

Bridging marketing and higher education: resource integration, co-creation and student learning

Kjersti Karijord Smørvik & May Kristin Vespestad

To cite this article: Kjersti Karijord Smørvik & May Kristin Vespestad (2020): Bridging marketing and higher education: resource integration, co-creation and student learning, Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, DOI: [10.1080/08841241.2020.1728465](https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2020.1728465)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2020.1728465>



© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 18 Feb 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 587



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Bridging marketing and higher education: resource integration, co-creation and student learning

Kjersti Karijord Smørvik and May Kristin Vespestad 

School of Business and Economics, UiT, The Arctic University of Norway, Harstad, Norway

ABSTRACT

Consumers are constantly searching for new experiences that provide more than just a product or a service. A cup of coffee is not just a cup of coffee. The atmosphere surrounding the coffee experience is a matter of ever greater importance to consumers. Along with an increased demand for experiences, the lecture hall has also become a setting where students expect to be entertained and engaged. This article looks into how value created through co-creation and mutual resource exchange can contribute in higher educational experiences. The article also explores how implementing tools from marketing can promote learning experiences. This study is based on focus group interviews, evaluations and observations. The findings show that co-creation of values can contribute to students perception of learning. By linking theories of marketing and higher education, the article contributes to new ways of thinking that focuses on co-creation of value in a teaching-learning context.

ARTICLE HISTORY


Received 9 May 2019
Accepted 7 February 2020

KEYWORDS

Value co-creation;
interaction; experience;
higher education; resource
integration

Introduction

Western society has to a large extent become an experience society (Guneriusen, 2012), where experiences are an integral part of consumers' interactions with service providers, and other customers on a day-to-day basis. Today's consumers are not satisfied with goods and services that merely meet their needs. The goods and services must also provide engaging experiences. The phenomenon experience has become an important term of interest for managers and service researchers (Jaakkola, Helkkula, & Aarikka-Stenroos, 2015). This can be seen in connection with a growing demand for more interactive and participative experiences (Campos, Mendes, Oom do Valle, & Scott, 2018). Consumers want to be involved and engaged in experiences and co-create meanings (Boswijk, Peelen, & Olthof, 2012; Thompson, MacInnis, & Arnould, 2018), and desire a more active role in co-creation of value (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004a; Vespestad, Lindberg, & Mossberg, 2019). A shift towards an experience society also affects today's students. As Dziewanowska (2017) points out, students need teaching with focus on a more direct and

CONTACT Kjersti Karijord Smørvik  kjersti.k.smorvik@uit.no

© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

entertaining presentation of theories and its usefulness, and the teaching style must adapt to better accommodate this need.

As part of a development with increased attention towards consumer experiences as a key in marketing (Jaakkola et al., 2015), higher educational institutions (HEIs) are in a situation where we find growing expectations of adaptation to the experience-seeking consumer. In this context the student. Viewing students as consumers implies that HEIs act as providers of e.g. goods and services (Woodall, Hiller, & Resnick, 2014). In higher education (HE), goods and services include the provision of study programmes, teaching, learning experiences, examinations and more. However, the use of the metaphor of 'students as consumers' is criticized (Bailey, 2000; Franz, 1998; Saunders, 2015), especially with regard to learning. Guilbault (2016) proposes a shift from viewing students as passive consumers within a traditional perspective based on a saying that the customer is always right, to treating them as active consumers within the new marketing perspective acknowledging the new roles of the consumers. Meaning that HE is an experiential service and should be considered within a service dominant view (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2017), where resource integration plays an important part. Students are thus co-producers or co-creators of the service given, and not just passive recipients or spectators demanding a service or demanding learning for that matter. An understanding of HE as a service includes a broad variety of services offered, an extended service relationship, and the demand of active involvement from those obtaining the service (Chalcraft, Hilton, & Hughes, 2015). The re-modelling of the HE servicescape represents changes affecting all stakeholders, and implies a new reality in which both students and HEIs have to adapt.

