Fit in to stand out

An experience perspective on value creation

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Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Business Administration

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Abstract

In order to grow and survive, a firm must create value with consumers in ways that both fit in with consumer demands and stand out from competitors. Focusing on and understanding consumer and firm assessments of value and creation of value has become a central scope in the contemporary strategic management and marketing literature for understanding and explaining firm survival and success. Consequently, the overall aim of this thesis is to provide a conceptually and empirically grounded understanding of consumers' and managers' value assessments and behavior in value creation.

This thesis draws on a consumer experience perspective and theories on social construction, organizational identity, self-congruence, and the theory of attractive quality, and combines multiple qualitative and quantitative studies. The findings in this thesis shed light on the interplay between consumers, firms, and contextual structures in value creation. Contextual structural, cultural, and political forces are shown to affect and be affected by the shared and individual cognitions of value creation that firms and consumers use in their assessment and creation of value.

The results of the study enhance the understanding of how firms can adopt various strategic schemas or organizing logics to optimize different types of use value creation when choosing between opposing and contradictive demands in their value creation. Furthermore, the thesis provides a deeper understanding of the hierarchical nature of consumer judgments of value that can be used to enhance the effectiveness of firm prioritizations and as a foundation for future value-creating strategies.

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1 Introduction

To be irreplaceable, grow, and survive, firms must fit in and stand out. To stand out, competition strategies in traditional management and marketing literature suggest that firms must outperform their rivals in order to capture greater shares of established markets with clear rules, standards, and boundaries (e.g., Barney, 1991; Porter, 1980). However, an increasing amount of literature has focused on how firms can create unique value with consumers to find uncontested market space and change the rules of the game in a way that makes competitors irrelevant (Aaker, 2012; Berthon et al., 2003; Kim and Mauborgne, 2004; 2005). Consequently, the term 'value creation' has become a central concept in strategic management and marketing literature for understanding and explaining firm survival and success. However, differing views on the phenomenon have triggered debates over similar issues in both fields regarding what value is, and how, when, where, and by whom value is created, with the exception that strategic management also emphasizes who captures value (Bowman and Ambrosini, 2000; Grönroos, 2008). At each end of these debates, which center on the notions of use value and exchange value that can be traced back to classical economists, lies what is referred to as distinct demand-side and supply-side views on value creation in strategic management (Humphreys and Grayson, 2008; Lepak et al., 2007; Priem, 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). The demand-side views forward *use value*, which I define as the consumer's subjective valuation of experienced consumption benefits, as the scope of value creation (cf. Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Holbrook, 1999; 2006; Priem, 2007). On the contrary, the supply-side views forward *exchange value*, which I define as the monetary amount a consumer actually pays to a seller at a certain point in time for its facilitation of the consumer's use value creation (cf. Grönroos, 2008; Priem, 2007), as the scope of value creation. Based on these different assumptions of what the scope of value creation is, the demand-side and supply-side views provide different accounts of actors' relational roles in, and the locus and nature of, value creation. These differences are of key importance to explain different aspects of firm success and understand the research domain of this thesis.

The supply-side view on value creation, more recently referred to as a value capture logic, or orientation in strategic management (Priem, 2007), and as a goods logic or goods dominant logic in marketing (Grönroos, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2004), assumes that firms are in control of value and are its sole creators. From this perspective, the market is the locus of value exchange (Kotler, 1972), and consumers are passive targets separated from what is viewed as the vertical value (adding) system. This vertical value system represents a specific transaction context in which firms are assumed to lade products and services with value, frequently referred to as the value chain or supply chain (e.g. Porter, 1985). This perspective assumes that the firm creates value when it receives exchange value and, simultaneously, retains some or all of this value by preventing other members

(that is, customers, suppliers or competitors) from claiming shares of the value. Accordingly, theoretical frameworks that dominate this perspective, such as the 4Ps marketing model (McCarthy, 1960), transaction cost economics (Williamson, 1981), resource-based theory (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993; Sirmon et al., 2007), and the firm positioning view (Porter, 1980), attend to how a focal firm in a value system can maximize its share of a given amount of consumer payments to that system, often referred to as market size. The theories provide elemental insights into how managers can use mechanisms such as knowledge, physical, organizational, and legal barriers to isolate the firm from competitor replication and opportunism, and provide firms with the negotiating leverage that allows them to capture exchange value in a particular transaction context (Lepak et al., 2007; Priem et al., 2012). However, these theories generally neglect use value, the mechanism of demand that drives consumers' willingness to pay, thus also neglecting the source of exchange value (Grönroos, 2008; Priem, 2007). Consequently, the supply-side view provides managers and researchers with an important framework for understanding what Priem (2007, p 220) refers to as 'value capture' and defines as "*the appropriation and retention by a firm of payments made by consumers in expectation of future value from consumption*". In other words, to develop a more complete understanding of how firms can create value within existing industries, or by diversifying into other transaction contexts, scholars and managers must rely on other theories, adopting a demand-side view of value creation (Priem et al., 2012).

Important premises of the demand-side views on value creation, which I adopt in this thesis, trace back to service research in strategic management and marketing from the 1970s through the 1990s. This research called for an overall, holistic, and customer-driven perspective for managing and studying services in general that differed from the traditional supply-side view (Berry and Parasuraman, 1993; Grönroos, 1994; Kingman-Brundage et al., 1995). Service researchers proposed that services, as an offering category, differ from goods for being more intangible, heterogeneous, and perishable, and for being produced in an open system in which consumers and producers interact, making production inseparable from consumption (Lovelock, 1983; Mills and Margulies, 1980; Shostack, 1977). These researchers acknowledged how the highly experiential and relational nature of services cause organizational input uncertainty related to goal congruence, performance ambiguity in terms of measuring and valuation of performance, diversity in demand, and how consumers are integrated into the production (Bowen and Jones, 1986; Larsson and Bowen, 1989; Zeithaml, 1988). Consequently, service research came to emphasize consumer-firm relationships, co-production, and consumer-perceived quality and value instead of transactions and firm production of value for consumers (e.g., Bolton and Drew, 1991; Grönroos; 1978; 1984; 1997; Normann and Ramirez, 1993). Recently, service researchers have forwarded service as perspective on value creation, rather than as an offering (Edvardsson et al., 2005). This perspective represents a use

value, interaction, and relation-centered demand-side view on value creation that has proved applicable to research and management in both goods and service contexts (e.g., Bowen et al., 1989; Grönroos; 2006; Löfgren, 2006; Pareigis, 2012). The perspective is reflected in the basic premises of what is referred to as the service logic (SL) (Grönroos, 2006) and the service dominant logic (SDL) in marketing (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Similar to demand-side research in strategic management, adopting what Priem (2007, p. 219) calls a 'consumer experienced benefit view' on value creation, the service perspective on value creation emphasizes situational, experiential, and consumer-defined use value as the scope of value creation (Edvardsson et al., 2005).

Relating to the questions of how, where, when, and by whom value is created, demand-side research in strategic management and SL scholars argue that consumers are active "arbiters" or "creators" of value who generate benefits for themselves through processes involving indirect or direct interaction with other actors (that is, firms or consumers) in various individual and social contexts (Priem, 2007; Grönroos and Voima, 2013). In contrast, SDL researchers take on a different perspective and view value creation as an all-encompassing process in which value is always co-created by both consumers and other actors in various market, public, and private contexts (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014; McColl-Kennedy, 2012; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Accordingly, SDL views value creation as co-creation, a more metaphorical meaning that can, primarily, be used to provide needed, important, general *macro-level* or 'big picture' insights into how social structures and institutions affect individual actors' mental models of value and enactment of activities in value creation systems (cf. Edvardsson et al., 2011; Akaka, Vargo, and Lusch, 2013). This difference is reflected in that SDL scholars are seemingly reluctant towards application of supply-side theories, or remnants of such (see, for example, Vargo, 2008; discussion of Moeller 2008), holding the premises of SDL as *the* basis for explaining and understanding strategic success (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; 2008). On the other hand, demand-side research in strategic management and SL scholars promote their view on value creation as a view that transcends and complements the supply-side views (Grönroos, 2006; Priem, 2007). In other words, demand-side research in strategic management and SL scholars suggest that the choice between value creation and value capture logics is a strategic concern of which strategic schema is appropriate or effective in which situation (Grönroos, 1997; 2008; Priem et al., 2012; 2013). This choice is particularly important, as a firm's strategic schema guides strategic decisions and organizational actions that are central to the firm's identity and reputation; that is, how consumers experience and judge the firm and its offerings (Heide and Wathne, 2006; King and Whetten, 2008; Priem, 1994; Messick, 1999; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999; Whetten, 2006). Essentially, this notion also implies that a firm's development of a strategic schema is a choice related to the type of consumer use value creation the firm seeks to facilitate; in other words, how it seeks to fit in and stand out from the market.

This choice is likely to involve clear trade-offs, which deserves further attention. In this sense, the demand-side research in strategic management and SL view on value creation provides a basis for a much-needed analytical development of an actionable understanding of value and value creation for strategic management and marketing.

There is less difference within the demand-side view concerning the understanding of use value. While demand-side research in strategic management and SL view use value as a valuation of consumer experienced benefits, SDL seemingly considers value merely as consumer-experienced benefits (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; 2008). In this sense, the demand-side research in strategic management and SL make an explicit and interesting notion that use value is a relative consumer judgment of benefits that may differ both in type and extent. Due to this similarity, use value as a construct has received relatively little attention in the debate between SL and SDL other than if the label reflects the nature of such value (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014). Thus, although use value is assumed to serve as the key foundation of effective strategic choices and firm survival, it has, with few exceptions (cf. Edvardsson et al., 2011), received little attention from scholars other than in more consumer-research-focused literature (Holbrook, 2006; Smith and Colgate, 2007; Woodside and Walser, 2007).

Previous research on consumers has shown how various concepts related to the use value definition above are essential for explaining value creation. In part, the research shows how various consumer evaluation concepts, such as consumer-perceived quality, value, satisfaction and/or trust, affect consumer commitment and loyalty (e.g., Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Anderson and Mittal, 2000; Johnson et al., 2001; Fornell et al., 1996; Gustafsson et al., 2005). Other researchers, by focusing on consumer experiences, have provided an understanding that a wide array of sources within and beyond the firm's control affect the consumer's experience and evaluation (e.g., Bitner, 1992; Brakus et al., 2009; Pareigis, 2012; Shams, 2013). In turn, research focusing on consumption experiences shows how consumer-experienced use value are assessments of fit that differ in type, depending on what aspects of an experience a consumer values in a certain situation (e.g., Addis and Holbrook, 2001; Holbrook, 1999; 2005; 2006; Kleine et al., 1993; Smith and Colgate, 2007; Tynan et al., 2010; Woodside et al., 2013). Overall, the main insight drawn from this research is that consumers prefer products, services, or brands that fit either as part of a cluster of complementary products or as an artifact that facilitates an identity that is important to the consumer (e.g., Jamal and Goode, 2001; Kleine et al., 1993; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy et al., 2008). Essentially, and in line with the demand-side views' assumptions, these studies show how consumers care little about market offerings other than as instruments that contribute to living in line with the basic assumptions of the demand. However, the research has typically focused on the congruity between self-image and product-image often described as a brand personality (e.g., Aaker,

1997; Sirgy, 1982; 1997) and has not considered the complex fit between a consumer experience's attribute configuration and the attributes configuration specified in the schemas that the consumer uses when making a judgment (Mandler 1982; Rindova and Petkova, 2007).

Further, in order to address assessments of fit from a more experience-based use value perspective, consumer experiences must be distinguished from consumption experiences. In this thesis, I define consumer experiences as the consumer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral response to stimuli directly or indirectly related to a specific market relation; that is, a product, a service, or a firm (cf. Brakus et al., 2009; Carù and Cova, 2003; Pareigis, 2012). Consequently, from this perspective, the consumer experience becomes the brand (Payne et al., 2009; Prahalad, 2004; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2003; 2004). In contrast, a consumption experience encompasses a consumption event that occurs with or without any market relation (Carù and Cova, 2003). Accordingly, researchers need to address the congruence between a consumer experience (as opposed to a product or service) and an archetypal consumption experience, representing the consumer's elementary idea or image of the holistic consumption experience he or she seeks (Woodside et al., 2008; 2012; 2013). This more detailed and structural understanding of consumer experience evaluations is necessary to gain a deeper insight regarding how focus on use value can serve as the foundation for effective value-creating management and marketing strategies (Bolton et al., 2014; Holbrook, 2006).

1.1 Aim

Following from the above, the overall aim of this thesis is to provide a conceptually and empirically grounded understanding of consumers' and managers' value assessments and behavior in value creation. Subsequently, the aim can be detailed as follows:

- Contribute to the theoretical understanding of contextual factors that influence and are influenced by consumers' and managers' assessment and value creation process from a social construction perspective.
- Develop the theoretical understanding of how firm develop various archetypal strategic schemas to facilitate various forms of consumer use value creation and manage paradoxes in value creation.
- Enhance the theoretical understanding of the hierarchical nature consumer experience evaluations from a management and marketing point of view.

The dissertation adopts a demand-side view on value creation and focuses on providing an actionable managerial understanding of consumer use value judgments and value

creation. The contributions are made both in the framework of the thesis and in the appended papers.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters, in addition to this introduction.

Chapter 1 introduces the research domain and presents the aim of this thesis.

Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature in order to provide a background and the theoretical framework I have used in the thesis. The chapter starts with a review of extant research related to the use value construct, followed by a review of theory related to organizational identity, image and reputation as well as self-congruence and the theory of attractive quality.

Chapter 3 delineates my research strategy and research design. I describe and reflect on the research approaches and specific methods I have adopted in each of the appended papers.

Chapter 4 summarizes the findings, contribution, and implications in the appended papers.

Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with a discussion that coordinates the findings in the appended papers. I present the main theoretical contributions and implications for managers and future research.

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter provides the theoretical framework I use in the thesis. I start by describing the view on value creation and use value I have adopted in order to provide a background for the subsequent review of theory on organizational identity, image and reputation, self-congruence, and the theory of attractive quality.

2.1 Adopting a demand-side view on value creation

In this thesis, I draw upon the demand-side view in strategic management research and service logic, arguing that consumers, whether they are individuals, organizations, or societies, are arbiters of value in a sense that they have the ultimate authority in determining what use value is (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Priem, 2007; Lepak et al., 2007). Consequently, I hold use value (which I define as the consumer's subjective valuation of experienced consumption benefits) as the scope and consumers' creation of use value as the locus of value creation (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). From this perspective, firms can capture exchange value from facilitating the consumer's creation of use value (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014; Lepak et al., 2007; Priem, 2007). In other words, I view exchange value (which I define as the monetary amount a consumer actually pays to a seller at a certain point in time for its facilitation of the consumer's use value creation) as a function of use value (Grönroos, 2008; 2011). However, a consumer is, by definition, someone who purchases goods or services for personal use. Thus, if no exchange occurs, the consumer is no longer a consumer but merely a user. Accordingly, from this perspective, the consumer's creation of use value must lead to monetary exchange for value creation to emerge and endure (Lepak et al., 2007; Priem, 2007). Nevertheless, use value is the source of exchange value and, thus, the concept to build upon in order to understand value creation (Grönroos, 2008).

2.1.1 Use value

The demand-side views that I outlined in the introduction seem to agree that use value is related to the consumer's assessment of benefits and the scope of value creation (Grönroos, 2006; 2008; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Lepak et al., 2007; Priem, 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Yet, there is an ongoing debate over the labeling of the term 'use value' in marketing literature (cf. Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014). Lurking in the shadows from this discussion are the somewhat different views on the locus of value creation (Grönroos, 2008; Lepak et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). On one hand, from the more macro-level system perspective often used in SDL-based research, value creation is often seen as an all-encompassing process in which everything is co-created and everyone co-creates (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Vargo and

Lusch, 2004). As a consequence, some scholars within the SDL stream have suggested that the labels value-in-context or value-in-social-context better reflect that use value represents a uniquely and socially constructed, multifaceted, interactive, relativistic, and meaning-laden phenomenon (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Vargo, 2008). Note that these labels should not be confused with the term 'social value', which is defined broadly as "that which enhances well-being for the earth and its living organisms" (Brickson, 2007, p. 866) in strategic management research. On the other hand, scholars within SL and strategic management alike have argued that the locus of value creation is the consumer's value creation (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Lepak et al., 2007; Priem, 2007) and, therefore, that such labels disguise the fact that value-in-use is created when the consumer consumes (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014). Yet, similar to the notions in SDL research, SL scholars agree that value is socially constructed in a sense that social, physical, mental, and other contextual factors influence the consumer's assessment of use value. In this sense, the terms value-in-use, value-in context, and value-in-social-context can be said to represent different labels of the use value concept I use in this thesis and discuss further below.

2.1.2 Types of use value experiences

Previous research has shown how use value can be categorized into different archetypal types that provide a foundation for understanding consumer behavior and firms' value creation strategies (e.g., Berry et al., 2002; Holbrook, 2006; Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

In this thesis, I categorize consumer experiences along an extrinsic-to-intrinsic continuum (Holbrook, 2005; 2006). Categorization along this continuum builds on whether the consumer assigns weight to the utility derived from objective features or the meaning of its own subjective responses in a specific consumption event (Addis and Holbrook, 2001). At one end of the continuum, extrinsic use value experiences (also referred to as utilitarian) signifies that the consumers mainly emphasize objective features and view the experience as an instrumental or functional means to some further end (Batra and Ahtola, 1990; Holbrook, 1999; 2005; 2006; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). At the other end, intrinsic use value experiences (also referred to as hedonic) signify that the consumer emphasizes its own subjective responses, such as emotional reactions, as attributes of a consumption experience (Batra and Ahtola, 1990; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). In this sense, intrinsic consumption experiences are valued for their own sake as self-justifying ends in themselves (Holbrook, 1999; 2005; 2006). However, although a consumer may emphasize objective features (subjective responses), this does not make subjective responses (objective features) irrelevant. Many

consumption experiences are balanced in the sense that they signify a fairly equal weight of extrinsic and intrinsic value (Crowley et al., 1992).

Moreover, I also assume that consumer experiences of use value can be divided into self-oriented and outer-oriented types (Holbrook, 1999; 2005; 2006). Self-oriented types of use value experiences are typically experiences that the consumer values for his or her own sake, such as intrinsic feelings of fun or extrinsic experiences of efficiency or excellence. In turn, other-oriented types of use value experience are experiences that the consumer values for the sake of or relative to others, such as intrinsic feelings of oneness with a group (cf. Ashforth and Mael, 1989) or extrinsic feelings of esteem or status. Although this categorization provides a basic understanding of how use value may differ, which provides valuable basic insights for scholars and managers, it says little about the actual nature of consumer's use value experiences.

2.1.3 The nature of consumer use value experiences

Research on consumer behavior adopting an experiential view suggests that use value emerges through an "interactive relativistic preference experience" (Holbrook, 1996, p. 138). Similar to ideas in semiotics (see Grayson and Shulman, 2000; Mick 1986 for an overview) and as indicated above, a consumer use value experience is interactive in the sense that it involves interaction between an object and a subject (Addis and Holbrook, 2001; Holbrook, 1996; 1999; 2005; 2006). The object can, for example, be a brand name, firm, place, event, product, or service that embodies certain features or objective characteristics aimed to facilitate the consumer's value creation (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). The subject, who represents the consumer in the present thesis, embodies a specific personality including certain subjective responses, individual dispositions to participate and demands in value creation (Addis and Holbrook, 2001; Andreasen, 1984; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Kleine and Kleine, 2000; Sirgy, 1982).

