean for your firm?
5. How are you personally, with your own actions, engaging your customers?
6. How have you been instructed to face a customer?
7. How have you been instructed to engage a customer?
8. What would you change from these instructions based on your own experiences?
9. In what ways can a customer demonstrate his/her engagement towards your firm?
10. How does customer engagement benefit your firm?
11. How does customer engagement benefit the customer?
12. How can customer engagement be harmful for your firm?
13. What are your firm’s biggest challenges relating to customer engagement?

Sustainability

1. What does sustainability mean in your organisation?
2. What issues drive sustainability in your organisation?
3. Who is in charge of sustainability in your organisation?
4. How sustainable business creates value to your organisation?
5. What kind of challenges relating to sustainability have you personally or your organisation phased recently?
6. What kind of business risks sustainable business helps to mitigate or prevent?
7. What kind of risks can sustainable business pose for your organisation?
8. How do you communicate with your customers about sustainability?
9. How does sustainable business create value for your customers?
10. How do you think customers feel about sustainability?
11. Do you think that consumers are willing to pay for sustainability?
12. Do you see customer segment differences in willingness to pay?
13. How sustainability is co-created with your customers?

Value co-destruction

14. How would you define in your own words what value co-destruction means?
15. What is a typical situation where a customer has been disappointed with your firm’s actions?
16. What is a typical service or a product that your customers have been disappointed with?
17. In what ways do customers demonstrate their disappointment towards this product/service/situation?
18. What do you think are actions that customers can take that will negatively affect their own experience whilst staying in your hotel?
19. What do you think are actions that customers can take that will negatively affect your value creation whilst staying in your hotel?
20. Do perceive that some firm’s actions are invaluable for your customers?
21. What actions that your firm can take that will negatively affect the customers’ value creation?
22. If a customer is acting in a negative way, how does this affect your own behaviour?
23. What are the biggest challenges your firm is having regarding value co-destruction?
REFLECTIVE DIARY

Dear hotel guest,

My name is Henna Järvi, and I am working on my doctoral dissertation at Lappeenranta University of Technology, Finland. I am interested in hearing about experiences you have perceived whilst staying at this hotel and especially, what parts you liked or did not like during your stay. My doctoral dissertation is in the field of consumer marketing and focuses on understanding customer experience, the customer’s and service provider’s roles in building that customer experience and how customer experience can be perfected.

After this introductory letter, you will find the actual diary part, which is divided into three sections: background questions, a daily reflective diary and questions about your overall stay. Each section has instructions. Please return this diary to reception when you leave the hotel.

Your answers shall remain anonymous and shall not be handed to any third parties. Your answers shall be utilised only as background material for my doctoral dissertation.

I am grateful for your time!

With kind regards,
Henna Järvi
Junior researcher
School of Business and Management
Lappeenranta University of Technology
P.O. Box 20
FI-53851 Lappeenranta
@: henna.jarvi@lut.fi

(The layout of the diary has been changed here in order to save space.)

Background questions

Please answer these background questions.

1. What is the purpose of your visit?
2. Are you travelling alone or with other people? (family, work colleagues etc.)
3. How long are you staying at this hotel?
4. Why did you choose this hotel chain?
5. Why did you choose this particular hotel?
6. What are you expecting from this hotel stay?
Appendix B: Study 2, interview guides and reflective diary

Diary

Please think about your first day at this hotel and reflect on the following questions. Please use 5–10 minutes to reflect on these questions. You can utilise the questions in parentheses as support to your reflection.

7. In your opinion, what was the most important service moment in this hotel during this day? (Why was this moment important to you? What happened that made it important for you? Etc.)

8. When thinking about this day, have there been any moments you have been disappointed with? Disappointment could have been caused by services provided to you or the hotel’s facilities. (What happened that was disappointing? Why were you disappointed? Etc.)

Please think about your second day at this hotel and reflect on the following questions. Please use 5–10 minutes to reflect on these questions. You can utilise the questions in parentheses as support to your reflection.

9. In your opinion, what was the most important service moment in this hotel during this day? (Why was this moment important to you? What happened that made it important for you? Etc.)

10. When thinking about this day, have there been any moments you have been disappointed with? Disappointment could have been caused by services provided to you or the hotel’s facilities. (What happened that was disappointing? Why were you disappointed? Etc.)

Please think about your third day at this hotel and reflect on the following questions. Please use 5–10 minutes to reflect on these questions. You can utilise the questions in parentheses as support to your reflection.

11. In your opinion, what was the most important service moment in this hotel during this day? (Why was this moment important to you? What happened that made it important for you? Etc.)

12. When thinking about this day, has there been any moments that you have been disappointed with? Disappointment could have been caused by services provided to you or the hotel’s facilities. (What happened that was disappointing? Why were you disappointed? etc.)

(If you are staying longer than three days, please use extra paper to reflect on the days after the third day.)
Reflecting on your overall hotel stay

Please answer these questions at the conclusion of your hotel stay, reflecting on your entire hotel experience. You can utilise the questions in parentheses as support to your reflection.

13. At the beginning of this document, you specified your expectations for this hotel stay. How they were met or not met?
14. What service moments have been most important for you during this hotel stay?
15. Why were these service moments important to you? (What aspects made them important for you? What actions made them important for you? Etc.)
16. How could this hotel serve you better that you would experience more of these important service moments?
17. What service moments have been most disappointing for you during this hotel stay?
18. Why did you experience these service moments as disappointing? (What aspects made them disappointing for you? What actions made them disappointing for you? Etc.)
19. How could these disappointing service moments be avoided?
20. How did these disappointing service moments affect your behaviour? (Did you complain about the moment to hotel staff or to your friends? Are you planning to visit this hotel again in future? Etc.)
21. Based on your experiences from the past few days, could you recommend this particular hotel to your friends/family? Please clarify why you will recommend or not recommend.
22. Based on your experiences from the past few days, could you recommend this hotel chain to your friends/family? Please clarify why you will recommend or not recommend.
23. Based on your experiences from the past few days, will you revisit this particular hotel in future? Please clarify why you are going to revisit or not revisit this hotel.
24. Based on your experiences from the past few days, will you revisit this hotel chain in future? Please clarify why you will revisit or not revisit this hotel chain.
25. If you have something else you wish to say, please use this space to do so.
Publication I

Järvi, H.

Customer engagement in the hotel industry: perceptions of hotel staff and guests.

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When value co-creation fails: reasons that lead to value co-destruction

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Publication V

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