Looking at HE as an experiential service includes a view where value co-creation is important. The term co-creation implies a joint development of values in an interaction between people, services, environment and products (Binkhorst & Dekker, 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a; Prebensen, Vittersø, & Dahl, 2013). There is considerable interest in co-creation in both academic and popular science fields (Sivertstøl, 2016), and the concept is particularly used in marketing and tourism research (Campos et al., 2018; Mathis, Kim, Uysal, Sirgy, & Prebensen, 2016). However, there is a lack of studies exploring how central ideas in the current debate in marketing research, can contribute in various contexts (Jaakkola et al., 2017). A notable exception is Dziewanowska (2017) who classifies the value types of students in HE. The study, however, does not fully grasp the mutual exchange of resources taking place. Drawing upon the same context, our study elaborates on co-creation in a learning and teaching context, looking into whether jointly shared resources and co-creation experiences can facilitate student engagement, and contribute to students' perceptions of learning. As called for by Beirão, Patrício, and Fisk (2017), and Vespestad and Clancy (2019) there is a need for development of the service dominant view at the meso and micro level. Our study expands upon the literature of a service-dominant logic at a micro level. Moreover, this study contributes to the use of a new angle to understand students' perceptions of learning, not only by studying the role of resource integration and value co-creation in a HE context, but also by addressing students' perspectives on value.

Theoretical background

The concept of co-creation focuses on an idea that consumer value is created in interaction with the provider of goods or services (Dean, Griffin, & Kulczynski, 2016; Grönroos

& Ojasalo, 2015; Prebensen, Vittersø et al., 2013). Co-creation as a concept may be seen in the context of the transition from what Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008, 2017) refer to as a traditional goods-centred logic to a service-dominant logic, where the latter replaces a practice involving the exchange of tangible goods with a notion of the exchange of service(s). This is thus a logic that recognizes the value of the interaction facilitated by the trading, where the individual consumer integrates his/her particular non-material resources into the consumer experience (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). The value creation that takes place is, therefore, the result of a mutual exchange of resources between company and consumer throughout the consumer experience (Thompson et al., 2018), and can include activities such as knowledge development, communication and relationship building (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006).

'The role of institutions in value co-creation has moved to the forefront' (Vargo & Lusch, 2017, p. 47), and value co-creation has a wide scope of applicability and relevancy to many kinds of contexts, including the HEIs. It also challenges HEIs to become more consumer-centric (Fleischman, Raciti, & Lawley, 2015). With a growing focus on marketing, HE has to modernize its strategies and services, but as Ng and Forbes (2009) point out; marketing is not about advertising or intense selling; the domain of service marketing, where HEIs should position themselves, puts the consumer at the centre and is concerned with creating educational experiences that genuinely satisfy the student's need. This includes the two different aspects of both student services and student learning, where student services includes e.g. the provision of study programmes, syllabuses, examinations and more, and student learning includes the range of activities where learning is at heart. A market position of HEIs must, however, not indicate a shift towards short-term gains, such as prioritizing stakeholders' satisfaction above learning or educational outcome (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Marketing is concerned with value creating through exchange, instead of a marketing department's techniques (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). Looking at marketing from this perspective HEIs should aim at becoming more student-oriented through their services, inviting students to co-create the educational experiences (see e.g. Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011; Dziewanowska, 2017; Vespestad & Smørvik, 2019).

Value co-creation allows for students and HE to work together to refine the student experience (Dollinger, Lodge, & Coates, 2018), and value co-creation is about giving room for interaction in a setting where students themselves feel they can contribute and co-create learning experiences (Smørvik & Vespestad, 2017). It is difficult to imagine how learning experiences can be created without taking students' participation and engagement into account. A lecturer encourages students' learning and development 'by challenging, stimulating, involving and facilitating, and by providing feedback,' according to Raaheim (2011, p. 56, our translation). Raaheim (2011) also argues that the idea of how students learn best through listening to the lecturer should be replaced with an idea that all parties have something to contribute. Encouraging student involvement and interest by inviting them to dialogue and interaction is thus an important part of planning a good learning environment.