In this thesis, I view this interaction between subject and object, such as the interaction between a consumer and a service provider or a consumer using a product or brand (Grönroos, 2006; 2011; Ma and Dubé, 2011; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004), as the minimum common denominator in all consumption experiences (Addis and Holbrook, 2001). This interaction can be direct or indirect (cf. Brakus et al., 2009; Carù and Cova, 2003; Pareigis, 2012) and provides the basis for the consumer's relativistic categorizations and evaluations of consumption experiences based on its attributes as well as how the object interacted with performs (Kleine and Kernan, 1991).

Further, use value is assumed to be relativistic in that it reflects the consumer's personal subjective hierarchical preferences that are based on the consumer's situation-specific comparison of one object's attributes with another (Belk, 1975; Holbrook, 2006; Mick, 1986). Accordingly, the consumer's use value judgments are essentially assessments of fit between an experience attribute configuration and the attributes configuration specified in the schemas that the consumer uses when making the judgment (cf. Mandler, 1982; Rindova and Petkova, 2007). In this comparison, the consumer focuses less on products and services per se than as instruments that contribute to living (Kleine et al., 1993). Thus, attractive products or services are those that fit the consumer as (i) complements to each other in a cluster of products or services (cf. solutions in marketing research, Tuli et al., 2007); or (ii) as facilitators of some identity that is important to the consumer (Kleine et al., 1993; Kressmann et al., 2006).

The above assumptions regarding the nature of use value show how consumer's assessments of use value are contextual and situational and occur within an activity stream and social interactions (Belk, 1975; Kleine et al., 1992). This view on the nature of use value resembles the experiential learning described in management theory (cf. Danneels, 2003) and raises questions about how consumers and managers assess and assign use value in the interaction with their environments, as well as how such assessments provide a foundation for firms' and consumer's value creation.

2.2 Assigning use value through experiences

Previous research in both consumer and management research has shown how consumers and managers learn from and ascribe meaning to objects through experiences of focal objects, such as products, services, brands, and other cues in their environment (Danneels, 2003; Hamel and Prahalad, 1991; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Levinthal and March, 1993; Porac et al., 1989). This meaning-ascribing or sense-making process includes stages related to context definition and information extraction, as well as meaning creation, identification, and validation (Kleine and Kernan, 1991; Mick and Buhl, 1992; Salancik, 1977; Weick, 1979). In its context definition, the consumer/manager select and attend to cues or structures – that is, norms, rules, and resources – in the external context and relevant prior experiences in its intrinsic psychological context that are useful and important for ascribing meaning to the focal object (Danneels, 2003; Giddens, 1984; Kleine and Kernan, 1991; Smircich and Stubbart, 1985). Thus, the character of the 'defined context' depends on the actors' pattern of attention as well as the specific theories, and affective dispositions used to interpret its environment. The external part of this context is often referred to in management research as an 'enacted environment' (cf. Danneels, 2003; Porac et al., 1989; Stubbart and Smircich, 1985; Weick,

1979) and as a 'intrinsic external context' in consumer research (Kleine and Kernan, 1991). The 'intrinsic psychological context' used in this interpretation (for example, theories, frameworks, and dispositions) is a concept used in consumer research (Kleine and Kernan, 1991) that is commonly described as a 'judgment policy' (e.g., Priem, 1994), 'mental model' (e.g., Danneels, 2003), or 'strategic schema' (Nadkarni and Narayanan, 2007) in management research. In this sense, the meaning or 'value labels' (that is, the types of social identity or meaning categories) the actor ascribes to a focal object will vary depending on the kind of environment that the actors attends to and is related to how the object performs rather than what the object is (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Kleine and Kernan, 1991; Levy, 1959; Mick and Buhl, 1992; Porac et al., 1989; Schmitt, 2012). In turn, actors are more likely to ascribe meanings more coherent with those intended by the object displayer (for example, a supplier or a consumer) or a projected displayer (for example, a stereotypical supplier or consumer) as the amount of information cues and the familiarity of the intrinsic or enacted context increase (Danneels, 2003; Kleine and Kernan, 1991). For example, Hamel and Prahalad (1991) showed that as a firm becomes familiar with its market, it learns to serve customers increasingly well.

Following from the above, external schemas embedded in the context in which the value creation takes place, as well as those the consumers or firms use in their sense making, both play a crucial role to understand value creation (Bern, 1981; Dacin et al., 1999; Granovetter, 1985; Neisser, 1976). In this sense, consumers' and managers' assessments of use value are systemic outcomes that develop through the actors' interactive, comparative, and subjective experiences of fit in a certain situation (Holbrook, 1999; 2005; 2006; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999; Rindova and Petkova, 2007. From a managerial perspective, such assessments inform a focal firm's strategic schema that underlies a manager's sense-giving attempts to create an attractive experiences of its organizational identity, or shares thereof, in an environment (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999; Rindova and Petkova, 2007; Weick et al., 2005; Whetten, 2006).

However, previous research on value creation mainly focuses on actors' relational roles in value creation (Barley, 1990), as evident in the functional role descriptions of 'customer' and 'provider' or the structural properties of interaction patterns (such as value facilitation, co-production, co-creation) between such roles (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). Although the research contributes with valuable insights into how value is created, it only provides a limited understanding of the properties of relevant parties and often ignores the strategic schemas underlying their actions and decision-making, with a few exceptions (cf. Salancik, 1995; Messick, 1999). For example, research on inter-organizational relationships shows that firms' strategic schemas can have a significant effect on the nature of interactions and its outcomes (Brickson, 2005;

2007; Heide and Wathne, 2006; Kumar et al., 2011). Therefore, in order to advance understanding of the firm's role in value creation, research needs to move beyond the relational role, or structural position of a firm, and also address the role of firms as social actors (cf. Montgomery, 1998).

2.3 Understanding value creation form the perspective of the firm as a social actor

Social identity theories in management research present a viable framework with which to enhance the understanding of value creation. Research in this field commonly takes a social constructivism view on organizations as social actors and focuses on the concepts of organizational identity, organizational image, and reputation (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Giddens, 1984; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Rindova et al., 2006; Weick, 1979). In line with this view, organizations are – similar to individual actors – assumed to possess identifying features or characteristics that allow other actors to recognize them as particular types, and distinguish them from other similar actors (King and Whetten, 2008; Whetten, 2006). Similar to the self-concept construct in consumer research, representing the consumers' self-view (Belk, 1988; Kleine et al., 1992; Sirgy, 1982), researchers generally define organizational identity as members' common shared understanding or experience of their organization's central, enduring, and distinctive (CED) features or attributes (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Brickson, 2007; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; King and Whetten, 2008). In other words, organizational identity represents the current or ideal internal perception of 'who we are, what we do, and how well we do' as an organization, which is shared among members in a firm (King and Whetten, 2008). Resembling the brand image concept in marketing (Keller, 1993; Park et al., 1986), organizational image represents the organization's characteristics that organizational members believe individuals outside the organization share and use to distinguish the organization from other similar organizations (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Whetten, 2006). In this sense, organizational image represents firm members' interpretation or best guesses of their reputation, representing outsiders' actual collective assessment of the organization based on their experience of its CED attributes and achievement of such attributes as a means to facilitate their value creation (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990, Weigelt and Camerer, 1988; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999).

Based on this division, researchers assume that firm members' comparisons of relevant insider and outsider views of a firm – that is, its identity versus its image – provide them with an understanding of the organizational identity's genuine CED attributes (Dutton et al., 1994; Whetten, 2006). While central and enduring (CE) attributes represent features that determine what kind of organization a firm is (that is, the firm would become a different organization if CE attributes would be removed), distinctive (D) attributes

distinguish the firm from similar others (King and Whetten, 2008). Further, the CED attributes can vary in terms of what the firm does (nominal difference) and extent related to how well the firm does (interval difference), which combine to inform the members and outsiders of 'who the firm is'. The resulting understanding is essential for firm members and outsiders to identify who the firm is similar to, as well as how it differs from similar others (Fiol, 2002; Whetten, 2006). King and Whetten (2008, p. 196) presented a good example of this logic inherent in the CED notion; "Entrepreneurs creating a bank must decide which kind of bank they want to be (eg commercial versus investment). Once this choice is made, the bank must further differentiate itself from other banks through further category-consistent elaboration of the identity (eg we are a commercial bank that offers small business loans to local retailers)." Such categorization is also crucial for actor identification, which has been shown to lead to firm member, stakeholder, and consumer activities that are congruent with and support a firm's identity, or that of its products, services, or brands (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Kressmann et al., 2006; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Scott and Lane, 2000).

2.3.1 The role of strategic schemas in firms' value creation

Through the above comparison process, the firm's organizational identity and image comes to inform, motivate, and create incentives for the firm's managers and members to preserve or change various CED aspects of the organizational identity (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Dutton et al., 1994). Consequently, firm managers attempt to maintain, reinforce, or reconstruct the firm's CED attributes through various sense-giving efforts in order to promote attractive constituent and stakeholder experiences of the firm; that is, experiences of fit and distinctiveness (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). In response, members and outsiders make sense of the meaning or value of the 'proposed' CED attributes and respond by attempting to influence and/or committing to its realized form (cf. Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999). As such, both managers, firm members, stakeholders, and consumers make sense of and act on the hierarchical constellation of CED attributes in attempts to identify, categorize, evaluate, and move organizations into shared self-defining social categories in a certain context (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; King and Whetten, 2008; Kleine and Kernan, 1991; Sirgy, 1982; Weick, 1995).

Following from the above, the firms' self-selected CED attributes or social identities, such as type of organization, forms of ownership and governance, and offering categories, provide the strategic schema or organizing logic that informs the firm's articulation of vision and mission and organizational actions (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; 2003; King and Whetten, 2008). In other words, the strategic schema constitutes a shared perception and

foundation when firm members assess the importance of various issues, make decisions, communicate, and/or act on behalf of the firm (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; March, 1994; Messick, 1999; Nadkarni and Narayanan, 2007; Priem, 1994; Whetten, 2006). Previous research has also shown how organization identity affects the nature and outcomes of the firm's interaction with consumers and other firms (Brickson, et al., 2007; Heide and Wathne, 2006). As such, the firm's strategic schema is likely to reflect how, where, when, and with whom, a focal firm strives to create a certain type of use value as well.

However, paradoxes – which can be defined as interrelated elements that may seem logical in isolation, but become contradictory when treated simultaneously (Lewis, 2000) – lurk in the shadows of a firm's identity creation and, therefore, value creation. Firms need to share some similarities and also challenge existing norms in order to become distinct and reputable enough for members and outsiders to identify with them (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; King and Whetten, 2008; Scott and Lane, 2000); for example, in the case of consumers, offering something that is novel, better, or cheaper than similar other category members (Lepak et al., 2007, Priem, 2007). In other words, at some levels, the firm needs to stabilize its identity relative to extant norms if it is to be considered a legitimate option for stakeholders and consumers to identify with the firm or its offering (Rindova et al., 2006; Zimmerman and Zeit, 2002). However, as the firm stabilizes its identity and the identity grows stronger, it may be harder to change the firm's CED attributes (Fiol, 2002). Therefore, the firm's self-selection of CED attributes is likely to involve trade-offs related to its attempts to create attractive product, service, or brand experiences; that is, consumer experiences that are congruent with consumer identities or their archetypal images of consumption experiences in certain situations.

2.4 Self-congruence as a predictor of favorable firm outcomes

As shown above, firm's CED attributes or identities provide a foundation not only for firm members (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Scott and Lane, 2000), but also for consumer identification (e.g., Sirgy, 1982; Kleine et al., 1993; Solomon, 1983). Identification is assumed to be based on individuals' self-categorization of, for example, firms or brands, which occur through consumers' comparison of attribute-by-attribute to a holistic gestalt match between their own defining categories (such as competence, personality traits, values, social identity, and possessions) with those that the define the identified social category (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; Kleine and Kernan, 1991; Mittal, 2006). A common assumption and research finding within social identity theory is that the more congruent a firm's identity, or that of its products, services, or brands, is with that of the consumer, the more attractive the consumer is likely to perceive the product,

service, or brand (e.g., Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Kleine et al., 1995; Kressman et al., 2006).

Consumer research on self-congruence shows how an objective's features, such as functional attributes of a product, service, or brand, are related to the consumer's perception of 'what the object is', while its performance attributes are dependent upon the external context or situation and refer to 'what the object is for' (Kleine and Kernan, 1991; Levy, 1959). In other words, the consumer focuses less on the characteristics of products, services, or brands, per se, than on the benefits they render in a certain situation in their evaluation of an object (Belk, 1975; Christensen et al., 2005; Deighton, 1992; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Holbrook, 2006; Solomon and Buchanan, 1991). Accordingly, product or service attributes, as well as a host of other contextual factors, such as packaging, advertising, price, stereotypes of typical users, and also where and in what situation the object is used, determine a consumers' image of a product, service or brand; this is referred to as user-image (Park et al., 1986; Keller, 1993; Sirgy, 1982). Thus, the complete user-image is held to interact with the consumer's self-concept or self-image; 'a sense of who I am and what I am' (Kleine et al., 1992, p. 411). This generates a subjective experience of fit in a certain situation, which is referred to as self-congruity (Kleine et al., 1993; Kleine and Kleine, 2000; Sirgy et al., 1997).

Previous research demonstrates how self-congruity is an important predictor of consumer emotional attachment and commitment to various types of brands (Malär et al., 2011; Orth et al., 2012; Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005; Thomson 2006), material possession/products (Ball and Tasaki, 1992; Belk, 1988; Kleine et al., 1995), and specific places or destinations (Alexandris et al., 2006; Kyle et al., 2005; Williams and Vaske, 2003). Self-congruity has also been shown to predict consumer preference, involvement, satisfaction, and loyalty to a focal product, service, or brand (Jamal and Goode, 2001; Kressmann et al., 2006; Sirgy et al., 1997; 2008; Sirgy and Su, 2000). In this sense, the consumer is shown to actively consume products and services as a source of self-definition whose preferences and behavior change as their sense of self, life status, and social relations changes (Andreasen, 1984; Kleine and Kleine, 2000; Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent, 2010; Thomson and Johnson, 2006).

However, managers must also take functional attributes and more calculative commitments into account (Gustafsson et al., 2005). Self-image congruity with brand personality has been shown to influence consumer preferences, satisfaction, choices, and loyalty to a brand directly and indirectly through functional congruity, which is definable as "the match between consumers' ideal expectations of utilitarian product features and their perceptions of how the brand is perceived along the same features" (Kressmann et al., 2006, p 955; Sirgy et al., 1991). Similarly, the functional congruity or experienced

functional conditions is a particularly important complement to relation-based interaction in predicting both the identification and sense of dependence that underlies place attachment and consumer loyalty to a place or destination (Alexandris et al., 2006; Williams and Vaske, 2003).

2.4.1 Expanding the scope: Experience-congruence

Viewed together, the research on self-congruence generally focuses on the consumer-firm identification as an important predictor of various important outcomes for the firm. In doing so, the research has come to focus on how consumer-perceived self-congruence is contingent upon various aspects of a product's, service's, or brand's personality and situational conditions (Aaker, 1997; Andreasen, 1984; Kleine and Kleine, 2000; Kressmann et al., 2006; Solomon and Buchanan, 1991; Sirgy et al., 2008; Swaminathan et al., 2009). This focus on the personality construct appears to have led to an emphasis on outer-oriented symbolic and expressive value related to status, esteem, and feelings of unity or oneness with some whole, such as a community or group of persons (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Holbrook, 2006; Smith and Colgate, 2007). Even if this research shows how symbolic use of products, services, and brands based on their brand personality is an important predictor of consumer behavior in public and relationship building circumstances – and, thus, for strategy (Smith and Colgate, 2007) – it has been shown to be less important in private conditions (Swaminathan et al., 2009).

Further, as mentioned above, research on self-congruence and functional congruence has shown that aspects other than just personality can help explain attachment and loyalty to a firm's brand (Kressmann et al., 2006) or a destination (Alexandris et al., 2006). Therefore, it is likely that adopting a wider consumer experience view on the user-image, as opposed to a pure personality view, can help explain how consumer experience evaluations form when they value an extrinsic or intrinsic experience for the consumer's own sake in a particular situation (cf. Holbrook, 2006). More recent research supports a consumer experience view, showing how brand experiences[1] impact consumer satisfaction directly and indirectly through brand personality, and consumer loyalty directly and indirectly through satisfaction and brand personality (Brakus et al., 2009; Nysveen et al., 2013). Thus, a broader conceptualization of a consumer experience, such as the one I have adopted in this thesis, is likely to provide a basis for addressing the nature of consumer evaluations of fit when more self-oriented value is created (cf. Holbrook 1999; 2005; 2006). Such conceptualization essentially addresses consumers' assessment of fit between the CED attributes inherent in their archetypal image of a

[1] Brakus et al. (2009, p 53) define brand experiences as "subjective internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments."

particular consumption experience (cf. Woodside et al., 2008; 2013) and the consumer's actual experience of a firm, brand, or offering.

Moreover, for identification to occur (unless by chance), the consumer must experience the firm's CED attributes as reputable; that is, categorize the firm, or its products, services, or brand, as attractive and distinct (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Although previous research has addressed how and under what conditions self-congruence create positive outcomes for companies, those studies appear to have adopted a holistic gestalt view (cf. Gentile et al., 2007) on the user-image concept. Accordingly, those studies have focused less on the CED hierarchy of attributes inherent in user-images.

In contrast, research on consumer experiences often argues that experiences need to be decomposed into cues or part experiences in order to better understand the underlying structure of experiences and consumers' evaluations (Brady and Cronin, 2001; Berry et al., 2006; Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Accordingly, this view assumes that various types of attributes can contribute positively or negatively to distinguish a firm, or its products, services, or brand, from similar others (Addis and Holbrook, 2001; Berry et al., 2006; Hunt, 2004; Pine and Gilmore, 1998). For example, previous research has shown how a consumer's experiences of a firm's attribute achievement can contribute to that consumer's (dis-)satisfaction in either a linear on non-linear way (Mittal et al., 1998; Anderson and Mittal, 2000). In this sense, the CED attributes of the firm, the brand, or the offering can be assumed to contribute in different ways to the sum of all benefits that consumers experience after evaluation (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Hunt, 2004; Priem, 2007). As such, it is likely that adopting a consumer experience view can shed light on the complex fit between an offering's attribute configuration and the attributes configuration specified in the schemas that the consumer use when making relevance and preference judgments about an experience (Mandler 1982; Rindova and Petkova, 2007).

2.5 CED attributes' relation to relevant and preferred consumer experiences

The level of relevance that a consumer attributes to an object or activity, and the enthusiasm and interest the object generates, can help predict the degree to which consumer participation and resource integration occurs in its interaction with the object (e.g., Celsi and Olson, 1988; Grönroos, 2008; Orth et al., 2012). To assess what attributes are central, enduring, or distinctive for a specific type of consumption experience, managers must understand how their achievement of specific attributes affects consumers' experience evaluations in terms of relevance and preference.

The relation between a firm's identity and its reputation is based on external performance standards that are shared among firms in a social category. The performance standards represent institutionally defined norms of minimum appropriate behavior and ideal performance that inform consumers', stakeholders', and firm managers' categorization and evaluation of firms (King and Whetten, 2008; Rindova et al., 2006). On one hand, the performance standards define the minimum criteria or societal expectations to which a firm must conform in order for consumers to perceive it a legitimate member of a social category and, thus, relevant option (Aaker, 2012; Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). On the other hand, performance standards also specify the ideal standards that a firm must achieve in order to be considered a highly preferred option among a typical type of firm (King and Whetten, 2008; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999).