Exley and Dennick (2009) ask how a traditionally passive situation in the lecture hall can be changed into a form of teaching that promotes deeper learning, and refer to a wide range of activities from problem solving and discussions to interactive tasks. However, an important point is that learning does not function in the same way in every situation and for every student (Cassidy, 2004). Some students need clear instructions on how to

move forward, while others are more self-reliant. Taken into account the differences between students and not least the dissimilar approaches to co-creation and learning, there is a huge variety of learning styles and learning strategies (see e.g. Clothier & Matheson, 2019; Loyens, Gijbels, Coertjens, & Coté, 2013; Lumpkin, Achen, & Dodd, 2015). A learning strategy can be defined as the strategy a student adopts when studying, and will vary dependent of different situations and tasks (Hartley, 1998). One way to approach learning strategies is to distinguish between the two main strategies: surface learning and deep learning (Marton & Säljö, 1976). Further elaborated by Biggs and Tang (2011), Entwistle (2009) and Ramsden (2003). In a surface learning strategy, a student spends considerable time noting down and reproducing as many facts as possible (for examinations), without any significant effort to acquire a more general understanding of the subject (Hermann & Bager-Elsborg, 2014). A surface approach can thus typically be described as processes distinguished by memorization and rote learning (Dolmans, Loyens, Marcq, & Gijbels, 2016). By contrast, in a deep learning strategy, the student will have a basic interest in understanding the key concepts and structure of the subject. An attempt to see logic and connections is, therefore, characteristic of this learning strategy, which again will increase the possibility of achieving optimal learning (Dolmans et al., 2016; Hermann & Bager-Elsborg, 2014). Surface and deep approaches to learning can be understood as students' motives or intentions to learn combined with different learning activities (Dolmans et al., 2016). Common to all theories of learning is their rejection of the notion that the lecturer can transfer knowledge directly to the students (Biggs, 1999; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Learning requires some form of engagement and activity, and as one learns, the conceptions of a phenomenon change.

Good learning involves student-activating teaching, as pointed out by Biggs and Tang (2011). This is also implied by Bovill et al. (2011) when they emphasize the importance of activating students by encouraging dialogue, co-creation and co-production. Getting students engaged in co-creation activities matters, because student involvement influences persistence and learning (Campbell & Cabrera, 2011; Wardley, Bélanger, & Nadeau, 2017). Co-creation may thus be seen as key to developing good student learning experiences, and allows students to participate and take an active role in their own learning. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a, 2004b) stress that a sound foundation for co-creation can be established by using the four building blocks of dialogue, access, transparency and understanding of risk/benefits, each depending upon resource integration. The first building block, *dialogue*, involves an emphasis on communication, reciprocity, engagement, and the ability and willingness to act. Dialogue also implies the possibility of shared learning between two equal parties (such as two students). The second, *access*, involves insight into and access to the same type of information and/or knowledge. Here it is recognized that the consumer (student) benefits greatly from being kept informed and that information is to be shared. The third building block, *transparency*, follows naturally from access, as knowledge and understanding of how things are interrelated gives the consumer (student) greater insight and control. The final building block, *understanding of risk/benefits*, concerns the knowledge of the responsibilities and benefits involved in co-creation based on the above principles (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004a, 2004b).

Value outcome is crucial within co-creation, as emphasized in the aforementioned building blocks by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a, 2004b). However, how value is created can only be understood by studying this in relation to other values a consumer

has experience with, meaning that ‘consumer value refers to the evaluation of some object by some subject’ (Holbrook, 1999, p. 5). This is also pointed out by Grönroos and Ravald (2011) when they argue that value is not created or delivered as a result of production or exchange, so called ‘value in exchange,’ but emerge as a result of an individual process, so called ‘value in use.’ Value is, therefore, phenomenologically and subjectively determined by the consumer (Dziewanowska, 2017). Value creation in a consumer experience is influenced by several interrelated contexts; one is the interaction between the consumer and an object, another is the context in which the consumption takes place, a third relates to consumer preferences as to this context, and finally, value is based on experience because the value itself is neither part of the product, object or brand possessed, but resides in the experience (Holbrook, 1999). If we transfer this to an educational context (Vespestad & Smørvik, 2019), student experiences of value and learning may thus be influenced by the lecturer-student interaction, the student-student interaction, the context of the lecture, and the engagement of the student.

Grönroos and Voima (2013) criticise service-dominant logic for being too abstract and underdeveloped, especially when it comes to the concept of value co-creation. Studying value created through mutual resource exchange in HE experiences is one way of exploring the concept’s usefulness for managerial purposes, and its use at micro level. When including resource integration throughout the HE experience, the resources involved becomes essential in understanding the value that derives thereof, but when it comes to addressing value in education, there is a gap in the literature where the student perspective on value largely has been by-passed. Drawing upon this, our study looks into students’ perceptions of learning, by studying the value created through co-creation experiences and jointly shared resources. Following this, the research question is: How does the value derived from mutual resource exchange and co-creation contribute to students’ perceptions of learning?

Method and data

This study uses qualitative data. The data was collected through focus group interviews, field observations, and interim and final evaluations. The study was conducted over a five-year period, in three different advanced marketing courses at Bachelor level, at a single campus of a Norwegian university. The sample comprised a convenience sample with a total of 42 international students; all non-native English speakers from nine European countries including Bulgaria ($n = 1$), France ($n = 8$), Germany ($n = 1$), Latvia ($n = 1$), Lithuania ($n = 4$), Norway ($n = 7$), Poland ($n = 1$), Russia ($n = 18$), and Spain ($n = 1$). The sample was reasonably gender balanced with 22 female informants and 20 males. The participants were students on a one-year or one-semester tuition free programme. The participation was voluntary, and students were ensured that participation would not affect any grades. The students were informed that the information they gave and the opinions shared during the focus group interviews and evaluations would help us in coming course development. The written evaluation ensured the anonymity of the respondents. Nothing that could identify the students were electronically or otherwise stored as a result of the data collection.

Qualitative designs can be understood as naturalistic to the extent that the research involves real world settings where the phenomenon unfolds naturally (Adler & Adler,

1994; Patton, 2002). Here, the context was the lecture halls and other settings where teaching and learning took place, e.g. during business visits, excursions, participation in events and group sessions. This is where the data were collected. In all groups of students, we first conducted focus group interviews, illuminating feedback on the teaching methods and the structure of the lectures. Subsequently, written individual evaluation forms were collected during and at the end of the courses, opening up for depersonalized data. The questions in the written evaluation were about the value outcome for the students, involvement in the course, design of the course, as well as questions about the efforts of the students and the lecturer. Moreover, open ended questions were used to allow the students to freely express their opinions.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argue that qualitative research may be seen as a situational activity, based on the researcher(s) being in a specific setting and visualizing this reality. As lecturers with many years of teaching experience, our encounters with students are our everyday work and, in this context, also our research field. In addition to gathering data through focus group interviews and evaluations, we focused on observing student interaction during lectures, excursions and company visits. Observation can give a broader insight into the context where the interaction takes place (Patton, 2002), and is particularly useful in combination with other methods (Adler & Adler, 1994). In our case, observation broadened our knowledge of the area under study, as it allowed us to observe the interaction and co-creation taking place amongst the students. Moreover, since data were collected over several years, reflections on the observations also resulted in further development and focus towards activities that lead to co-creation in different settings.

This study draws on practices of engaging students in learning. The study also focuses on mutual resource exchange and co-creation in an educational context. The teaching methods used in the courses involved in this study, included everything from elements of more traditional forms of lecturing (e.g. use of PowerPoint), to business visits and local excursions. Moreover, it also involved participation in local events with the aim of combining theory and practice. The teaching methods emphasized co-creation and interaction. This often included a combination of short lecture sessions with a variety of other learning activities such as buzz groups, brainstorming and think-pair-share (Hermann & Bager-Elsborg, 2014), active use of business cases, active cross-communication and various forms of problem solving. In our efforts to activate and engage the students, we wished to create an interest in dialogue and co-operation. Our overall aim was to create room for co-creation of value. This includes the value created through personalized interaction in specific situations, in specific contexts and between specific individuals (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004b).