From a purely nominal categorization point of view, central and enduring (CE) attributes represent minimum criteria or must-have attributes that consumers use to categorize their experiences of firms (or their products, services, or brands) into social categories (Aaker, 2004). Consumers use this categorization to evaluate whether interacting with the firm is likely to render a relevant type of a consumption experience in a certain situation (King and Whetten, 2008). Consequently, if a consumer categorizes a consumer experience derived from its direct or indirect interaction with a firm (or its products, services, or brands) as being incoherent with the type of use value it seeks, the consumer is likely to deem the focal object irrelevant (Aaker, 2012). Such consumer judgments are likely to result in sanctions such as excluding the brand completely from the consumer's consideration set (Aaker, 2004). In turn, distinctive attributes are those that differentiate a consumer experience from similar others, given that the attributes are socially desirable (King and Whetten, 2008). If considered desired (that is, ideal), these attributes can help the firm increase its reputation and consumer preferences for its products, services or brands (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Rindova et al., 2006; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999; Weigelt and Camerer, 1988).

From a performance point of view, performance standards also inform consumers' and firm's evaluations of how well various consumption experiences achieve various CED attributes along a socially desirability continuum (King and Whetten, 2008). The performance standards define both the minimum and ideal degrees of CED attribute achievement for a certain consumption experience. In other words, consumers consider an interaction with an object that renders central and enduring attributes of a particular category, to at least the minimum degree specified in the used performance standards, to be relevant or legitimate (Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). On the contrary, given that minimum standards are achieved, objects will be highly preferred and rewarded with good reputation when consumers consider that an interaction with an object renders

one or more CED attributes to a vastly favorable or socially desirable – that is, an ideal – degree (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Weigelt and Camerer, 1988).

2.5.1 Strategic options in the battle for relevance and preference

Following from the above, reputation resides in the likelihood that the firm can facilitate consumers' and other stakeholders' value creation along key dimensions of performance, based on their direct and indirect experiences of the firm's past and present achievement of various CED attributes (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Rindova et al., 2006; Weigelt and Camerer, 1988). Based on this understanding and the above notion of performance standards, a focal firm has two options: (i) it can compete on preference conform to minimum standards and strive for ideal standards in a certain market, or (ii) it may attempt to compete on relevance by reconstructing its identity and environment through sense-giving efforts that create new performance standards with which other firms cannot compete (Aaker, 2012; Kim and Mauborgne, 2004; 2005; 2009). For example, Apple's introduction of the iPhone radically altered how cell phones are viewed and used. This enabled Apple to define the central and enduring attributes for a novel type of cell phone experience that made competitors (such as Nokia) that competed on preference, based on the 'old' CED attributes, irrelevant. Therefore, the reward of the latter option, if successful, is that the firm is offered a possibility of creating its own unique market space that alters the structure of the market (cf. Aaker 2012; Kim and Mauborgne, 2004; 2005; 2009; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002).

In both cases above, the managerial assessment of the firm's CED attributes, culture, reputation, and relevant normative performance standards informs the strategic schemas that direct future sense-giving actions (Giddens, 1984; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Hatch and Schultz, 1997; 2003; Weick et al., 1979). If a given comparison process between the firm's actual CED constellation and the set of CED attributes the firm aspires to achieve detects a sufficiently large gap, then certain sense-giving responses are likely to be triggered in attempts to 'correct' the problem (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Heide and Wathne, 2006). Accordingly, the firm's assessment of performance standards is likely to pattern its strategic investments, decisions, activities, and interaction with consumers and other stakeholders in ways that either reinforce or reconstruct performance standards (Rindova and Fombrun, 1999). In a similar way, the same performance standards are likely to pattern consumers' experience evaluations and behavior, which also contributes to validate or alter the performance standards.

The above discussion shows how managers need to create an understanding of how the CED attributes of the firm, or those of its brands or offerings, are congruent with those

in the consumers' emerging archetypal consumption experiences to invest in attributes that either increase their relevance or preference. One theory that has been shown to be viable for producing such understanding in goods and service contexts is the theory of attractive quality (e.g., Löfgren and Witell, 2008; Witell et al., 2013). However, few if any studies have adapted the theory to the nature of experiences and to provide a deeper understanding of consumers' relevance and preference judgments, which can be used to refine and reconstruct the consumer's experience of a firm.

2.6 The theory of attractive quality

According to the hierarchical CED attribute arrangement outlined above, relevance is reached when minimum central and enduring attributes of a certain consumption experience type are achieved. Within-category preference, on the other hand, relates to the degree to which the central, enduring, and distinctive attributes of a given type of consumption experience are achieved. In this thesis, I have used the theory of attractive quality to gain insights into how firm's attribute achievement contributes to relevant and preferred consumption experiences (Kano et al., 1984; Berger et al., 1993; Matzler, 1996; Löfgren and Witell 2005).

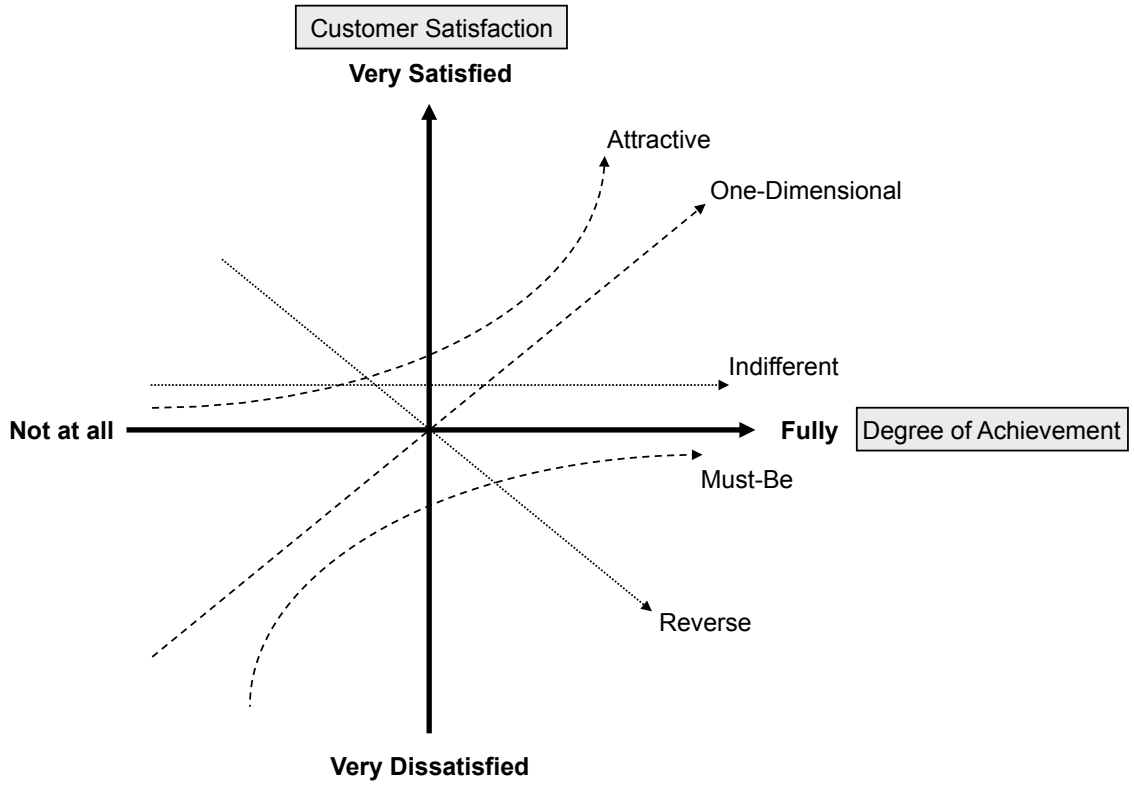

Figure 1. An overview of the theory of attractive quality (based on: Gustafsson, 1996).

Figure 1 illustrates how the theory of attractive quality links the degree to which a certain attribute is achieved to a consumer's corresponding subjective experience evaluation. In Figure 1, the horizontal axis represents the degree to which a certain attribute is achieved, while the vertical axis corresponds to a consumer's corresponding experience evaluation. The graphs illustrate the nature of the theory's prototypical quality categories and, thus, how attribute achievements can have an asymmetric or symmetric relationship with consumers' experience evaluations. This relationship forms the basis for the theory's division of attributes into prototypical 'must-be' (M), 'one-dimensional' (O), 'attractive' (A), 'indifferent' (I), and 'reverse' (R) quality categories, which I describe below (Berger et al., 1993; Löfgren and Witell 2005).

Must-be quality attributes represent the basic criteria or minimum performance standards a consumer experience must meet if it is to be a considered a legitimate or relevant type of experience and be able to compete with other alternatives within the specific category (Berger et al., 1993; King and Whetten 2008; Rindova and Fombrun 1999). Consumers are likely to take the presence of these attributes for granted, which means they may not clearly demand them (Löfgren and Witell, 2005). As depicted in Figure 1, achievement of must-be attributes is presumed to only lead to a state of consumer 'non-dissatisfaction' with the consumer experience and will not contribute to consumer satisfaction (Kano et al., 1984). In other words, if must-be attributes are not met, consumers are likely to perceive the service as irrelevant and exclude it from their consideration sets (Aaker, 2004). Therefore, scholars who adopt the theory of attractive quality have generally assumed that these attributes are difficult or even impossible to compete on. However, given the notions of performance standards above, it is likely that if a firm manages to create and achieve desirable central and enduring must-have standards for an experience that no competitor can achieve, these standards may be used to create a unique market space for the firm.

One-dimensional quality attributes are presumed to have a linear, symmetrical, and proportional relationship between attribute achievement and consumer (dis-)satisfaction (Berger et al., 1993; Kano et al., 1984). As Figure 1 illustrates, the greater the extent to which one-dimensional attributes are met, the greater the consumer preference and satisfaction with the consumer experience. Conversely, the lower the extent to which these attributes are achieved, the higher the dissatisfaction and the lower the preference. Accordingly, unlike the taken-for-granted must-be attributes, the achievement of one-dimensional attributes follows a 'the-more–the-better' mantra. Therefore, while it is of key importance for the firm to achieve these attributes to at least a minimum degree in order to be relevant, firms achieving these attributes to an ideal degree can increase consumer preference for its product, service, or brand (cf. Aaker, 2004; 2012).

Attractive quality attributes have the ability to satisfy or delight consumers when achieved, but do not cause any dissatisfaction if they are not performed (Kano et al., 1984); see Figure 1. Normally, attractive attributes are assumed to delight or satisfy consumers because the consumers are unaware of the attributes' existence or do not expect suppliers to perform them (cf. Berger et al., 1993; Löfgren and Witell, 2005; Matzler et al., 1996). However, given the discussion on CED attributes above, another explanation may be that they represent distinct and highly desirable attributes (cf. King and Whetten, 2008). Therefore, a firm that achieves desirable attractive attributes is likely to enhance its offering's reputation and consumer preference, which may lead to a competitive advantage and a higher repurchase rate (Sauerwein, 1999).

Indifferent quality attributes refer to aspect of an offering that may be needed to facilitate value creation, but that consumers do not care about and, therefore, do not contribute to either relevance or preference, or result in either satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Berger et al., 1993; Löfgren and Witell, 2005); see Figure 1. These attributes may just not be congruent with the central and enduring attributes for a particular experience. However, they may be important to other stakeholders or represent a novel attribute that consumers simply are not aware of and, thus, have difficulty evaluating. As such, indifferent attributes may become important to differentiate a consumer experience once consumers become aware of and experience them (cf. Löfgren et al., 2011). Another explanation may be that the attribute has become obsolete and is no longer requested.

Reverse quality attributes represent negative relationships between the achievement of certain aspects and consumers' experience evaluations. Reverse attributes signify that consumers demand certain attributes not to be performed. Scholars adopting the theory of attractive quality generally consider reverse attributes as a single unified one-dimensional category (Lee and Newcomb, 1997; Löfgren and Witell, 2005). Thus, contrary to one-dimensional attributes, reverse attributes are assumed to follow a 'the-less–the-better' mantra. Therefore, while it is of key importance for the firm to achieve these attributes to the low possible degree in order to be relevant, firms that do not achieve them to any degree may potentially increase consumer preference for its product, service, or brand, if competitors achieve the attribute.

Following from the above, the hierarchical order of attributes can be understood and managerial priorities can be made following a 'Must-be>One-dimensional>Attractive>Indifferent' (M>O>A>I) evaluation rule (Matzler et al., 1996). Based on this rule and the hierarchical CED attribute order in the discussion above, firms must first achieve must-be attributes, followed by achieving one-dimensional attributes and limiting reverse one-dimensional attributes to minimum level, in order to make the

offering relevant to consumers (see Figure 1). In addition, to distinguish itself the firm must meet one-dimensional attributes exceptionally well and/or achieve attractive attributes to some extent to enhance consumer preference and its reputation among consumers (King and Whetten, 2008; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999).

2.6.1 The dynamic relation between CED attributes and performance standards

From the above discussion, it becomes apparent that ideal standards must be consistent with the central and enduring must-be and minimum levels of one-dimensional attributes for a particular type of experience (King and Whetten, 2008). In this sense, the minimum performance standards are likely to inform consumers' and managers' assessment of what 'ideal' means. This notion suggests that consumers' categorizations of experiences represent backward-compatible assessments and that consumer's experience evaluations (that is, judgments of value) are assessments of fit (cf. King and Whetten, 2008; Rindova and Petkova, 2007). This suggestion yields proof of the usefulness of theories such as the theory of attractive quality to provide an actionable managerial understanding of the hierarchical ordering inherent in consumers' assessments of use value. Essentially, such understanding can help firms form strategies that facilitate consumer's creation of use value: either they compete on preference or attempt to compete on relevance by creating new performance standards with which others cannot compete (Aaker, 2012; Kim and Mauborgne, 2004; 2005; 2009).

Longitudinal research based on the theory of attractive quality also show how attributes' relations to consumer evaluations are dynamic and change over time, typically following a I→A→O→M pattern (Kano, 2001; Löfgren et al., 2011; Nilsson-Witell and Fundin, 2005). However, reverse movements are also detected in some studies, although it is less clear what pattern, if any, such movements follow (Löfgren et al., 2011). These studies yield proof of how firms' and consumers' interpretation of and behavior based on performance standards contribute to validate and alter standards in ways that reconstruct the market environment over time. It is likely that experiences that achieve certain distinctive attributes or one or more CED experience attributes exceptionally well will serve as a prototype or 'best-in-class' example that informs both firms' and consumers' assessments of competing alternatives (King and Whetten, 2008). Similarly, firms that do not achieve certain reverse attributes may play an equal role. For example, switching from fossil fuels to an environmental friendly alternative may serve as a distinctive feature in some market contexts. Thus, what was once an ideal standard either in performance level or attribute type per se, may become the future norm through isomorphic mechanisms of replication and competition unless isolating mechanisms are in place (DiMaggio and

Powell, 1983; Lepak et al., 2007). In such circumstances, ideal standards raise the minimum performance standards.

To summarize, the theory of attractive quality can help managers prioritize efforts and investments that support their overall value creation strategies independent of whether such strategies are inherently exploitative or explorative. Combined with the accompanying methodology (Kano et al., 1984) used in Papers III, IV, and V in this thesis (see chapter 3.5), managers and researchers are able to assess the hierarchical order and CED attributes of consumers archetypical experiences and better understand the nature of experience evaluations.

3 Methodology

In this chapter I present a description of the research methodology used in this thesis. I start by describing my overall research strategy and the subsequent research approaches of my research from an ontological and epistemological point of view. In turn, under research design, I present an overview of the research methods and contexts I have used in the various studies. Throughout these sections, I reflect upon the validity and reliability of the overall research process.

3.1 Research strategy

Drawing on Van de Ven and Poole (2005) and Tronvoll et al. (2011), ontology refers to whether a researcher looks at value creation as consisting of *nouns* or *verbs,* while epistemology concerns the researcher's view on knowledge and how value creation can be understood. When we take the ontological stance of nouns, we assume that value creation consists of entities (or things) in a certain state or phase of a process whose identity or meaning change from one time to another. Accordingly, this stance focuses on the change in, or relationships between entities. In contrast, from the ontological stance of verbs, we assume that value creation is composed solely of processes and that structures (such as, objects, subjects, normative standards and experiences) are simply reifications of such processes. In turn, the adopted method for studying an entity or a process can be seen as a representation of the researcher's epistemological view and divided into *variance methods* or *narrative methods* (Poole et al., 2000; Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). Combined, these views on ontology and epistemology form a typology of four different and complementary research approaches or strategies that can be used to provide different, and therefore partial, understandings of value creation (see Figure 2).

Following this typology (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005), variance methods are apt to (Approach I) study differences in and between entities; that is, variables on selected dimensions, and establish causal relationships that explain the conditions that bring out an outcome, or (Approach IV) study indicators, or attributes of events, and analyze resulting time-series to examine various aspects, such as a sequence or structure of an unfolding process. In turn, process methods represent process narratives apt for describing and explaining (Approach II) the temporal order and sequence of relationships, events of change or development in an entity, or (Approach III) the emerging actions and activities through which collective development and change unfolds. Accordingly, the research design associated with each research approach limits the type of research questions a researcher can address without compromising the quality of his or her research findings (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). Therefore, I coordinate the pluralistic insight drawn from various approaches in this compilation thesis to provide a richer, more robust,

generalizable and actionable understanding of value creation than any one approach provides on its own (e.g., Jick, 1979; Scandura and Williams, 2000; Sechrest and Sidani, 1995; Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). In particular, I have selected and combined three of the four research approaches described above based on my overall research aim and the aim in each appended paper. Accordingly, each of the appended papers mainly lends itself to a certain approach as follows.

		Ontology Value creation represents:	
		A noun(s), a real entity(*entities*)	A verb, a process of creating value
Epistemology (Method for understanding value creation)	Variance method	**Approach I** Variance studies of value creation entities. Causal analysis of change in, or relationship between entities (variables)	**Approach IV** Variance studies of value-creating processes. Dynamic modeling of agent-based models or systems
	Process narratives	**Approach II** Process studies of value creation entities. Narratives that explain sequence of events, stages or cycles of value creation	**Approach III** Process studies of value-creating processes. Narratives that explain emergent actions and activities through which value creation unfolds

Figure 2. Approaches for studying value creation (based on Van de Ven and Poole, 2005)

Paper I (Högström and Tronvoll, 2012) follows approach III, which is often held useful to explore critical features of change and development (Poole et al., 2000), in order to create an understanding of the process through which structures, sensemaking, and enactment unfold in value creation. Accordingly, we combine a process-oriented ontological view on value creation with a process narrative to describe the emerging actions and activities through which value creation unfolds. From this research perspective, structures (such as, objects, mental models, normative standards and experiences) are seen as reifications of a set of value-creating processes. An important artifact of this interpretive approach is that stability or change in reifications are products of the researcher's own judgments and understanding of previous research, and not "real things." Thus, in line with common practice among researchers adopting this approach (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005), the paper is conceptual in nature and reviews previous research on subjects such as structuration theory, sensemaking theory, and social embeddedness theory, and research on value-creating systems, so as to provide a deeper understanding of structures and human actors' roles in value-creating processes (cf. Edvardsson, et al., 2011; Giddens, 1984; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999; Weick, 1979).

In paper II (Högström et al., 2014), we adopt approach II to explore how firms rely on various strategic schemas aimed at different forms of use value to manage paradoxes between efficiency, legitimacy, and flexibility. The ontology and epistemology of this approach is particularly useful when studying relationships between entities and to describe and explain a temporal order and sequence of events through which value creation unfolds (nouns) (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). Thus, we judge this approach appropriate to explore and form a foundational understanding of generative mechanisms and contingencies related to the research aim, as well as to understand how such mechanisms and contingencies operate in value creation. In line with this approach, we adopt a qualitative research design and assume that value creation consist of entities ("the created") in a certain state or phase of a process whose identity or meaning change from one time to another; for example, a type of strategic schema, a consumption experience, a type of organization, a type of situation, a type of attribute, or a type of consumer (cf., Addis and Holbrook, 2001; Holbrook, 2006; Kano et al., 1984; Whetten, 2006).