The data collected were analysed through three activities; data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019). Data reduction is a process of simplifying and transforming data. Data display is a process of organizing information, and conclusion drawing and verification is a process of noting regularities, explanations, patterns and propositions. The interview data and observations were transcribed and analysed together with the written evaluations. The data were abstracted into conceptual and structural order (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), and then organized so that codes and categories could be identified (Miles et al., 2019). The categories we used were inspired by theories (Flick, 2018) in value co-creation, such as the building blocks of co-creation, and resource integration as part of a service-dominant logic

(Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004a, 2004b; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2017). The use of a methodological triangulation of research methods (Oppermann, 2000) aimed at providing a deeper insight into the research area, and allowed us, as researchers, to identify and uncover enriched data within the phenomenon.

Results

This section presents the results following the building blocks of co-creation as outlined by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a, 2004b); dialogue, access, transparency, understanding of risks/benefits.

The focus on dialogue

Dialogue involves finding a common platform and a common starting point where each person can participate, regardless of background and experience. In our study, three types of dialogue were elaborated and identified. The first was the teacher-student dialogue. In the encounter between the lecturer and a new student or group of students, it is important to attempt to create a secure learning environment, where all students feel that they can actively participate on their own terms. This is particularly important because students have different backgrounds and have experienced different teaching methods. 'A good connection with the teacher helps in understanding all the material,' as one student states (informant 19).

The second type of dialogue is between students. For groups of students with different backgrounds and different knowledge of a subject, it is useful to create an environment where knowledge can be shared, where those who may know more about the subject can share with the others, and where all students are allowed to participate regardless of their previous knowledge:

We share a lot of personal experience within this course, and I think that is the most important and interesting part. (Informant 25)

To use each student's own knowledge and competences, our pre-knowledge skills, and combining it all into group work for the business, worked well. (Informant 23)

The third form of dialogue is with the business community, which is an important part of the programme. By using a practical case concerning e.g. a small local company or a large service company, both lecturer and students are able to relate theoretical perspectives to real everyday work. Contact with the business community is beneficial to students, lecturers and companies alike. Such dialogue provides insight into real issues of importance to company employees. Collaboration with a company gives students many different interaction and discussion points; they visit the company, meet employees in key roles, and collect data from the company. When students are asked for feedback on how they find this collaboration, they say:

It is a really concrete example, the perfect way to learn and understand the courses in an educative way. (Informant 25)

The best part of the course has without doubt been the work based on our business visit and the following group discussions. (Informant 29)

I really enjoyed guest lectures from businesses and excursions. When you have theoretical knowledge it needs to be proved in practice. (Informant 13)

By observing different kinds of dialogue through co-creation activities, it seems obvious that some students become more confident and active throughout a semester. Students also report that different dialogues helped in a better understanding of course material and theories.

The focus on access

Access begins with information and tools (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). In a teaching situation, students must be given access and insight into the same information and expertise, while also being provided with the tools they need to process the information. At the start of a course, it is important to provide clear information about the curriculum, work requirements, examination scheme, course structure, available learning resources and the lecturer's expectations. However, to ensure that the students actually experience equal access, it is also useful to form an idea of their viewpoints and background, or entry position (Smørvik, 2014). As one student points out: International students are not familiarized with the Norwegian education system.

By emphasizing that students at the start of a course tell about their academic background, fields of interest, expectations and goals for their studies, other students and lecturers can form a picture of their entry position. An entry position including the resources students bring with them when joining a new course. International students often come from HEIs where teaching is more traditional, and where students act more passive. In Norway, on the other hand; the students comment on their more active role as wholly positive:

I was really motivated. Everything was so interesting that time goes fast and I wasn't tired. I am really pleased with it. (Informant 29)

This course definitely helps to improve my knowledge in management/marketing sphere. It helps me to understand better. (Informant 30)

It was really nice, and I really enjoyed these lectures. It was interesting and relevant. (Informant 18)

Given the opportunity to share and communicate information through different learning platforms, students report that they feel more assured with regard to course content and course structure. Further, since we as lecturers wish to focus on access by offering the resources available at the institution e.g. academic, technological and pedagogical tools, we experience more engagement and participation amongst the students.

The focus on transparency

Access and transparency involve sharing knowledge and making it visible not only in communication from lecturer to student, but also from student to lecturer, and student to student. Digital learning management systems provide students with access to dialogues between student and lecturer or between students. Information is spread and made available, ideas are shared, and links giving access to other websites are open to everyone.

Students accessing the material may also present their views and feedback through various forms of dialogue, in or outside the classroom, online or offline.

In our efforts to create transparency, we have emphasized a number of activities where students are encouraged to share, e.g. in connection with work requirements, case studies or preparation for examinations. When a group presents its solution to a problem in the class, another group is invited to be opponents. Such role distribution allows the students to reflect on their own and others' ways of using theory. Initially, it is not unusual for several students to be sceptical of this form of assessment and evaluation, but it often turns out later that this particular activity creates the best discussions and the strongest involvement. Two students said:

The best parts of the course have been the interactive way of conducting the lectures. (Informant 27)

It was a really enjoyable experience (...). The very interesting and useful discussions helped me to understand the information much better. (Informant 30)

When students themselves give grades and evaluate other students' work, it is not uncommon for them to be stricter in grading than the lecturer. This helps to dispel notions of distance and difficulty in relation to theory. It can also lead to greater openness about a topic students find difficult to understand. This allows the lecturers to put in some extra effort if there are topics that the students perceive as particularly challenging.

The focus on risk/benefits

The use of the building blocks of dialogue, access and transparency always involves a risk-benefit factor (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004a, 2004b). For the consumer, it can lead to a question of different kinds of actions and decisions. And for the company, it can involve providing tools and exposing ideas and information. Being aware of risks and benefits implies a focus on the responsibilities and possibilities of a company on one hand and of a consumer on the other. In our case, the context is an educational arena. Emphasizing co-creation as part of a teaching programme involves a different preparation than a traditional lecture or a 45-minute PowerPoint presentation. The responsibility of the student is to spend time studying relevant issues and theory. While the responsibility of the lecturer is to prepare activities focusing on interaction, to include tools focusing on dialogue, and to give access to adequate information. The co-creation experience originates in the students' collaboration with the HE, and it cannot evolve without an environment that allows for co-creation experiences to happen (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). Students need to understand what is required to get the best out of the teaching. If they come to class inadequately prepared, it not only affects their own learning, but also the co-creation of value that takes place in the classroom. In an interactive lecture, with a focus on co-creation, students must take greater responsibility for their own development and learning. When students were asked how they found this way of working and studying, some comments were:

I was very involved in the learning process. It was interesting and useful. (Informant 4)

I value the combination because it gives a broader understanding of the content. (Informant 26)

It is a good way to learn, it is more interesting. (Informant 31)

The preparations made by the lecturers, and the requirement for students to participate more actively, not only seems to give them an experience of greater value, but also a better foundation for learning.