Paper III (Högström et al., 2010), IV (Högsröm, 2011), and V (Högström et al., forthcoming) are based on approach I to provide a deeper and general understanding of consumer experience evaluations from a marketing and management perspective. Accordingly, and similarly to Paper II, we presuppose that value creation consists of entities whose value may vary to the consumer from one time to another (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). Yet, a difference from paper II is that we use variance methods to study differences in and between entities (variables) on selected dimensions using the Kano methodology. More specifically, how consumers' evaluation of the achievement of various attributes vary in an object–subject interaction (cf. Löfgren and Witell, 2005).

Summarized, my overall research strategy is to combine and coordinate the insights drawn from three research approaches I describe above, providing the basis for my research design.

3.2 Research design

Building on my research strategy, I base my research design on how well the characteristics of different methods fit; that is, how well they serve to answer the research problem and phenomenon under investigation. In Table 1, I provide an overview of how the research aims guided the choice of research approach, methods, and empirical context in the appended papers. In the following section, I describe and reflect in more detail upon the research design used in each of the appended papers;, and I also provide a

description of my role and contributions in the empirical studies and writing processes of the co-authored papers.

Paper	Type of paper	Aim	Research approach	Method(s) used	Empirical base
I	Conceptual	Explore the process through which structures, sensemaking and enactment unfolds in value creation.	Approach III	(Purposive) literature review	Case study description provided by European Management Journal
II	Empirical	Explore how organizational strategic schemas aimed at different forms of use value trigger and are used to manage paradoxes between efficiency, legitimacy and flexibility.	Approach II	Interviews (Iterative grounded theory approach)	Multiple case study with two phases of data collection Phase 1: 16 cases - 19 interviews (excluding pre-study) Phase 2: 5 cases - 5 interviews
III	Empirical	Understanding the relationship between attribute achievement and consumer experience evaluations in an 'intrinsic' context	Approach I	Interviews (pre-study) Questionnaires	30 semi-structured interviews 270 questionnaire respondents
IV	Empirical	Enhance the understanding of the hierarchical arrangement between and within Kano categories from a consumer experience perspective.	Approach I	Interviews (pre-study) Questionnaires	30 structured interviews 270 questionnaire respondents
V	Empirical	Understanding the relationship between attribute achievement and consumer experience evaluations in an 'extrinsic' context	Approach I	Interviews (pre-study) Questionnaires	30 semi-structured interviews 930 questionnaire respondents

Table 1: Overview of the research design used in this thesis based on the appended papers

3.3 Paper I: Research design

Paper I follows approach III and aims to explore the process through which social structures, sensemaking, and enactment unfolds in value creation. In this paper we attend to the social, structural, cultural, political, and cognitive structuration of actors' sensemaking and resource activation in value-creating systems.

Following the conceptual nature of approach III (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005), rather than argue against the inclusion of ideas from other fields, we contend that research that aims to understand value creation lends itself to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary investigation (cf. Priem, 2007; Priem et al., 2013). Therefore, in this paper we view value creation research as an endeavor that has the ability to integrate strategy, economics, management, and marketing disciplines with each other and with more basic disciplines, and also benefits from such integration. Accordingly, paper I reviews and integrates theory and concepts from strategic management and marketing (Grönroos, 2006; 2008), structuration theory (Giddens, 1984; Sewell, 1992), economic sociology and institutional theory (Dacin et al., 1999; Granovetter, 1985; Zukin and DiMaggio, 1990; Uzzi, 1996;

1997), and sensemaking theory (Weick, 1979) into a joint framework for understanding human actors' value creation processes in value-creating systems.

First, a purposive literature review was performed, aimed at investigating how value creation and economic human action has been depicted and understood in prior marketing and strategic management research from past to present. Our findings in this first phase showed that an increasing amount of scholars acknowledge that value creation processes are constituted by collective human action that is embedded in larger social environments including resource, sociopolitical, cultural, and cognitive structures. At the same time, it also became apparent how several scholars emphasize how value-creating systems, representing a form for ongoing organizing, are comprised of individuals – and individual action – in particular who act within and upon their understanding of the structures that constitute such systems. Therefore, in order to provide a richer understanding of actors' value-creating processes, the focus of our study turned to economic sociology and macro-level structuration theory (e.g., Giddens, 1984; Sewell, 1992), economic sociology (e.g., Dacin et al., 1999; Granovetter, 1985), as well as micro-level theories on how individuals' make sense of their environments and act upon the resulting understanding (e.g., Weick, 1979). In this sense, the review process consisted of informed theory borrowing and integration into a conceptual framework of value-creating processes that improve the understanding of how value creation processes unfold.

Second, to demonstrate the utility of the concepts borrowed from the above-mentioned related and basic disciplines as explanations of how actors' value creation processes emerge in value-creating systems, we applied our framework to a an empirical case description (cf. Whetten et al., 2009). We applied the distinctive insights drawn from our framework to a case description of the London borough of Sutton, which was given to us as a mandatory demand by an editor of the *European Management Journal* prior to submission. We identified similar processes and reifications in the value-creating processes of the case description as the ones suggested in our conceptual framework. In this application, the integrative proposed framework contributed with a predictive and explanatory power to how macro-level value creation processes and micro-level human actor sensemaking and activities unfold within a value-creating system.

3.3.1 Paper I: Author contributions

In Paper I, the overall writing process was a joint effort with Professor Tronvoll, in which I acted as the coordinating author. Prof. Tronvoll contributed with the review on value creation systems in SDL-specific literature and structuration theory in the writing process. I introduced and contributed with the review on sensemaking/enactment theory in an

initial phase before the first submission. Subsequently, I revised and added structural, cultural, political, and cognitive embeddedness as an overarching theme to frame the manuscript in response to reviewer comments that the paper needed an improved and clearer structure. It is worth noting that the reviewers did not suggest or request this specific addition. Throughout this major revision I acted as a coordinator and constructed a new main line of reasoning, integrated the different theories into the manuscript, and developed the conceptual models in the paper. In this part of the process, Prof. Tronvoll acted as a reviewing co-writer, commenting and suggesting changes to the manuscript. We contributed equally to the introduction, the basic contrasting between goods logic and service logic, and the discussion and conclusions in the paper.

3.4 Paper II: Research design

Paper II follows approach II to explore how organizational strategic schemas aimed at different forms of use value creation with consumers trigger and are used to manage paradoxes between efficiency, legitimacy, and flexibility. In this paper I conducted all parts of the empirical study and data analysis on my own. I structured the methodology according to an iterative grounded theory approach (Orton, 1997) and worked with extensive case studies to create a holistic comprehension of branding and extend existing theory on value creation (Bonoma, 1985; Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 1978; Yin, 2009). Following the iterative grounded theory approach, I conducted an iterative process of two running exchanges depicted in Figure 3; the first between literature review and (empirical) data analysis, and the second between data analysis and data collection (Burawoy, 1991).

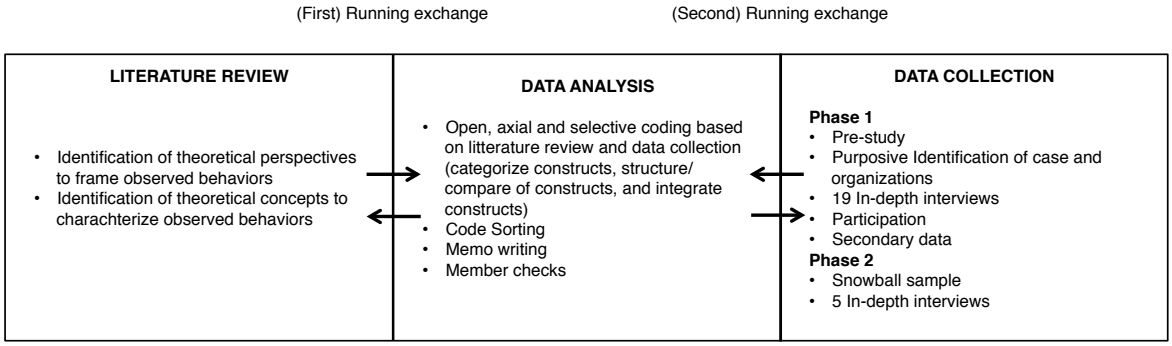

Figure 3. Overview of the research procedure in Paper II

3.4.1 Research procedure

The first running exchange is the interplay of literature review and analysis of empirical data that occurs concurrently (Danneels, 2003). Data analysis guides the literature review, which provides frameworks to aid in interpreting the empirical data. Based on this

exchange, I developed a tentative theory of how firms co-create certain forms of value and manage paradoxes in value creation that played a guiding and sensitizing role in the second running exchange (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Yin, 2009). Specifically, the tentative theory guided context selection and provided phenomena for investigation, topics, and directions for data collection in the second running exchange. The collected data was coded to generate substantive theory in the form of memos, mainly in the form of firm descriptions (see Table 1 in Högström et al., 2014) (Silverman, 1970), which stimulated and directed further literature studies to enhance theoretical understanding. Accordingly, the study refined, specified, qualified, re-assessed, and confirmed concepts and theories in a continuous interplay between literature review, data analysis, and data collection (Vaughan, 1992). This alternation of deductive and inductive theorizing continued to a point of theoretical saturation, allowing me to construct a formal typology and theory of archetypical strategic schemes and paradoxes in brand management in value creation; see Table 5 and Figure 6 in chapter 4.2 (Strauss, 1987).

3.4.2 Data sources and data collection

This study was divided into two main phases of data collection. Following the procedures of the iterative grounded theory process, data collection, including sampling and interview guides, evolved with changes in theoretical understanding. The data source in the first phase was a study of 25 firms of varying sizes co-producing materials for various branding, marketing, and media production purposes in a Norwegian winter destination. A pre-study showed that the context includes firms that were representative of different branding (value creation) archetypes and provided cases that enabled comparisons to clarify if findings are transferable between different cases (Eisenhardt, 1991). I deemed this context a strong base for building theories about how organizational focus on various types of use value results in various forms of value creation that expose the firm to various paradoxes (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009). Further, I used a theoretical sampling procedure to select 16 cases (entities with brands) based on their potential to contribute to the developing theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Maxwell, 1998; Patton, 1990). The firms' brand diversity, various roles and objectives in the value creation promised to provide particularly good cases to explore strategic schemes in branding (value creation) from multiple perspectives. The case selection resulted in 19 in-depth interviews with knowledgeable informants with different approaches toward value creation (Eisenhard and Graebner, 2007). The interviews focused on the firms' strategic identity, intents, objectives, value proposition, value-creation activities, value capturing, view on the surrounding network, and types of exchange relationships (strong vs. weak). I recorded all interviews, which lasted between 30 and 75 minutes, on film and then transcribed the material.

The second data collection phase was an extension of the second running exchange of this study, and served to develop a more transferable and grounded formal theory, meaning that the theory has meaning to others in similar situations in various contexts (Gasson, 2003). This data collection subjected the findings from the first data collection phase to an external check in contexts different to those studied during the first phase. Accordingly, substantive theory drawn from analysis of empirical data from the first phase guided the second data collection phase. In this phase, I relied on a snowball sample to find purposive cases and informants. This procedure generated five in-depth interviews with informants from five firms. The firms vary in size, operate in diverse markets, and promised to yield rich theories on how objectives and paradoxes in branding affect the firm's orientation toward its environment. By moving back and forth between data analysis and data collection (second running exchange), this supplementary data generated enough theoretical saturation to develop a formal theory on paradoxes in branding. This saturation was reached when additional data collection and analysis no longer increased understanding to any significant extent (Lee, 1999; Strauss, 1987).

While the second data-collection phase consisted mainly of in-depth interviews, the first phase also included two additional data sources. One source was video documentation of parts of the firms' production processes; the other source was secondary data in the form of e-mail correspondence, market research statistics, press articles, and material resulting from production and marketing activities. This additional data provided information that contextualized and facilitated the coding and interpretation during data analysis. This data also provided an external check on how the firms enacted certain brand orientations to optimize certain aspects of paradoxes throughout the data analysis.

3.4.3 Data analysis

The data analysis was structured according to the iterative grounded theory approach (Orton, 1997). The analysis included open, axial, selective modes of coding, memo writing, and model and typology development to extend existing theory (cf. Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). I used open coding to generate initial concepts from my data and axial coding to link the different concepts into conceptual families. During the selective coding, I selected core categories relevant for the research aim and formalized relationships between concepts into the resulting theoretical framework. As described below, I constructed tentative theoretical memos with descriptions and explanations based on identified, structured, refined, and integrated categories and themes (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In line with the iterative approach, literature review paralleled this process and helped label concept and

relationships, along with directing further attention to specific themes in the data that recursively informed the literature review.

First, I focused the data analysis and memo writing on building detailed case descriptions (see Table 1 in Högström et al., 2014). These case descriptions underwent several member checks in order to test the credibility of the findings (Hirschman, 1986). Second, I compared the case descriptions by continuously sorting, matching, and contrasting them, which led to the final models, matrices, and typologies found in the article (Miles and Huberman, 1994); see Table 5 and Figure 6 in chapter 4.2. Throughout this comparative analysis, I subjected my interpretations and findings to a marketing agency and consultants. I also presented my findings at a creative and cultural industry seminar, where several marketing experts and businesspeople provided feedback. The feedback from these external checks helped me confirm and refine the analysis. Informants and experts agreed with the substance and logic of the analysis. Most of the experts also commented on the need for a framework that explains how value creation can be understood and how paradoxes or trade-offs between creating various forms of use value can be managed.

Overall, the data analysis showed how the studied cases' branding relied on certain archetypical strategic schemes, including certain identities and decision logics (March, 1994; March and Olsen, 2004; Messick, 1999; Nadkarni and Narayanan, 2007; Whetten, 2006). I uncovered diverse and paradoxically related archetypes of value creation, depending on whether the firms seek to create growth through efficiency, legitimacy, or flexibility. This theoretical understanding of how firms enact brands; that is, create value with consumers based on different strategic schemes, allowed me to develop three archetypical brand orientations. The resulting typology includes descriptions of a calculative archetype aimed at creating benefits and efficiency; a heuristic archetype focused on the brand meaning's legitimacy; and a dynamic archetype seeking capabilities that increase flexibility. These archetypes then formed a basis for capturing how firms' selection of strategic schemas in value creation triggers paradoxes between efficiency, legitimacy, and flexibility.

3.4.4 Paper II: Author contributions

I co-authored Paper II with Professor Anders Gustafsson and Professor Bård Tronvoll. I was the main author of this paper. Given the particular character of the iterative research approach upon which Paper II builds, I conducted the literature review and contributed with the completed outline of the paper as well as the conceptual models and typologies found within it. I wrote all sections in the manuscript in every draft of the paper. Throughout this writing process, Prof. Gustafsson and Prof. Tronvoll acted as reviewing

co-writers, commenting and suggesting changes to the paper. They also provided support and guidance through several informal discussions on the content of the paper. It is also worth mentioning two anonymous Journal of Business Research reviewers who commented on the manuscript and provided aid in making the paper more distinct and to the point.

3.5 Paper III, IV, and V: Research design

I conducted all parts of the intrinsic empirical study and data analysis in Paper III and IV, and collaborated with Ph.D. student Davoudi throughout the extrinsic empirical study and data analysis in Paper V. Any exceptions are mentioned in the text below.

Empirical research studies using the Kano methodology		
	Intrinsic consumption experience	**Extrinsic consumption experience**
Empirical context	Norwegian Ski Resorts (Intrinsic experiences)	Public transit (Extrinsic experiences)
Empirical base for paper	III and IV	V
Pre-study		
Sampling procedure	Snowball sampling	Random assignment
Sample size	30 respondents (Snowpark users)	30 respondents (Public transit users)
Interview style	Semi-structured	Semi-structured
Data analysis	Open coding	Open coding
Point of theoretical saturation	25 respondents/consumer interviews 21 attributes found	11 respondents/consumer interviews 25 attributes found
External check	Previous research findings	Comparison with industry standards
Questionnaire		
Sampling procedure	Purposive (electronic) Complete electronic member registry of the Norwegian Snowboard Federation	Purposive (mail) Random assignment from a government-owned public transit database
Sample	1571	2500
Response rate	231 (17.2%)	930 (37%)
Background questions	Age, gender, skill level, frequency of snowboarding, most visited resort, and most preferred resort	Age, gender, and travel habits
Kano survey	Kano pair questions Attribute importance ratings Attribute achievement ratings (resorts)	Kano pair questions Attribute importance ratings

Table 2. Overview of studies adopting the Kano Methodology

Following approach I, Papers III, IV, and V aim to provide a general understanding of the nature of consumers' valuation of experience attribute achievement across intrinsic

and extrinsic experience contexts. Specifically, Paper III builds on a study regarding what constitutes a typical intrinsic consumption experience context (Snowpark experiences[2]), while Paper V builds on a study concerning a typically extrinsic counterpart (Public transit experiences[3]) (cf. Batra and Ahtola, 1991; Crowley et al., 1992). Both studies adopt the Kano methodology (Kano et al., 1984), which draws upon the theory of attractive quality, and verify its applicability in both intrinsic and extrinsic experience contexts to study the relationship between attribute achievement and consumer experience evaluations; in other words, the nature of consumers' use value evaluations. Further, Paper IV builds on the same empirical study as Paper III, but discusses basic assumptions of the Kano methodology and theory of attractive quality for studying consumption and consumer experiences; in this paper the main aim is to discuss questionnaires' construction and test the validity and reliability of the evaluation heuristics used for classifying attributes into the categories of the theory of attractive quality from a consumption experience; that is, use value, perspective. Table 2 provides an overview of the studies.

3.5.1 Pre-studies

Similar to previous Kano studies (e.g., Matzler et al., 1996), in each of the two studies quantitative questionnaires were developed based on qualitative pre-studies; see Table 2 for a detailed description of the studies. The purpose of the pre-studies was to identify and validate context-specific consumption experience attributes for the questionnaires. I collected and analyzed the data during the 'intrinsic' pre-study (Papers III and IV), whereas my fellow author of Paper V, Ph.D. student Sara Davoudi, collected the data in the 'extrinsic' pre-study.

When collecting data, we followed Griffin and Hauser's (1993) finding that 20 to 30 consumer interviews regarding complex offering are sufficient to determine approximately 90 percent or more of all user requirements in a homogeneous consumer segment. Thus, 30 consumer interviews were conducted in both studies. Open coding was used in both studies to identify and generate experience attributes (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Theoretical saturation was reached; that is, the found attributes were confirmed and validated to ensure internal consistency (Gasson 2003) after 25 interviews in the intrinsic study and 11 interviews in the extrinsic study.

In both studies, the questions asked during the interviews concerned: (i) associations the consumer made when using/interacting with offering category X; (ii) problems the

[2] A snowpark is a slope with obstacles such as jumps, halfpipes, etc. It is often part of a larger wintersport destination. In this thesis, 'snowpark experience' refers to the archetypal consumption experience directly related to using snowparks, not a destination or the supportive tourism system as a whole.
[3] 'Public transit experience' refers to the archetypal consumption experience directly related to using a terrestrial public transit system, such as buses, trains, etc.

consumer associated with using/interacting with offering category X; (iii) criteria the consumer considered when buying/selecting offering category X; (iv) new features or services that would better meet the consumer's expectations; and (v) changes the consumer would like to see so as to improve his or her experiences with offering category X. Throughout the pre-studies, informants were also asked to exemplify with real life experiences the objective features or subjective responses they referred to in their answers to help identify attributes. Answers to the first two questions helped identify consumers' general requirements toward the studied types of experiences, as well as basic and undetected attributes in the form of consumer-experienced problems and desires. Answers to the third question assisted in capturing consumers' articulated needs and requirements. Finally, answers to the fourth question helped identify potential, existing, and desired experience attributes of which the consumers were aware, but which they did not see as achieved or provided through interactions with existing market offerings. Overall, rather than being based on predefined scripts (from firm or industry descriptions, for example), this procedure provided attributes based on the insights drawn from respondents' archetypal image of each of the studied experiences. However, in the analysis of the 'intrinsic' study, previous research on ski resorts (Flagestad and Hope, 2001) helped confirm the appropriateness of the attributes. In the study on public transit we made an external check of our results against a national user survey, including performance indicators used by Swedish Public Transit Organizations. These external checks yielded proof of the findings' conformability and transferability, but did not contribute with any additional attributes (Gasson 2003).