Discussion

In this study, we have been interested in studying how the value created through mutual resource exchange and co-creation, contributes to students' perceptions of learning. Moreover, we have been interested in looking into how linking disciplines of marketing and HE, contributes to new ways of thinking in a teaching-learning context. Co-creation is a form of sharing and involvement culture, where all parties can participate. Students participate with their resources; e.g. previous learning experience, knowledge and cultural background. HEIs and lecturers with their resources; e.g. organization, course design and competences. The educational arena thus involves a mutual exchange of these resources. Exley and Dennick (2009) point to students' many positive experiences of taking a more active role in their learning, and this is also one of our findings. The students said that they appreciated being challenged and involved. They valued the possibility to participate with their own knowledge. Moreover, they welcomed a teaching that emphasized communication and interaction in a learning environment focusing on co-creation experiences. 'The combination of these aspects and ways to learn are the perfect mix,' said one (informant 25). 'It's the best combination,' another pointed out (informant 28). Of course, facilitating active learning and collaboration is not a new phenomenon. A number of studies show that student involvement and active participation are crucial for learning (Bovill et al., 2011). What is new in this study, however, is the implementation of the four building blocks of co-creation as a learning strategy. Co-creation is about creating something together, which implicitly points to establishing a value and a concrete result for those involved (Dziewanowska, 2017; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b; Sivertstøl, 2016). Because students are actively motivated to be engaged, we see that not only does the value perceived individually seem important, but also that of the whole class. Sivertstøl (2016) states that it may not seem obvious that one can be interested in creating value for others than oneself, but mentions several examples of people voluntarily participating in co-creation activities where they themselves do not directly benefit from the result; the motivation for participation may be a desire to help others, to demonstrate one's own knowledge or to enjoy the opportunity to learn (Sivertstøl, 2016). Our findings support this, and show that students are happy to participate in a learning community that promotes values for others than themselves. They say the additional work involved, is worth the effort.

Referring to the four building blocks to promote co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a, 2004b), the first of these is *dialogue*, which involves sharing an interest in something, having a suitable setting for interaction, and establishing interaction points where shared engagement can grow and develop (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). Here, the teaching situation provides a suitable basis. The data display that three forms of dialogue are emphasized and encouraged: teacher-student dialogue, student-student dialogue and student-company dialogue. This is somewhat in line with former research, stressing the importance of exchange of knowledge and resources through dialogue

(Vargo & Lusch, 2017). The findings show that a good starting point for dialogue is to establish a secure environment and common ground. With groups of students with different backgrounds and experiences, it is important to try to create as little distance as possible between student and student, and between student and lecturer. This can be regarded similar to the findings of Grönroos and Ojasalo (2015) in a business-consumer context, emphasizing collaborative and dialogical interactions.

Our experience is that the use of practical business cases can be a good way to reduce distance through dialogue. In collaboration with businesses, students have similar entry positions. This provides a basis for many different interaction points, and is experienced as very positive by students. 'It helps us to memorize the material better,' said one student (informant 29). Another student said that close contact with businesses (through e.g. excursions, business visits and guest lecturers) also 'helped theory to come to life' (informant 11). Teaching is not just a matter of communicating theory or research findings, it also involves including the students as key participants in a learning community, according to Raaheim (2011). The use of business cases, which we have emphasized in our teaching, allows for the development of such learning communities, which in turn, may increase both the knowledge of a subject and the value derived. This, then, would rely on the same idea as that of consumer communities where consumers not only are well-equipped to collaborate (Karababa & Scaraboto, 2018), but also more compelled to create communities of co-creation.

Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004b) next two building blocks, *access* and *transparency*, may be taken together, and, based on our implementation of the concepts in teaching, are primarily a question of providing students with access to the same information and the necessary tools to benefit from the information. At the same time, it is important to prioritize different procedures to present and share the information the students need. This study demonstrates the importance of ensuring that students actually understand and acquire information in the way that the lecturers have intended. Cultural differences and diverse experiences of teaching suggest that misunderstandings may easily arise (Vespestad & Smørvik, 2019). It is, therefore, important to have oral and digital intercommunication from lecturer to student, from student to lecturer, and from student to student; in this way, both lecturer and student will come to realize whether and how the communication actually works. Easy access to information and transparency in communication will thus facilitate resource exchange.