3.5.2 Questionnaires

After theoretical saturation was reached, the identified consumption experience attributes were used to construct a questionnaire. In both studies the questionnaires were divided into three parts: an introduction with an explanation of the survey's purpose, background questions, and a Kano survey. See Table 2 for an overview of the questionnaire design and data collection procedure.

In accordance with previous Kano survey constructions (Kano et al., 1984; Löfgren and Witell, 2005; Matzler et al., 1996; Witell and Löfgren, 2007), the Kano surveys in both questionnaires consisted of Kano pair questions and importance ratings on a scale from 1 to 10 regarding consumer experience attributes. One part of the paired question was functional, while the other was dysfunctional, and respondents could choose one of five alternatives to each part of the pair question. The pair question formulation can be described as, "How would you feel if offering category X allows you to experience Y / offers you the chance to do Y / offers Y?" (functional form), or "How would you feel if

offering category X did not allow you to experience Y / offer you the chance to do Y / offer Y?" (dysfunctional form), depending on what attribute the respondent was asked about. Each question could be answered with one of five alternatives that were later used to classify the attributes according to the theory of attractive quality. Translated into English, the alternatives were, "1. I think it is positive when it is that way"; "2. I expect it to be that way"; "3. I am neutral"; "4. I can accept it when it is that way"; and "5. I dislike it when it is that way." In this sense, the respondent was asked to picture how he or she would feel if a certain experience attribute was or was not achieved and indicate their preference for the different scenarios relative their archetypal image of the focal experience. This form of questioning, which induces respondents to conjure (that is, think of, visualize, or imagine themselves in different scenarios) at the moment of response, has been shown to yield results that are more valid than those obtained when pre-determined images are used in congruence studies (Sirgy, 1997). In other words, the questions were focused on specific experience attributes' congruency with the respondents archetypal consumption experiences. In addition to the Kano pair questions and importance ratings, respondents of the 'intrinsic' study (Papers III and IV) were also asked to use a scale from 1 to 10 to rate the degree to which interacting with the destination they visit most frequently and the destination they perceive has the best offering achieves each of the studied attributes. Such rating was not included in the public transit questionnaire (see Table 3).

3.5.3 Data analysis

In all papers related to the 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' studies, the data analysis of Kano pair questions is based upon the Kano methodology's evaluation heuristics. The heuristics are summarized in Figure 4 and have been used in several empirical studies to classify respondents' answer combinations to the Kano pair questions into the prototypical M, O, A, I, and R quality categories found in the theory of attractive quality (e.g., Berger et al., 1993; Kano et al. 1984; Lee and Newcomb, 1987; Löfgren and Witell 2005; 2008). Following the evaluation procedure found in these studies, attributes were assigned to the prototypical quality categories by combining each answer to functional Kano questions with answers to their related dysfunctional counterparts (See Matzler et al., 1996, for an illustrative example of this evaluation procedure). For example, the answer combination 1 (functional) and 5 (dysfunctional) signifies that the respondent perceives that an experience attribute achievement has a one-dimensional (O) relation to his or her experience evaluation. Further, these heuristics also include a Questionable (Q) classification to indicate contradictory answer combinations and detect if the respondents understand the Kano pair question correctly. Both studies resulted in low levels of Q classifications, proving the reliability of the items used in the studies (Kano et al. 1984).

Quality attribute → ↓		Dysfunctional				
		1. Like	2. Must-be	3. Neutral	4. Live with	5. Dislike
Functional	1. Like	Q	A	A	A	O
	2. Must-be	R_A	I(Q[a])	I(A[a])	I(O[a])	M
	3. Neutral	R_A	I	I	I	M
	4. Live with	R_A	I	I	I	M
	5. Dislike	R_O	R_M	R_M	R_M	Q

M= must-be **O**= one-dimensional **A**= attractive **I**= indifferent **R**[b]= reverse **Q**= questionable

[a] Categorization suggested in Högström (2011).

[b] Reverse subgroups were suggested and only used in Paper V (Högström et al., forthcoming).

Figure 4. Kano classification table (based on Berger et al., 1993; Högström, 2011; Högström et al., forthcoming).

This classification technique of respondents' answers to the Kano pair questions described above provided the basis for assigning attributes to a specific quality category. The classification agreement (CA) for each attribute was based on the mode values of the classification of respondents' answer combinations. To aid and validate the overall categorization of attributes, Category Strength (CS), and Total Strength (TS) coefficients were calculated based on the proportions of respondents' total classifications (Lee and Newcomb, 1997; Löfgren and Witell, 2005); see Table 4. Category Strength (CS) represents, in percentage, the difference between the mode category (that is, the classification agreement) and the second most common category for a single attribute. Total Strength (TS) is the sum, expressed as a percentage, of the "must be", "one-dimensional", and "attractive" answers (M+O+A = TS), and indicates whether achieving the attribute contributes to consumer preferences. However, following the research strategy, further analyses in the appended papers were selected based on the particular aspects each individual paper aims to investigate. See Table 3 for a complete overview of which analytic techniques were used in each of the papers, and Table 4 for a summary and descriptions of Kano methodology statistics used in this thesis to analyze attribute classifications. Below, I provide brief descriptions of the individual combination of analytical techniques used in each paper.

	Paper III	Paper IV	Paper V
Aim of data analysis	Understanding the relationship between attribute achievement and consumer experience evaluations in an 'intrinsic' context	To enhance the understanding of the hierarchical arrangement between and within Kano categories	Understanding the relationship between attribute achievement and consumer experience evaluations in an 'extrinsic' context
Data analysis	Theoretical division of the 21 attributes found in the pre-study Kano classification of attributes including CS, TS, and Better-Worse coefficients (based on Kano classifications) T-test of classification Attribute importance means Attribute QI-index	Kano classification of attributes Importance ratings T-test of importance means for classifications	Principal components analysis on the 25 attributes found in the pre-study Kano categorization of attributes including CS, TS, TR, CA-to-TS, and CA-to-TR coefficients (based on Kano classifications) T-test of classification Attribute importance means

Table 3. Overview of the analytical techniques in the appended papers using the Kano methodology

Analyzing data in Paper III

In Paper III the Kano data, importance ratings, and attribute achievement ratings from the 'intrinsic' study were used to analyze how various types and degrees of attribute achievements in different experience dimensions affect consumer experienced relevance of, and preference for, intrinsic consumption experiences.

In this paper, I divided the 21 attributes found in the pre-study into three theoretically derived experience dimensions based on a literature review (cf. Löfgren and Witell, 2005). Following the classification procedure described above, I used Berger et al. (1993) evaluation table to classify the answers to the Kano pair questions into the categories of the theory of attractive quality; see Figure 4. I also calculated "better" and "worse" coefficients, which are expressed as indexes ranging from 0 to 1; see Table 4. Combined, the Better and Worse indexes indicate what impact achieving an attribute has on respondents' evaluations (Berger et al., 1993; Matzler et al., 1996). A 'Better' value of 1 indicates that attribute achievement has, (i) a strong impact on respondents' preference, while a better value of 0 indicates that attribute achievement has; (ii) no impact on respondents' evaluations when the 'Worse' value ≈0; or (iii) prevents negative evaluation if the 'Worse' value is >0. Further, to ensure the reliability and validity of the attribute classifications, I conducted a statistical t-test on the proportions of the highest and second

highest classifications for each attribute (Prof. Lars Witell at Karlstad University provided assistance in this particular analysis). Following Löfgren and Witell (2005), I classified seven attributes that could not be assigned to a significant category as combinations. Later, I used data from the background questions to analyze whether these combinations were due to differences between respondent characteristics/market segments or dynamism; that is, life-cycle changes (Nilsson-Witell and Fundin, 2005). Finally, I calculated importance ratings of each attribute and a Quality Improvement (QI) index (Matzler et al., 1996) to validate the hierarchy of respondent evaluations and generalize how the different respondent evaluations contribute to the respondents' overall preference experience. Overall, this analysis provided reliable insight into the hierarchical order of consumer evaluations of attribute achievement (or elimination), but also into how the degree to which various types of attributes is achieved affects consumer experience evaluations.

Analyzing data in Paper IV

In paper IV, I discuss the assumptions of the theory of attractive quality categories and Kano questionnaire construction, based on a review of research concerning consumer experiences in service marketing and consumer research literature. The data analysis is an empirical test of the Kano evaluation table that aims to enhance the understanding of the hierarchical arrangement between and within Kano categories; that is, consumers' valuation of attribute achievement.

In this analysis I divided and critically examined the validity of evaluation table layouts in relation to the M>O>A>I rule and the mean importance attributed to a certain answering alternative combination to a Kano pair question. The mean importance attributed to a certain answering alternative combination, which results in a specific category, is compared to the importance means of other cells resulting in the same category. The importance means were then t-tested for significance and cross-tabulated. This process resulted in some modifications of the evaluation rules, which were summarized in a new evaluation table; see Figure 4. Finally, I compared the importance ratings related to overall Kano classifications (resulting from pre-existing and my proposed evaluation table) to assess the validity of different layouts in relation to the M>O>A>I evaluation rule in the theory of attractive quality.

Analyzing data in Paper V

In paper V, the Kano methodology and importance ratings from the 'extrinsic' study were used to analyze how various attribute achievements in different consumption experience

dimensions affect consumer experienced relevance of, and preference for, extrinsic consumption experiences, namely public transit.

In this paper I divided 25 attributes into a smaller set of five context-specific public transit quality dimensions, based on principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation on respondents' importance ratings (Ph.D. student Davoudi did not collaborate with me in this particular part of the analysis). In turn, we classified attributes into categories of the theory of attractive quality and calculated attributes importance means. Our classification of attributes followed the basic principle of the Kano methodology's evaluation procedure described above. However, instead of assigning all reverse attribute classifications to a universal, one-dimensional reverse category, we acknowledged that attribute achievement might have an asymmetrical reverse relationship to consumer experience evaluations (see Paper V for a more detailed description). We made this particular choice of heuristic as we found several reverse attributes with varying importance ratings; thus, we needed a valid basis for a deeper discussion on how reverse attribute achievement affects consumer experience evaluations. After conducting a statistical t-test, two non-significant attribute classifications were categorized as 'combinations'. To further aid and enhance the reliability and validity of the classification, we introduced a new Total Reversibility (TR) measure representing the sum of reverse classifications for a single attribute, to assess if the achievement of a certain attribute contributes to dissatisfaction in this study (see Table 4). Another difference from previous studies was that we used statistical t-tests to control whether TS and TR values are significantly higher than indifferent classification agreements, validating whether or not achievement of an attribute classified as Indifferent based on mode value affects consumers' experience evaluations. Further, we also introduced CA-to-TS and CA-to-TR ratios, which were used to confirm whether an attribute classified as one-dimensional or reverse one-dimensional actually has a symmetric relationship to consumers' experience evaluations in general (see Table 4).

3.5.4 Paper III, IV, and V: Author contributions

I co-authored Paper III with MBA Marina Rosner and Professor Anders Gustafsson. I was the main author of this paper, contributing with the outline of the paper and writing the literature review, the method section, results, and discussion. MBA Rosner assisted me during parts of the empirical study and the literature assembly, but did not participate in the actual writing of the paper. Prof. Gustafsson acted as reviewing co-writer that commented and suggested changes to the paper during the final stages of the writing process of the manuscript and the reviews prior to publication. Moreover, two anonymous *Marketing, Intelligence and Planning* reviewers commented on the paper. These comments helped us clarify the methodology section and outline of the paper. In

particular, one of the reviewers directed attention to that, in fact, the Kano methodology does not measure satisfaction per se, but rather consumers' preference evaluation of attribute achievement. Having said that, based on such evaluations, the reviewer argued that the research could conclude if achievement is likely to affect satisfaction. As such, the reviewer held the evaluations as mediators of satisfaction; thus, in using the term '(dis-)satisfaction' or 'delight' in the paper, we assume that attribute achievement is likely to render such responses in consumers.

I was the sole author of Paper IV and worked on my own throughout the whole writing process. Two anonymous *Total Quality Management Journal* reviewers' comments helped improve and clarify the theme of the paper. Apart from this, I also had support from minor informal discussions of the manuscript with my advisors, Prof. Anders Gustafsson and Dr. Martin Löfgren.

I co-authored Paper V with Ph.D. student Sara Davoudi, Dr. Martin Löfgren, and Dr. Mikael Johnson. I share the main authorship of this paper with Ph.D. student Davoudi, with whom I conducted the literature review and wrote the complete outline of the paper. Davoudi and myself also collaborated during the first round of reviewing. The paper is accepted for publication in Public Management Review. One of the two anonymous reviewers suggested publication direct on submission, whereas the other has asked for some minor clarifications and additional references to public transit literature. Dr. Löfgren and Dr. Johnson acted as co-authors, commenting and suggesting changes to the manuscript throughout the writing process.

Coefficient	Description	Formula
CA	*Classification Agreement*: The mode value of classification of respondents' answer combinations. Overall classification statistic for an attribute. The statistic is commonly expressed in percentage.	$Mo_{Classifications}$
CS	*Classification Strength*: The statistic is the percentage point difference between CA proportion and the second most common category proportion. The statistic is an indicator of the strength of a classification, often complemented with a statistical proportions test for significance. The higher the CS, the more likely that the Classification Agreement is significantly larger than the second most common category. The statistic is commonly expressed in percentage.	$CS = CA - Second\ most\ common\ category$
TS	*Total Strength*: The statistic is the sum of the proportions of M, O, and A classifications of an attribute. The statistic indicates if an attribute has an overall positive impact on respondents' experience valuation. The statistic is especially useful to validate indifferent and classifications agreements, and can be used in a statistical proportions test for significance against the proportion of indifferent classifications. The statistic is commonly expressed in percentage.	$TS = M + O + A$
TR	*Total Reversibility*: The statistic indicates if an attribute has an overall negative impact on respondents' experience valuation. The statistic is used when the Reverse classification category is divided into subcategories, and is the sum of the proportions of R classifications of an attribute. The statistic is especially useful to validate indifferent classifications agreements and can be used in a statistical proportions test for significance against the proportion of indifferent classifications. The statistic is commonly expressed in percentage.	$TR = R_M + R_O + R_A$
CA-to-TS	*CA-to-TS ratio*: The statistic is a measure of the proportion of O classifications relative to the TS coefficient. The statistic can be used as an indicator of an overall linear or non-linear relationship between attribute achievement and respondent evaluations when an attribute is classified as O. The larger the statistic in such occasions, the more likely that the attribute has a general positive linear relation to respondent evaluations. The statistic can be used in a statistical proportions test for significance against the proportion of M+A classifications to confirm or reject general linearity. The statistic is commonly expressed in percentage.	$CAtoTS = \frac{CA}{TS}$
CA-to-TR	*CA-to-TR ratio*: The statistic is a measure of the proportion of R_O classifications relative to the TR coefficient. The statistic can be used as an indicator of an overall linear or non-linear relationship between attribute achievement and respondent evaluations when an attribute is classified as R_O. The larger the statistic in such occasions, the more likely that the attribute has a general positive linear relation to respondent evaluations. The statistic can be used in a statistical proportions test for significance against the proportion of R_M+R_A classifications to confirm or reject general linearity. The statistic is commonly expressed in percentage.	$CAtoTR = \frac{CA}{TR}$
Better and Worse	*Better and Worse*: The Better and Worse statistics are averages expressed as indexes ranging from 0 to 1. Combined, the indexes indicate what impact achieving an attribute has on respondent evaluations. A 'Better' value of 1 indicates that attribute achievement has, (i) a strong impact on respondents' preference, while a better value of 0 indicates that attribute achievement has, (ii) no impact on respondents' evaluations when the 'Worse' value ≈0; or, (iii) prevents negative evaluation if the 'Worse' value is >0.	$Better = \frac{O + A}{M + O + A + I}$ $Worse = \frac{O + M}{M + O + A + I}$

Table 4. Description of Kano methodology statistics used in the appended papers.

4 Findings and contributions of the appended papers

This chapter summarizes the research findings and emphasizes the contributions made in each of the five appended papers.

4.1 Paper I - The enactment of socially embedded service systems: Fear and resourcing in the London Borough of Sutton (Högström and Tronvoll, 2012)

Drawing on social embeddedness literature, structuration theory, and enactment theory (cf. Danneels, 2003; Dacin et al., 1999; Giddens, 1984; Pondy and Mitroff, 1979; Weick, 1979, 2009), this conceptual paper provides a novel conceptual framework for understanding how contextual factors influence and are influenced by actor-members' value assessments and value creation processes (see Figure 5). In order to validate our conceptual framework we apply the framework to a case description of the London Borough of Sutton provided by the editor of the *European Management Journal.*

Overall, the paper specifies the process through which consumers, institutions, firms and government agencies jointly construct the environments in which value is created (cf. Edvardsson et al., 2011). The literature review and case implications in the paper specify that two conditions must be met to create value in the long term. First, the actor-members in a certain value creating system must interact in ways that allow them to develop a shared schema of what value is and how, where, and by whom value is created. Second, the actor-members need to act on resources in ways that, at least to some extent, are congruent with that schema in order to generate the capabilities needed to create indented, relevant and meaningful benefits for the actor-members of the value-creating system. This finding suggests that use value and exchange value are interdependent outcomes of value creation. Accordingly, an indented, relevant and meaningful benefit for a focal actor member may take the shape of either use value, or the exchange value that the value creation system renders. In this way, the paper underlines that both types of value are needed for value creation systems to endure. The paper points at several specific aspects on both a micro- and macro-level that are of importance for researchers, policy makers and managers to understand and manage the dynamism of value creation.

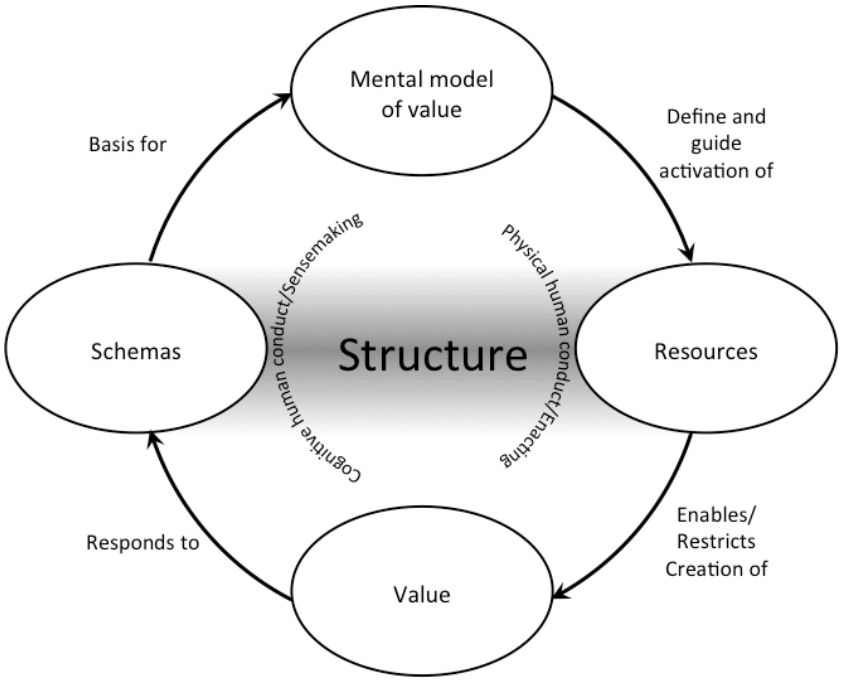

Figure 5. Model of value creation in complex service systems

From a micro-level perspective, the paper shows how individual actors are embedded in various social structures; that is, shared schemas in the form of cultural norms, political rules, shared cognitive schemas, and resource structures, in the actor's social environment that he or she interprets, evaluates, and manipulates through a situational and selective sense-making process (e.g., Dacin et al., 1999; Giddens, 1984; Weick, 1979). Through this selective sense-making process, the actor develops, reconstructs, and refines its emerging mental model (Bern, 1981; Neisser, 1976) of what value is and how, where, when and with whom it can act on resources to create value in its contextual situation (see Figure 5). The emerging mental model specifies how the actor can act on resources so as to create value in ways that either (i) fit into and reinforce existing social structures, or (ii) stand out from and potentially reconstruct existing social structures. For example, the case description provides several examples of how residents and organizations assign meaning to selected parts of environmental events, such as crimes, and develop believable stories, explanations, and interpretations based on prior experiences on which they later act to sustain or alter their environments. Either way (that is, option i or ii), the individual actor activates resources in attempts to create value that is congruent with its own mental model or archetypal image of what value is and how, where, when and with whom it can be created. Accordingly, the actor's emerging mental model directs focus and guides its decisions, communication with others, evaluation of other actors' resource activation, and its own activation resources in attempts to

create value (cf. Danneels, 2003; Pondy and Mitroff, 1979; Weick, 1969; 2009). Over time, the actor is likely to adjust its mental model and become increasingly committed to a value creation pattern that fits and reinforces this model of what value is and how, where, when, and with whom, it can create value (Danneels, 2003; Salancik, 1977). That is, unless the actor comes to make sense of structures that radically change its mental model of what value is and/or how, where, when, and with whom, it can create value. Consequently, the conceptual framework provides an important basis for understanding how a focal actor activate resources in attempts to create value in ways that are congruent with its mental model or image of what value is and how, where, when and with whom it can be created in a contextual situation.

From a macro-level perspective, the paper shows how resource, sociocultural, sociopolitical, and shared cognitive structures influence and are influenced by actors' sense-making and resourcing in attempts to create value. Thus, actors that develop a routinized commitment to a certain value creation pattern reinforce the social structures in the value creation system of which they are part (cf. Salancik, 1977). Powerful actors (such as institutions, market-leading corporations, media, consumer groups, or governmental agencies) that are committed to a specific routinized view of what value is and how, where, when and by whom it is created help reinforce the system's structures, rather than reconstruct them. For example, in the case description media's coverage of and political attention to crime directed individual actors' attention, sense-making, demand, and activities towards the need to fight crime through increased law enforcement even after crime rates decline. Over time, these self-reinforcing processes depicted in Figure 5 create collective and individual archetypal images or cognitive schemas with lasting power of what value is and how it is created (Weick, 2001). Such shared cognitive schemas or images are essential to ensure that capabilities needed to create benefits that are intended, relevant, meaningful, and viable for the actor-members in value creating system emerge and, thus, to ensure the system's survival (cf. Orton and Weick, 1990; Weick, 1995). In this sense, the survival of an existing value-creating system depends on how well individual actors' images or mental models cohere with each other. Consequently, individual actors with mental models of what value is and how, where, and by whom it is created that do not fit or cohere with the established shared schemas in a value creation system pose critical challenges for the system. Such challenges may trigger responses to suppress behavior, such as crime, that deviates from the shared schema in ways that reinforce the structures in the system. In this sense, deviant mental models do not bring radical changes in the social structures per se. However, knowledgeable actors with deviant mental models that possess the ability to act on

political, cultural, or resource structures may not only challenge but contribute to, or radically alter the established cognitive structures of what value is and how, where, and by whom value is created in a system.

4.2 Paper II - Strategic brand management: Archetypes for managing brands through paradoxes (Högström et al., 2014)

Paper II draws upon an empirical study to develop a formal strategic brand management typology that enhances understanding of different forms of value creation and the management of paradoxical tensions.

In this paper, we view firms as social actors whose organizational identity reflects their membership in self-defining categories that support constituents' actions on their behalf (King and Whetten, 2008; Whetten, 2006). Following this view, organizational identity is defined as the subset of firms' self-selected organizational features and attributes, which are experienced as central, enduring and distinguishing in defining who firms are, what they do, and how well they do as organizations (Albert and Whetten, 1985; King and Whetten, 2008). In particular, the paper shows how firms' self-select organizational features or attributes based on their assessment of environmental cues to create brands that signify a certain use value in a given context. Firms' self-selected features, such as type of organization, governance, and offerings, provide them with the archetypal strategic schema that inform their organizational actions.

Based on this understanding, the article presents a novel framework for studying and understanding strategic brand management and related paradoxes that may enhance firms' strategic decision-making. Paradoxes are traced to the strategic brand-management archetype firms use to create diverse types of use value and performance effects. The general implication of the findings is that firms enacting a certain brand management archetype diminish and exacerbate certain paradoxes. Thus, the framework provides an understanding of how firms can optimize certain effects and manage paradoxical relations between desired, but contradictory, effects in their value creation.

4.2.1 The occurrence of strategic brand-management archetypes

The paper shows how firms develop, and refine and commit to calculative, heuristic, or dynamic strategic brand-management archetypes in order to optimize a certain

extrinsic and/or intrinsic use value type (e.g., Addis and Holbrook, 2001; Holbrook, 2006). Essentially, the findings point to the ways in which different strategic brand-management archetypes develop based on firms' strategic schema through a self-reinforcing and path-dependent enactment (cf. sense-giving) and sense-making process (cf. Danneels, 2003; Weick, 1979). The strategic schema that dominates the firm's behavior is shown to determine what environmental norms managers deem salient, and constitutes the foundation for shared perceptions, coordinated decision- and strategy-making, as well as interaction with stakeholders (cf. Kelley and Stahelski, 1970; Miller, 1993; Nadkarni and Narayanan, 2007; Prahalad and Bettis, 1986; Priem, 1994; Whetten, 2006). In doing so the paper sheds light on how firms' views of what value is, and how, when, where and with whom, it can be created differ as a consequence of their strategic schema, providing a basis for explaining the effectiveness of different organizing logics in various value creation situations.

Strategic brand management archetypes			
	Calculative orientation	**Heuristic orientation**	**Dynamic orientation**
Strategic brand identity (**Strategic schema**)	Brand knowledge about offering [a] (Extrinsic market value/ utilitarian value)	Brand meaning and experiences [h] (Intrinsic meaning/ symbolic value)	Brand capabilities [k] (Extrinsic utilitarian and intrinsic symbolic value)
Decision- and strategy-making logic (**Strategic schema**)	Consequences [b] (Maximize awareness)	Appropriateness [b] (Match sociocultural meaning, expectations and norms)	Diversification [c,k] (Enhance capabilities)
Guiding objective	Efficiency [b,c,d,e] (Market Transactions)	Legitimacy [i,j] (Market Relations)	Flexibility [c,k] (Market Dynamism)
Time horizon	Short Term [d,f]	Long Term [d,f]	Varying
Enacted nature of activities and exchange relationships	Tightly coupled, clear, stable structure [c,d,e]	Tightly coupled, blurred, open structure [b,d,g,j]	Loosely coupled, adaptive, organic structure [c,g,l]
Enacted environment	Narrowed down to stabilize and reduce uncertainty [c,g]	Narrowed down to stabilize and reduce uncertainty [d,b]	Wide, take (pro-)action to reduce uncertainty [c]
Representative literature	[a] see Keller (1993) [b] Montgomery (1998); Messick (1999); March and Olsen (2004); Heide & Wathne (2006) [c] Anderson and Paine (1975) [d] Davis et al. (1997 [e] Williamson (1981; 1993) [f] Mouzas (2006) [g] Danneels (2003); Porac et al. (1989); Salancik (1977); Thompson (1967)	[h] Allen et al. (2008); Berthon et al. (2009) [i] Suchman (1995); Mitchell et al. (1997); King and Whetten (2008) [j] Uzzi (1997); Handelman & Arnold (1999) [k] Sanchez (1995) [l] Granovetter (1973)	

Table 5. Strategic brand management archetypes

Specifically, the firm's strategic schema is shown to affect its time horizon, the width of its enacted environment (definable as the environment consciously selected, attended to, acted upon, and deemed important for the brand's performance), and the nature of its enacted system of activities and exchange relationships as either tightly or loosely coupled (cf. Danneels, 2003; Granovetter, 1973; Osborne et al., 2001; Smircich and Stubbart, 1985; Thompson, 1967; Weick, 1976, 1979, 1995). Figure 6 and Table 5 illustrate that the choice of strategic brand management archetypes is limited to different marketing process continuums (an in vivo code from one of the informants in the study), and related to various paradoxes. Below, I present how marketing process continuums differ systematically across the three archetypes.

4.2.2 The calculative brand-management archetype

The findings illustrate that firms for which efficiency is the ultimate objective fit a description of a calculative archetype of strategic brand management (cf. Davis et al., 1997; Grayson, 2007; Heide and Wathne, 2006). These firms generally adopt a relatively short time horizon and a strategic schema that relies on a utility-maximizing, incentive-driven consequential logic (e.g., March, 1994). This calculative principle is apparent in managers' decisions, selection of actions, and exchange relationships, and strives to economize on the brand's image and exposure. Following this strategic schema, calculative firms specialize in certain segments in which they seek to maximize their exposure, consumer preference, and sales; improve their offerings; and lower operational costs through their activities and partnerships. In order to control and create consistent brand information and decrease uncertainty, calculative firms create and maintain a predictable, stable, integrated, and tightly coupled system of activities and exchange relationships. In this way, the firms simplify brands into marks of offerings and reduce brand management complexity into functions of optimizing information about offering extrinsic benefits and maximizing brand awareness (cf. Keller, 1993; Park et al., 1986). As a result, these firms narrow down their enacted environment, which is their range of actions and cognitions, to actors that are explicitly involved in current market transactions. However, this narrow focus on optimizing efficiency and economizing on a consistent brand image may come at the expense of flexibility and legitimacy-related sociocultural aspects of firms' value creation (e.g., Grewal Dharwadkar, 2002; King and Whetten, 2008; Suchman, 1995).

4.2.3 The heuristic brand-management archetype

In contrast to calculative firms, the paper shows that firms adopting a heuristic archetype of strategic brand management consider legitimacy to be an eventual source of long-term success and survival (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Grewal and Dharwadkar, 2002; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). The findings demonstrate that firms adopting a heuristic archetype have a long-term time horizon and seek to act appropriately with regard to contextual expectations, norms, and rules in order to build strong legitimate brands that signify brand categories of their own (March, 1994; Messick, 1999). The studied firms that follow this strategic schema focus their strategy-, decision-, and sense-making on contextually derived brand experiences and intrinsic symbolic value. Typically, these firms are shown to view their brands as experiences from which actors derive meaning, Accordingly, the firms' decisions, selection of actions and exchange relationships center on the legitimacy and relevance of the brand experience and the meaning of the brand, where the products merely become subordinate means by which to capture value from a relevant brand meaning. The brands' superior role over offerings gives firms greater ability to offer a variety of products or services under the brand name. However, the findings also illustrate that the firms' create tightly coupled activities and exchange relationships to facilitate certain experience themes (cf. Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Woodside et al., 2013) and co-create relevant brand meaning in a certain context (cf. Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Holt, 2002; McCracken, 1986). Inevitably, the brands' context-dependent nature is shown to narrow down and stabilize both the firms' selection of activities and partners, and their attention to certain communities. In this way, adopting a heuristic archetype narrows and stabilizes the firms' enactment of their environments, and tightens their systems of activities and exchange relationships. Therefore, in choosing this archetype, firms risk adopting an overly narrow and myopic view of the surrounding environment vis-à-vis value creation (Levitt, 1960). Accordingly, the findings show that both calculative and heuristic archetypes risk ignoring market dynamism and the need to change in order to remain relevant (Aaker, 2012; Keller, 2000).

4.2.4 The dynamic brand-management archetype

The firms in the study that adopt a dynamic archetype of strategic brand management view strategic flexibility as a key to creating and capturing value in markets with often latent and changing consumer preferences (Priem et al., 2013; Sanchez, 1995). These firms are shown to focus on enacting brands that signify relevant, preferred, and unique value – that is, extrinsic and intrinsic value – in

diverse market environments. Consequently, the firms follow a diversification rationale in order to cope with dynamic, and sometimes paradoxical, requirements (Anderson and Paine, 1975). This rationale involves constant balancing of paradoxical needs that force firms to weigh appropriate behavior against the consequences of such behavior (March and Olsen, 2004). Through this balancing act, firms seek dynamic equilibrium; that is, they move across opposing goals opposing goals of efficiency and legitimacy to create their brands (cf. Smith and Lewis, 2011). The paper shows that such a rationale relies on a varying time horizon, and considers the nature of the brand's identity, the environments in which enacting the brand may be appropriate, and the consequences of such a strategy. Thus, instead of making an either–or decision, the firms strive to develop brand capabilities that allow them to balance contradictory and diverse demands operating in several segments simultaneously.

The findings show that the capabilities that allow firms to adopt a dynamic archetype to operate in several markets increases as the system of exchange relationships and activities becomes more diversified and loosely coupled (cf. Anderson and Paine, 1975; Danneels, 2003; Granovetter, 1973; Orton and Weick, 1990; Thompson, 1967). The tensions that the firm can cope with, without muddling the image or meaning of the brand (Keller, 2000), are shown to delimit the width of the enacted environment. In other words, being dynamic does not mean being unfocused, as in offering everything to everyone; instead, the dynamic archetype is only product- and context-independent (that is, loosely coupled and flexible) to the extent that the firm can stabilize the brand economically and sustain some proof of its uniqueness and identity. Therefore, these firms engage in continuous, step-by-step marketing experimentation processes to strike a balance between the continuity needed in exchange relationships and activities in order to sustain such proofs of their identity, and the changes needed to sustain their brands' relevance (Aaker, 2012; Keller, 2000).

4.2.4 Archetypal management of paradoxes in value creation

The systematic differences between the archetypes found in the paper provide a foundation for understanding how firms will face different risks and perceive different paradoxical tensions depending on the enacted strategic brand-management archetype (see Figure 6). Firms utilizing one of these archetypes to optimize certain value-creation effects will inevitably face two value-creation paradoxes that are directly related to the archetype, while a third paradox will play an indirect, but

important, role for the firm. The empirically derived model in Figure 6 illustrates how the paradoxical tensions between efficiency and legitimacy that firms face vary as a function of its strategic schema and time horizon. In turn, paradoxical tensions related to flexibility vary as a function of which system of activities and exchange relationships and environment the firms enact. Further, another implication of the self-reinforcing nature of strategic brand management is that firms risk becoming captives of their archetypes, and exacerbating the associated paradoxical tensions (Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2014; Lewis, 2000; Salancik, 1977). To cope with this risk of captivity, firms can either accept to live with archetypes, seek to resolve them, or allow archetypes to coexist to create a dynamic equilibrium; that is, firms balance opposing demands in one of three ways, as demonstrated below (cf. Heide and Wathne, 2006; Poole and Van de Ven, 1989; Smith and Lewis, 2011).

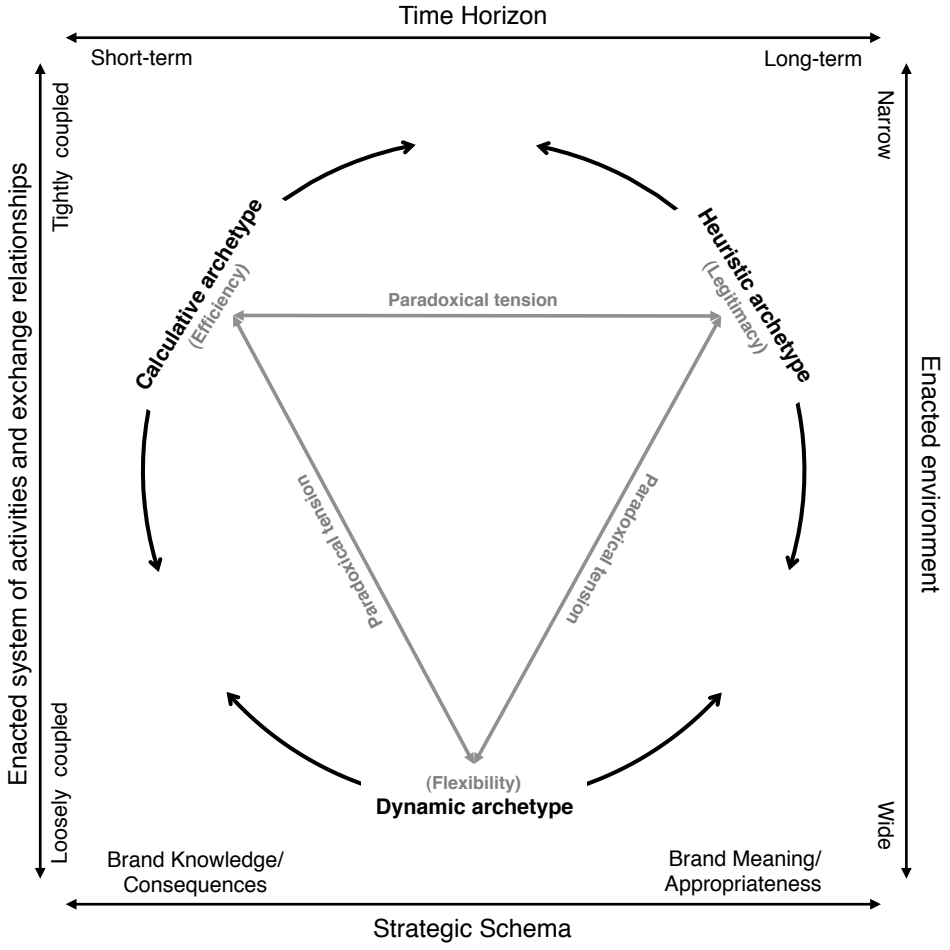

Figure 6. The marketing process continuums of strategic brand management archetypes and related paradoxical tensions.

First, as Figure 6 illustrates, firms in static environments can allow a calculative and heuristic archetype to coexist in order to balance demands of efficiency and legitimacy. Such coexistence implies that firms adopt a mid-range time horizon and seek a close relation between brand meaning and product or services so as to provide a basis for both calculative and affective forms of consumer trust and commitment (Berthon et al., 2003; Gustafsson et al., 2005). The resulting tightly coupled systems, and a narrow focus on the market, can help the firms to create a fine-grained production processes and consumer understanding that allows them to specialize their offerings and offer superior value (Danneels, 2003; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). However, firms in this position also decrease their flexibility, as their tightly coupled system and narrow view of the environment decreases their opportunity horizon and means that they face a high risk of changing market demand that can be detrimental to their fate (cf. Hamel and Prahalad, 1991; Slater and Narver, 1998).

Second, firms can allow a calculative and dynamic archetype to coexist to different extents in order to balance paradoxical tensions between efficiency and flexibility, resulting in a short-term focus on economic consequences and a more loosely coupled system. Therefore, firms are also likely to switch partners and activities to renew their offerings as the incentive structure changes (cf. Williamson, 1981). Ultimately, a firm in this position will manage to control and market several product and service categories under the same brand name, and create calculative commitment to and trust in the brand based on the offering's extrinsic value in a wide market environment (Berthon, et al., 2003; Gustafsson et al., 2005). However, these firms run the risk that poor quality in one product or service will affect consumer preference for other related offerings, and dilute trust in, and commitment to, the brand (Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 1998; Loken and Roedder John, 1993). Yet another potential problem concerns the low focus on legitimacy and brand meaning needed to create strong long-term affective consumer commitment and trust, an isolating mechanism that has previously been shown to result in higher levels of loyalty and willingness to pay (Park et al., 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park, 2005). Moreover, the constant striving to renew resources and product lines in order to create a state of efficiency and flexibility may prevent firms from gaining full returns on some of their products and marketing investments (Levinthal and March, 1993).

Third, firms can allow the heuristic and dynamic archetypes to coexist in order to reduce paradoxical tensions between legitimacy and flexibility. The strength of this

approach lies in the firm's focus on creating a meaning-driven and product-independent brand in order to become a relevant category of its own across several communities in its environment (Aaker, 2012). Accordingly, the primary task for the firm is to create contexts and resources that facilitate relevant brand experiences and brand meanings that cultivate relationships (cf. Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Schouten et al., 2007). For example, several respondents in the study expressed that an important part of brand meaning-making involves thriving on environmental tensions and engaging in anti-branding (that is, what the brand is not) in order to create their own brand space at a distance from those of other brands (cf. Allen et al., 2008; Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Fournier and Lee, 2009). Thus, the main aim is to make the brand a focal point of several communities and create affective self–brand connections that turn stakeholders into active meaning-makers that help advertise, and have a sense of ownership and identity with, the brand (cf. Allen et al., 2008; Belk, 1988; McAlexander et al., 2002; Pitt et al., 2006). Although previous research has shown that such strategies may result in more resilient and higher loyalty levels compared to traditional customer-satisfaction-centered management (Fournier and Lee, 2009; McAlexander et al., 2002; Park et al., 2010), firms that adopt this approach will face efficiency-related paradoxes. These firms risk potentially high marketing costs associated with an intense focus on creating a legitimate brand meaning in several communities (Sheth and Sisodia, 2002), at the same time as they are turning to the wrong markets in order to economize on the brand risk, thereby alienating their core supporters. In other words, the paper shows how firms inevitably become tied to certain communities, and may find that the opportunity cost of investing in other markets is higher than the resulting profit (cf. Mouzas, 2006). Consequently, firms create risks as communities gain control over their brands, which, in part, means that the brands can only survive as long as their meanings are in some sense more relevant and legitimate than those of their competitors.

4.3 Paper III - How to create attractive and unique customer experiences: An application of Kano's theory of attractive quality to recreational tourism (Högström et al., 2010)

The findings in Paper III are derived from the empirical study on ski resorts described in section 3.5. In this paper we use the theory of attractive quality and the Kano methodology (e.g., Berger et al., 1993; Kano et al., 1984; Löfgren and Witell, 2005) to study why and how consumers judge some firms or offerings as being more attractive than others.

The paper contributes to the understanding of how consumers select and evaluate firm offerings based on how well the offerings' objective features facilitate the consumers' creation of a particular intrinsic experience. In general, the article shows that both nominal (which attributes are included) and interval scale (how well attributes are achieved) differences affect which offerings consumers deem attractive – that is, relevant and preferred. The findings show that consumers' evaluations of attributes are hierarchical in the sense that they perceive some attributes as being more important to create value in certain situations than others. In essence, consumers prefer, and form stronger attachments to, firms that achieve must-be or one-dimensional experience attributes exceptionally well, while attractive experience attributes are less important. Thus, the findings challenge a basic assumption in the theory of attractive quality that must-be attributes merely affect evaluations negatively if not achieved, but do not contribute to higher levels of customer satisfaction and preferences if achieved (e.g., Kano et al., 1984). The results show that resorts achieving must-be attributes to a high extent are preferred relative to resorts that achieve must-be attributes, but to a lower extent. Accordingly, the more central the consumers deem an attribute to be to create a certain consumption experience, the more important the attribute is to the relevance of, and consumer preference for, the firm. Consequently, striving to achieve must-be attributes exceptionally well relative to competitors is shown to be a viable strategy by which to create superior qualities for consumer creation of value, and beat the competition or even make competitors irrelevant.

Further, the paper shows how intrinsic use value consists of outcome attributes in the form of subjective responses, such as feelings of fellowship, fun, challenge, relaxation and sensations. However, the relevance of and preferences for suppliers are based on more objective physical environment- and interaction-based experience attributes. In this sense, the results contribute to an understanding that outcome attributes are valued for their own sake (cf. Holbrook, 2006), providing a foundation for the consumer's attachment to a particular or archetypal type of intrinsic experience (cf. Kleine and Baker, 2004). The consumer merely experiences the enabling features a firm offers as means by which to create the intrinsic experience. Thus, although managerial focus on enabling goods, facilities, and service features is important, managers need to recognize that the use value of such features is determined by their ability to facilitate the consumer's creation of attractive intrinsic experiences.

The findings have several implications for theory and practice. The paper provides an understanding that in the case of intrinsic value creation consumers' choice of a certain activity, such as snowboarding, is related to whether they prefer the activity, or perceive its outcomes as being more relevant, relative to other, similar activities. On the contrary, consumers' preference for an attachment to certain suppliers is instrumental, and based on how well the objective features offered facilitate or fit into their archetypal image of the consumption experience. This finding allows for a general conclusion that outcome attributes are related to the actual intrinsic experience per se. Interaction-based services and physical facilities are merely perceived as enabling consumer experiences, rather than being the sole content of them. In the particular research context, an essential implication of this finding is that if no resort offers sufficient conditions for the desired archetypal intrinsic experience the consumers seek, they are likely to look for related substitute experiences elsewhere, such as surfing or skateboarding. Thus, the resorts' activities may not be able to facilitate such substitutes at all. Seen in the light of Paper I, in such circumstances the whole ski-resort industry fails to create value, and may even decrease the size of its market. Nevertheless, using the Kano classification of attributes managers can create an understanding of the hierarchical order in which attributes should be prioritized in order to create attractive offering profiles.

Consumers are shown to prefer suppliers that they perceive as offering certain physical-environment attributes that are central to their archetypal image of resort experiences, and to creating these intrinsic experiences. Thus, it is likely that consumers perceive offerings that do not have these physical-environment attributes as irrelevant and non-preferred. The most attractive resorts in the study offer physical-environment attributes that are classified as must-be and one-dimensional to a relatively high extent, making the resorts relevant and preferred destinations. In turn, the achievement of interaction attributes, such as service encounters with employees, represent distinguishing aspects that have the potential to delight consumers and contribute to differentiating advantages if consumers perceive several resorts as providing sufficient physical conditions for the experience (cf. Bolton et al., 2014).

Moreover, the findings suggest that attributes classified as combinations using the Kano methodology indicate either market dynamism or differences in preferences across segments. The results indicate that consumer skills and frequency drive and affect the pace of life-cycle changes. In the particular case outlined in the paper, more frequent and skilled consumers have higher demands on the facilitating

physical-environment attributes. A likely explanation of this finding relates in part to the fact that frequent and skilled consumers have a clearer and more developed image of the archetypal experience they seek. In summary, in order to offer attractive conditions for the experiences consumers seek, resorts need to develop physical-environment attributes at a similar pace as that at which its consumers develop skills. Firms that manage to adapt to the demands of skilled consumers, or to change as consumers' skills develop, are likely to offer the most appropriate conditions for the experience consumers seek and be rewarded with higher use frequency and a stronger reputation.

4.4 Paper IV - The theory of attractive quality and experience offerings (Högström, 2011)

This paper enhances understanding of the hierarchical arrangement between and within Kano categories. The study adapts the Kano methodology to the nature of consumption experiences and confirms the appropriateness of the theory of attractive quality as an operational means by which to understand how consumers will respond to a certain consumption event.

The paper shows that managers and researchers need to adopt a holistic perspective and consider attributes relative the total sum of benefits when determining the use value that consumers experience in a particular situation. Therefore, managers and researchers need to focus on both what consumers get and how the "what" performs relative to the consumers' archetypal image of the consumption experience. Based on Chitturi et al.'s (2008) findings, the article contributes to the theory of attractive quality and the Kano methodology by acknowledging that intrinsic and extrinsic part-experiences are likely to be different reactions (see Figure 7). On the one hand, delight is likely to occur, and dissatisfaction is likely to be avoided, when intrinsic must-be, one-dimensional and attractive attributes – that is, subjective responses – are achieved. On the other hand, satisfaction is likely to occur, and anger is likely to be avoided, as extrinsic attributes are achieved. In other words, delight is related to consumers' subjective responses, whereas objective features have the potential to satisfy if they contribute as a means to some further end. Consequently, the paper contributes to the debate over what drives satisfaction and delight in the theory of attractive quality and the Kano methodology (Lilja and Wiklund, 2006).

Figure 7. Introduction of a hedonic and utilitarian scale.

Moreover, the paper discuss Kano research and Kano questionnaire design for studying consumption experiences and testing the validity of evaluation tables used to classify responses to the Kano pair-questions, and thus attributes, into quality categories of the theory of attractive quality (Berger et al., 1993; Lee and Newcomb, 1997); see Figure 4 in chapter 3.5. Using importance ratings, the evaluation table test build on the assumption in the theory of attractive quality that must-be attributes are more important than one-dimensional attributes, one-dimensional attributes are more important than attractive attributes, and attractive attributes are more important than indifferent attributes (M>O>A>I). The test results confirm, clarify and challenge various aspects in the descriptions of prototypical relationships between attribute achievement and consumer-experience evaluations that the different quality categories signify. Importantly, the test shows that significantly different importance means apply to answer combinations to Kano pair-questions that are assumed to represent the same quality category. For example, the mean importance assigned to an answer combination assumed to signify an indifferent classification using the preexisting evaluation tables is significantly higher than the mean importance of an answer combination assumed to signify that the respondent deems the attribute attractive. Accordingly, the test shows that using the preexisting evaluation tables will, in some cases, produce attribute classifications that contradict the M>O>A>I assumption of the theory of attractive quality. Based on this finding,

I review the assumed prototypical relations between attribute achievement and consumer experience evaluations for the various quality categories.

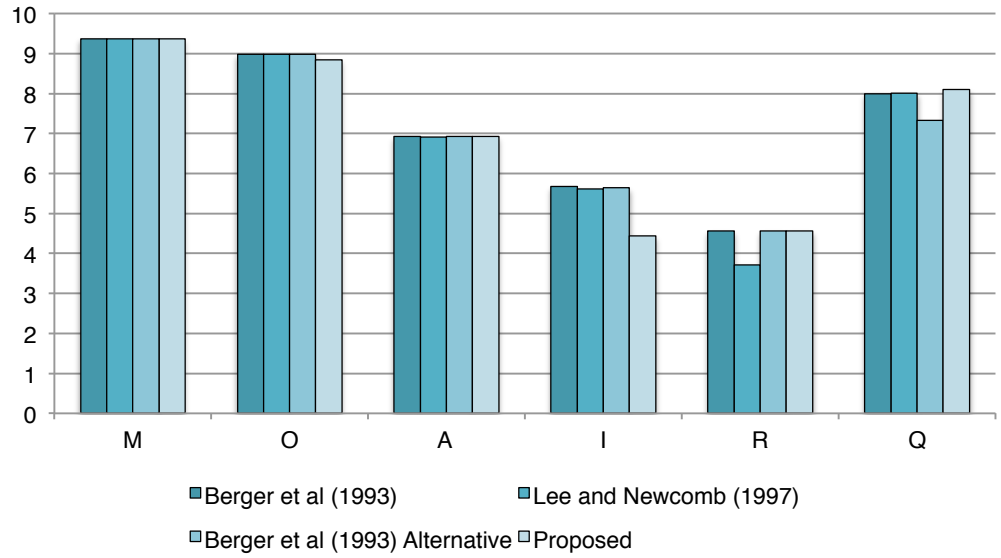

Figure 8. Comparison of pooled category importance rating in relation to the evaluation table used.

I propose several changes to the preexisting evaluation tables, see Figure 4 in chapter 3.5. In turn, the paper provides a comparison of results using the preexisting evaluation tables and a proposed evaluation table including the suggested changes. I show that the proposed evaluation table enhances the validity of attribute classifications. Figure 8 shows how the mean importance ratings assigned to the various quality categories better reflect the M>O>A>I assumption. In particular, the mean importance of the indifferent classifications, which is assumed to signify that an attribute is unimportant to respondents, declines. This finding decreases the risk that researchers or managers neglect potentially important attributes when using the Kano methodology.

The proposed evaluation table tends to change must-be/attractive combinations into must-be/one-dimensional or one-dimensional/attractive combinations and, in some cases, into pure one-dimensional classifications. In this way, the proposed evaluation table also produces attribute-classification combinations that better reflect the suggested A→O→M lifecycle thesis in literature on the theory of attractive quality (e.g., Kano et al., 2001; Löfgren et al., 2011). Further, the results indicate that differences or micro-level hierarchical orders may exist within the established attractive, must-be and reverse quality categories. However, further testing was not

possible due to a low incidence of occurrences of certain Kano pair-question answer combinations. Acknowledging such potential sub-categories would provide a fine-grained scholarly and managerial understanding of how attribute achievement affects consumer experience evaluations. In particular, the paper suggests that the reverse category needs to be divided into sub-categories to understand the impact of negative experiences on consumers' use value evaluations; this is something that we explore further in Paper V.

4.5 Paper V - Relevant and preferred public service: A study of user experiences and value creation in public transit (Högström et al., forthcoming)

The findings in this paper are derived from the empirical study on public transit described in chapter 3.5. In this paper, we review and combine previous strategic, service and public-management research related to value creation, and organizational identity and reputation, with the theory of attractive quality. Importantly, we focus on how managers can, apart from lowering the price of a previously available offering, choose to focus their value-creation strategies on relevance or preference (cf. Lepak et al., 2007; Priem, 2007). In this way, the paper provides a general and profound understanding of strategies for creating use value.

Based on the theoretical framework and the empirical study, the paper provides a deeper understanding of the fact that consumer evaluations regarding the relevance of various offerings, and the within-category consumer preference for these offerings, are based on normative and hierarchically ordered consumer requirements that represent performance standards for firms (see Figure 9). We propose that consumers experience and judge an offering as legitimate and relevant when it achieves the minimum or must-have attributes of an offering category (cf. King and Whetten, 2008; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999. On the contrary, a firm offering becomes a reputable and preferred option when consumers perceive that it achieves attributes to what they perceive as an ideal degree – that is, both type and extent – relative to their archetypal experience, representing the ideal performance standards for the offering category. In other words, the firm becomes a reputable and preferred option when it achieves must-be, one-dimensional, and/or attractive attributes to a high extent.

The paper also provides a novel understanding of how reverse attributes affect consumer relevance and preference judgments by dividing the theory of attractive

quality's reverse quality category into reverse must-be (RM), reverse one-dimensional (RO) and reverse attractive (RA) subcategories (cf. Berger et al., 1993; Högström, 2011) (see Figure 9). In particular, the paper shows that consumers are likely to deem offerings – that is, consumer experiences – that achieve RM and/or RO attributes as irrelevant. In a similar vein, consumers are not likely to prefer offerings that achieve RM, RO and RA attributes. However, not achieving RO and RA attributes can increase consumer preferences for the offering. This finding extends the theory of attractive quality and enhances the understanding of how experience attributes can affect use value, either positively or negatively. Based on the above division, the paper also contributes a new evaluation table for classifying attributes that can be used to identify such attributes (see Figure 4 in chapter 3.5). Additionally, we develop several new measures that can be used to assess the validity of Kano classifications (see Table 4 in section 3.5 for a more detailed description of these methodological contributions).

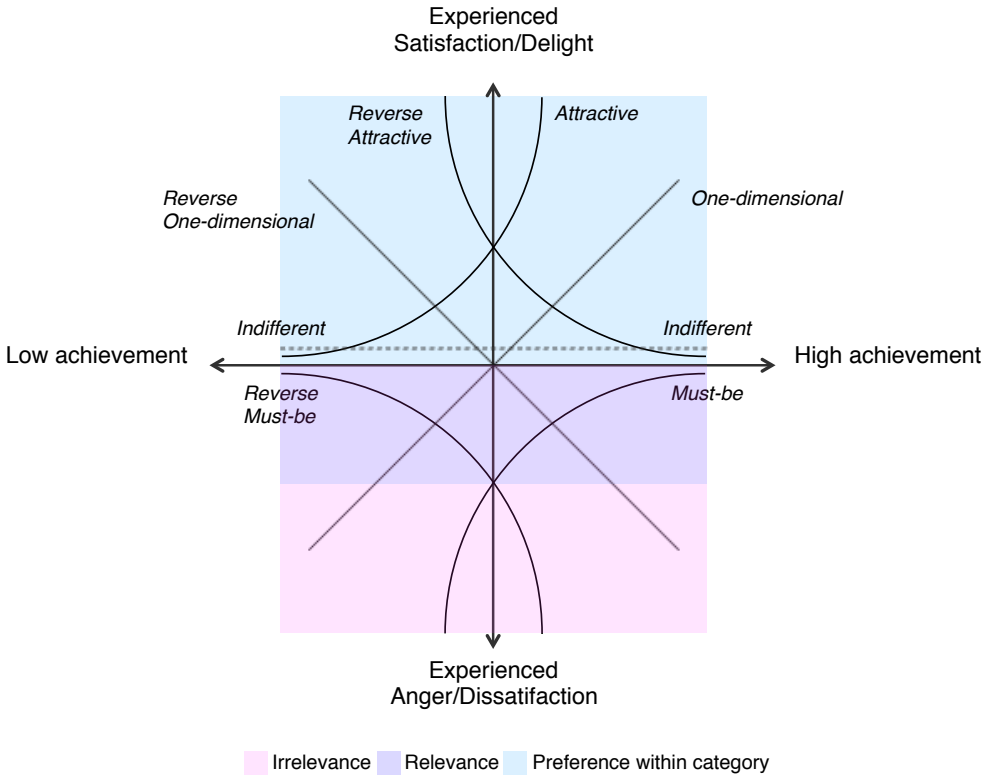

Figure 9. The theory of attractive quality and its relation to the relevance and preference hierarchy.

Moreover, the empirical findings show that an offering's extrinsic use value is determined by how well it satisfies some further end or outcome compared to

alternative offerings, which, in the case of public transit, is identified as saving time and money while travelling. However, although the extent to which public transit offerings help consumers save time and money relative to competing alternatives is important, it is not the sole reason for the formation of relevance, preferences and loyalty. In addition, consumer experiences of enabling features play a crucial role for the success of offerings.

The results indicate that when consumers evaluate an offering based on its extrinsic use value, they do so relative to their experience of enabling conditions or attributes. The study shows that in order to become relevant and preferred, public transit offerings need to satisfy several intrinsic and extrinsic consumer requirements related to public transit systems and services, as well as other passengers, in addition to meeting the outcome requirements. For example, the findings show that consumers value safety and convenience in such a way and to such an extent that not satisfying these requirements may become detrimental to relevance of and preference for the offering. Accordingly, the relevance of and preference for an extrinsic consumption experience relate not only to the extent to which some further goal is achieved, but also to how the goal is achieved. A key implication of this finding is that although extrinsic use value is related to the achievement of some further end, various aspects of the process through which such use value is created affect the consumer's evaluation to different extents. Therefore, strategic and public managers need to focus on how various aspects across different dimensions of the value-creating process, as well as the outcomes of this process, affect the consumer-experience evaluation. Thus, the paper indicates that consumers' evaluations of extrinsic experiences follow an 'is it worth it' mantra when comparing various optional consumer experiences.

The findings of the paper have a normative flavor for strategic and public management whose success depends upon attracting consumers. Importantly, the paper contributes to the theoretical understanding of how managers can allocate and coordinate resources to achieve experience attributes that increase their offerings' relevance and preference among consumers. In the particular research context, the findings indicate that the public transit sector lacks 'must-haves' that could help define the sector's offerings as a unique category of transportation. Instead, the achievement of 'must-not-haves' (that is, reverse) attributes, together with the lack of 'must-have' attributes, suggests that the sector lost the battle to attract certain types of consumers before it even started. Specifically, disturbing passengers, staff behavior that negatively affects onboard safety, and a system design that increases

the need to switch lines to reach a destination, are shown to have strong reverse (negative) effects on consumer preference and the relevance of public transit. All other service attributes across outcome, public-transit system and various service dimensions are mainly found to affect consumer preference for public transit. Moreover, the finding that the public-transit sector lacks 'must-haves' and distinctive attractive attributes that could help define the sector's offerings as a unique category or subcategory of transportation experiences forces public transit to compete with several other, potentially superior, means of transport.

Based on the findings from the empirical 'Kano study,' the paper shows that in order to increase the relevance of public transit, managers first need to adopt an exploitative-oriented strategy (cf. Benner and Tushman, 2003) that is focused on incremental improvements that eliminate aspects that achieve reverse service attributes. Once such efforts have been implemented successfully, managers can continue to follow the exploitative approach and focus on achieving the found one-dimensional attributes to increase consumer preference and attract consumers. However, public-transit managers also have a strategic option to adopt an explorative approach and focus some or all of their resources on developing radical innovations that become must-have attributes of transportation. If successful, such an explorative-oriented value-creation strategy (cf. Benner and Tushman, 2003) has the potential to make alternative modes of transportation, which are incapable of achieving the novel must-have attributes, irrelevant. No matter which of these two strategic approaches managers choose, the findings contribute to understanding of the relationships between consumers' archetypal image of consumption experiences related to transportation and consumer requirements. In other words, achieving fit between the consumers' experience of the firm and the consumers' archetypal consumption experience in a particular situation is of key concern for managers, independent of their strategic intent to compete in established markets or attempts to create a unique market space.

5 General contributions and directions for future research

In this final chapter of the thesis I summarize and the combined research findings made in each of the five appended papers and suggest topics for future research.

5.1 The experiential nature of actors' judgments of value

In this thesis, I have addressed the issue of fit between actors' mental models of what value is and how, where, when, and with whom to create value as a central theme for value creation to occur. Based on extant consumer and management research, I show how focal actors assign and create value based on their pre-existing subjective understanding of normative and shared performance standards for value creation. Accordingly, an actor's assessments and enactment of value creation are constrained and biased by actors' own personal dispositions, which are derived through prior direct and indirect experiences of value creation (Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Weick, 1995, 2001). This insight parallels my own empirical findings, which shows how consumers and managers evaluate prior, present, and future experiences based on archetypal images of what value is and how, where, when, and by whom it can be created in a particular situation (cf. Woodside et al., 2008; 2012; 2013). In particular, the finding offers a basic understanding of how firm managers' self-selection of central, enduring, and distinctive organizational features provide archetypal strategic schemas that inform the firm's facilitation of various types of extrinsic and intrinsic consumer use value and management of paradoxical demands. Consequently, this thesis draws attention away from consumers' and firms' structural and functional relationship roles, as 'providers' or 'consumers' for example, towards their roles as social actors who through their assessments and enactment of value creation contribute to the social construction of their own environments.

5.2 The socially embedded construction of cognitive schemas for value creation

Based on a social construction perspective, the thesis provides a scholarly and managerial understanding of how structural, cultural, political, and cognitive mechanisms in consumers' and firm managers' environment influence and are influenced by their assessments and creation of value (Dacin et al., 1999; Zukin and DiMaggio, 1990). Actors, whether as individuals or as a group, that possess (i) the authority to authorize or sanction certain activities, (ii) the cultural legitimacy to mobilize consumer groups or trigger debates, and/or, (iii) the control over structural

resources all contribute to reinforce or alter shared cognitions of what value is and how, where, when, and by whom it can be created. For example, media coverage, legislation, policies, and firms' resourcing may either reinforce or alter particular aspects in the shared cognitive schema that actors use to assess and enact value creation. Importantly, this thesis provides an understanding of how congruence between various actors cognitive schemas of value creation are essential for creating benefits that are intended, relevant, meaningful, and viable for actors involved in value creating activities and, therefore, for a value-creating system to endure (cf. Orton and Weick, 1990; Weick, 1995). However, if the shared cognitive schema becomes overdeveloped and receives lasting power, the opportunity horizon of actors within a value creating system is likely to contract (cf. Danneels, 2003). Such contraction may produce both uniform demand and supply in a certain social context that triggers preference-driven and calculative-oriented value capture strategies among firms and reduces the profit potential for market contenders (Aaker, 2004; 2012; Kim and Mauborgne, 2004; 2005; 2009).

At the same time, the establishment and reinforcement of a shared cognitive schema in an environment may create refined congruence between consumers' archetypal image of ideal consumption experiences and their experience of dominant firms' facilitation of their extrinsic or intrinsic use value creation. The calculative and heuristic archetypes described in Paper II adopt strategic schemas that aim to create a tightly coupled system of exchange partners and activities in certain shares of the environment to create such situations. However, their path-dependent sensemaking and enactment based on such strategic schemas not only leads to increased congruence with their consumers' demands, but may also make these firms' value-creating patterns routinized and standardized. Thus, firms in this situation are likely to find it increasingly difficult to change due their commitment to certain market segments or systems of exchange partners and activities, and potential blind belief in a strategic schema (cf. Salancik, 1977). This finding points towards a paradox of flexibility; namely, the more congruent the firm's strategic schema and activities are with shared cognitive schemas in a particular social environment and the less the firm questions its strategic schema, the less flexible it is likely to become (cf. Baker and Sinkula, 1999; Levinthal and March, 1993). In such circumstances, more flexible firms that can alter the established cognitive structures of value creation may develop strategic schemas that deviate from the shared cognitive schema in an attempt to reconstruct the social environment of the value-creating system. For example, a firm may alter its strategic schema to facilitate consumers' value creation in a novel way

that makes competitors irrelevant and radically changes the market structure (cf. Aaker, 2012; Berthon et al., 2003; Kim and Mauborgne, 2004; 2005; 2009).

5.3 Firms' strategic schemas, use value, and paradoxes

Drawing on the above discussion, the thesis shows how a firm adopts, that is, self-select, certain CED features that provide archetypal strategic schemas that cohere with particular types of use value creation with consumers. As the empirical study in Paper II shows, these archetypes may be inherently calculative, heuristic, or dynamic and represent diverse value creation strategies that optimize extrinsic and/or intrinsic types of use value creation with consumers.

Typically, the calculative archetype focuses on certain consumer segments existing extrinsic use value requirements for certain products or services and seeks to increase preference for their offerings according to a 'the-more-the-better' mantra. In turn, the heuristic archetype seeks to create novel and appropriate use value with consumers by creating a unique brand meaning that certain consumers experience as a must-have CED attributes. Finally, the dynamic archetype engages in a constant movement of focus across intrinsic and extrinsic use value creation with consumers to find opportunities that increase consumer preference and relevance for their consumer experience in wider market environments.

Although the calculative and heuristic archetypes seek to stabilize their value creation, some dynamism may exist in their tightly coupled systems of activities and exchange relationships. For instance, the heuristic archetype can offer product and service variation under a certain theme (cf. Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Woodside et al., 2013). As Papers II and III illustrate, enabling products, services, or facilities are merely subordinate consumers' commitment to the created intrinsic experience per se creating a space for product and service variety. In contrast, as Paper V indicates, consumers' creation of extrinsic use value is less context-sensitive, which enables the firm to target various market segments, and is more focused on functional product features or service delivery per se, as a means for consumers to achieve some further end. However, the calculative and heuristic archetypes or the co-existence of such archetypes is not flexible in a dual sense of both context and offerings as neither enhances the firm's brand extension or market expansion abilities simultaneously. Thus, in order to achieve sustainable advantages, firms that adopt calculative and heuristic archetypes seek to create tightly coupled activities and relations to cause a static equilibrium that optimize a specific use value type that fits narrower and stable

segments in its environment. In this sense, these archetypes make a trade-off between increased efficiency and legitimacy to fit in and stand out in certain ways. This fact underlines a key difference between being flexible or merely being dynamic in terms of meeting opposing demands of efficiency and legitimacy.

In contrast, the dynamic archetype seeks a dynamic equilibrium between efficiency and legitimacy by creating a loosely coupled system of exchange partners and activities and focusing on various use value types to fit into wider and more diverse market environments and, at the same time, create unique advantages in these environments. Thus, the dynamic archetype is likely to benefit market entrants or established firms that are seeking to develop differentiating attributes that align with consumers pre-existing archetypal images of consumption experiences (Aaker, 2012; Zhang and Markman, 1998). Yet, it is also important for firms with calculative or heuristic strategic schemas to find attractive differences in order to increase or sustain consumer preference in industries and markets with well-established cognitive schemas and patterns of value creation (Bolton et al., 2014).

5.4 Creating attractive consumer experiences

The two empirical studies on extrinsic and intrinsic consumer experiences in Papers III, IV, and V provide a basis for understanding the hierarchical nature of consumers' experience evaluations from a strategic management and marketing perspective. Based on the theory of attractive quality and performance standards in this thesis' theoretical framework, these two studies show how attractive consumers' experiences are backward compatible. In particular, the thesis shows how both nominal attributes differences and attribute degree of achievement affect consumers' judgments of use value (see Figure 10). In line with these theories, the studies show that before a firm attempts to differentiate itself from competitors, it needs to achieve or facilitate must-be and one-dimensional attributes to at least a minimum extent in order to become a legitimate experience category member and relevant option for consumers. Once such attributes have been achieved with the consumer, the firm can focus on achieving higher order attractive and/or achieve one-dimensional attributes increasingly well.

The above findings reflect the common presumption in the theory of attractive quality that must-be attributes are taken for granted and cannot contribute to satisfy consumers, and therefore not differentiate the firm. However, the study on the intrinsic experience context on snowparks challenges this assumption and shows

how firms that achieve must-be attributes exceptionally well may prevail in their market environments. In line with the description of the heuristic archetype of firm value creation, firms can create unique value and make competitors irrelevant, either by developing novel must-be attributes or, as that particular study shows, achieve them exceptionally well (see Figure 10). The study shows how consumers who focus on the intrinsic outcomes, just as with the theory of attractive states, take enabling experience attributes for granted (cf. Tynan et al., 2010). Yet, the theory of attractive quality has not yet suggested that developing new must-be attributes or pushing the ideal level of achievement of such attributes is a viable strategic option to create distinctive advantages. In particular, the latter option appears to contribute to raising the minimum performance standard for must-be attributes in ways that make competitors that fall behind irrelevant.

Another notion presented in this thesis is that the Kano methodology mainly focuses on and measures consumer preferences to predict satisfaction or delight if attributes are achieved. Related to this issue, Paper IV shows how consumer reactions of satisfaction/anger and delight/dissatisfaction are likely to depend on what type of attributes (extrinsic or intrinsic) are achieved. Moreover, Paper V adapts the theory of attractive quality to addresses consumers' relevance and preference evaluations as predictors of satisfaction, but also expands its scope to address reverse or negative experience attributes on such evaluations. Accordingly, the thesis expands the scope and applicability of the theory of attractive as a tool for researcher and managers to study the hierarchical nature of consumers' use value judgments (see Figure 10). In particular, the thesis shows how researchers and managers can adapt the theory of attractive to create an understanding of attributes' hierarchical order relative to the archetypal experiences that consumers seek. As such, the Kano methodology and the theory of attractive quality can also provide a basis for effective managerial prioritizations between various attributes and investments that reduce resource waste and the risk of overshooting customers (cf. Lukas et al., 2013). In this sense, the theory also provides a foundation for evaluating and building future value creation strategies from a use value point of view.

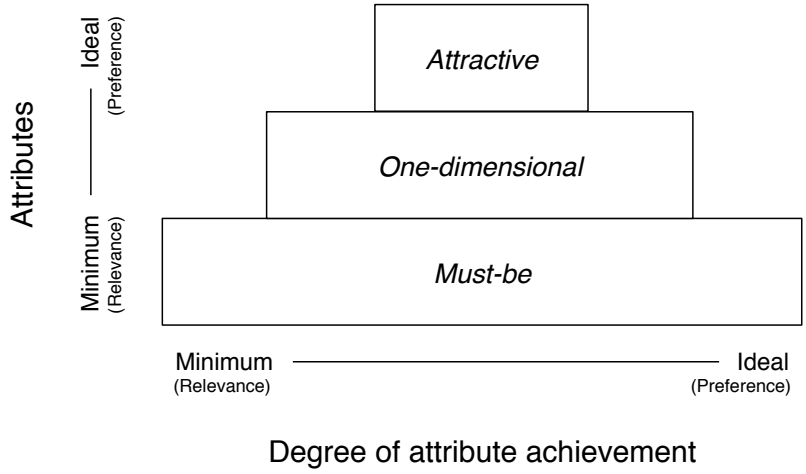

Figure 10. The hierarchical order of attributes in the theory of attractive quality and corresponding relationship to use value evaluations.

Viewed as a whole, the thesis suggests three viable archetypal strategic options for managers to create attractive consumer experiences based on the empirical studies on the hierarchical nature of consumers' experience evaluations and firms' strategic schemas. All of the options aim to create fit and stand out at the same time. The first option reflects a preference-driven approach to value creation that resembles on the inherent logic of the calculative archetype above. This option follows an exploitative, consumer preference-driven, the-more-the-better mantra and focuses on facilitating the consumers' creation of known and clearly specified experience attributes increasingly well. Firms that adopt such an approach are likely to emphasize experience attributes that are similar to those of competitors (cf. Bolton et al., 2014).

The second option is similar to that promoted by scholars adopting the theory of attractive quality. Following this option, the firm facilitates the consumers' creation of central must-be and one-dimensional experience attributes to at least a minimum degree, and then seeks to create distinctive attractive experience attributes with consumers. This approach can help the firm to create a unique attractive subcategory of the more mainstream consumer experiences that competitors relying on the first option focus on (cf. Aaker, 2012; Zhang and Markman, 1998). Accordingly, the option seeks to elevate consumer preferences at the same time, as it may make competitors that do not achieve the attribute irrelevant for some consumers.

The third option is the one discussed above, whereby the firm focuses on creating and reinforcing novel must-be attributes (such as adopting a heuristic strategic schema to create a unique brand meaning) or tries to push the ideal and minimum

degree of achievement standards for pre-existing must-be attributes to make competitors irrelevant. Consequently, while firms adopting the first option let the environment define their strategy, firms adopting one of the two others options seek to implement strategies that, to some extent, reconstruct the shared cognitive schemas of what value is, or how, where, when, and by whom it is created, in order to create uncontended market space (Kim and Mauborgne, 2009).

5.5 Limitations and Future research

A main question regarding the understanding of a value-creating system from the more all-encompassing value co-creation view is similar to that which Donaldson (1992) posed to researchers in organizational research. How does this focus lead to actionable and testable managerial and scholarly understanding of value creation? Answering this question is essential in order to move beyond a primarily internal dialogue in marketing management theories and attempt to influence managerial practitioners and policy makers. The present thesis suggests that theories on organizational identity, image, and reputation that adopt a view on firms as social actors can help bridge this gap from more abstract terms such as norms, rules, and resource structures to a clearer understanding of firms and consumers roles in value creation (cf. King and Whetten, 2008; Rindova and Fombrun, 1999; Whetten, 2006). Similar to previous research, the present thesis shows that both managerial strategic schemas and consumer dispositions (Garbarino and Johnsson, 1999; Kressmann et al., 2006; Larsson and Bowen, 1989; Swaminathan et al., 2009) are likely to predict behavior and interaction patterns better than merely focusing on the structural and functional properties of consumers or providers. Nevertheless, applying such framework underscores the importance of and need for clear structural and functional role descriptions that define who creates value and who facilitates value creation (cf. Grönroos and Voima, 2013). For example, Skaggs and Youndt (2004) presented an interesting empirical finding that customer co-production and customer contact may have negative effects on a service firm's performance when the firm's skills, knowledge, and expertise are high.

The present thesis makes an important case of the firm's strategic schema relative cognitive shared schemas of value creation, such as consumers' archetypal images of consumption experiences. The findings provides a foundation for future studies on the topic and address when and where different strategic schemas are likely to be effective and how value creation is likely to unfold in matching versus mismatching scenarios (cf. Kumar et al., 2011). Another question related to strategic schemas is

the impact that paradoxes have on firm behavior in value creation. Future research should address this issue to reveal how firms can alter their strategic schemas or combine different strategic schemas to overcome opposing demands in their value creation. This is especially important in order to better understand the relation between exchange value related to issues of firm efficiency and use vale related to issues of legitimacy and reputation. A viable way may be to view investors as customers who, like consumers, want benefits from their engagement and investments in an enterprise. Thus, the focus on paradoxes could help researchers address the relation between use value and exchange value as two opposing but interrelated demands. From such a perspective, focusing merely on consumer use value, which may seem logical when considered in isolation, becomes irrational and inconsistent (Lewis, 2000). In this sense, viewing demand-side and supply-side views on value creation as complementary rather than opposing may also be a fruitful path forward (cf. Priem, 2007).

The self-congruence literature, along with theories on product and service quality, can help provide a deeper understanding of consumers' evaluations of use value. This thesis acknowledges the strength of the self-congruence literature in predicting consumer behavior and use value judgments in outer-oriented use value creation. However, I also argue that such research should take a step towards addressing more self-oriented forms of use value. Although this thesis uses a methodology that is traditionally used in the field of quality management, this thesis suggests that consumers seemingly commit or attach affectively to the actual consumption experience, which is a construct that is comparable but not similar to, for example, brand personality. Thus, self- and functional-congruence may consider testing the congruence between the self and, for example, an intrinsic self-oriented experience in addition to the traditional focus on congruence between the self-image and brand personality. Directly related to this question is the question that Kleine and Baker (2004) ask about whether consumers are attached to experiences per se.

Further testing is needed on the issues of performance standards, the Kano methodology and the theory of attractive quality. Papers III, IV, and V enhance the understanding of how managers can refine their understanding of consumer experience evaluations and adopt various strategic approaches towards value creation. Essentially, this thesis adopted three of the four suggested research approaches discussed in the methodology section and addresses central, enduring, and distinctive aspects of firm behavior and consumer experiences. However, to shed further light on what attributes become enduring, more time-series based

research is needed (cf. Approach IV; see Figure 2 in chapter 3.1), similar to the recent research on attribute lifecycles (Löfgren et al., 2011). Such insights could enhance our understanding of the relation between minimum and ideal performance standards related to both nominal differences and interval scale differences related to attribute achievement. Moreover, the suggested reverse sub-categories need further testing, both in static Kano studies and in light of lifecycles. Such refined understanding can help firm managers and researchers develop a more dynamic understanding of strategies related to how firms can fit in, in order to stand out.

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Fit in to stand out

In order to grow and survive, a firm must create value with consumers in ways that both fit in with consumer demands and stand out from competitors. Focusing on and understanding consumer and firm assessments of value and creation of value has become a central scope in the contemporary strategic management and marketing literature for understanding and explaining firm survival and success. Consequently, the overall aim of this thesis is to provide a conceptually and empirically grounded understanding of consumers' and managers' value assessments and behavior in value creation.

This thesis draws on a consumer experience perspective and theories on social construction, organizational identity, self-congruence, and the theory of attractive quality, and combines multiple qualitative and quantitative studies. The findings in this thesis shed light on the interplay between consumers, firms, and contextual structures in value creation. Contextual structural, cultural, and political forces are shown to affect and be affected by the shared and individual cognitions of value creation that firms and consumers use in their assessment and creation of value.

The results of the study enhance the understanding of how firms can adopt various strategic schemas or organizing logics to optimize different types of use value creation when choosing between opposing and contradictive demands in their value creation. Furthermore, the thesis provides a deeper understanding of the hierarchical nature of consumer judgments of value that can be used to enhance the effectiveness of firm prioritizations and as a foundation for future value-creating strategies.

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