The last of the building blocks Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a, 2004b) refer to is the perception of *risk/benefits*. This can be understood from the point of view of the company or of the customer, in our case the HEIs and the student. There seems to be no doubt that the HEIs and the lecturers have benefited and achieved good results from co-creation as part of teaching, even though this entails a different type of preparation than for a more traditional lecture. The use of short lecture sessions, discussion, varied forms of communication, as well as various collaborative tasks and learning activities, including business cases, all lead to greater student engagement with the subject. Further, the outcome from work requirements, examinations and essays shows that valuable learning experiences takes place. We have also received positive feedback on the students' experience of risk/benefits. They report that co-creation contribute positively to their knowledge. It is also rewarding and fun, they say. Akin to what Thompson et al. (2018) points out then, by considering students as contributors with their respective portfolio of resources

this seems to limit the perceived risk for the individual. When all students are willing to take the risk of contributing with their own resources (e.g. knowledge) the perceived (collective) benefit increases. Further, students report that they benefit from having to invest a little extra effort before, during and after the lecture sessions. Our findings show that when students and lecturers are willing to take the risk of engaging in co-creation, the perceived value of the learning outcome is prevalent. The benefits are thus reported to be important.

Conclusion

To address resource integration and to apply the four building blocks of co-creation; dialogue, access, transparency and understanding of risk/benefits to an educational context, is of course not directly comparable to an everyday company-customer relationship. But in spite of the disparities this entails, we would nevertheless argue that implementing tools from a marketing tradition functions well in an educational context, not least because of the valuable learning outcome reported by students. The concept of co-creation points at an idea that value is created in interaction, and the more effort and interest one invests in a co-creation process, the greater the likelihood of memorable and positive experiences (Mathis et al., 2016; Prebensen, Woo, Chen, & Uysal, 2013). Through our study of students' efforts to participate in a variety of co-creation experiences, the data demonstrate that perceived learning takes place.

The authors are aware that this study has its limits. One limitation could be the use of a convenience sample where only certain subjects were included. Further studies could expand the number of informants, consider other subjects, and other forms of teaching. Since there is limited research on value co-creation and how it evolves in a teaching context, and even less in relation to actual learning, more research is needed to explore in-depth how students' co-creation of values and learning come about. A quantitative approach measuring change in knowledge during and after the implementation of co-creation experiences may exhibit findings demonstrating how actual learning takes place, and the use of an experimental design could be applied to gain even more insight into co-creation in learning. A transformative service research perspective (Anderson & Ostrom, 2015; Kuppelwieser & Finsterwalder, 2016) could also contribute to further synthesize co-creation in HE.

This study contributes to expand upon the literature on learning experiences in HE as well as co-creation literature, as it delves into a teaching-learning context. Bringing concepts from marketing into HE is a contribution which enables an understanding of teaching and learning in a way that emphasizes resource exchange between all parties. Moreover, bringing concepts from a marketing tradition into HE gives a new angle to understand students' perceptions of learning, not least from their own perspectives on value. Adjusting teaching to a service domain that provides for an inclusive and active dialogue between all parties, has proved fruitful. One practical implication is that students see themselves as active co-creators of the goods and services provided by the HEIs, and not only as passive consumers. Another practical implication is that adapting teaching to a service domain adds knowledge of the role of value co-creation and resource integration as part of a teaching-learning context. The interdisciplinary nature of this study, combining marketing and educational perspectives, can give lecturers a new focus. By including the building blocks of co-creation; dialogue, access, transparency and the understanding of

risk/benefits, our study shows that the implementation of these marketing aspects can prove viable. The main contribution is, therefore, that our study bridges the disciplines of marketing and HE, by proposing a new conceptual apparatus and an alternative way of thinking that focuses on co-creation of value in a teaching-learning domain. We may thus expect learning through co-creation to play an important role in the adaptation of universities to the experience society.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the editors and the anonymous reviewers for their help in developing this article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

May Kristin Vespestad  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2100-8146>

References

- Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 377–392). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Anderson, L., & Ostrom, A. L. (2015). Transformative service research: Advancing our knowledge about service and well-being. *Journal of Service Research*, 18(3), 243–249.
- Arum, R., & Roksa, J. (2011). *Academically adrift: Limited learning on college campuses*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bailey, J. J. (2000). Students as clients in a professional/client relationship. *Journal of Management Education*, 24(3), 353–365.
- Ballantyne, D., & Varey, R. J. (2006). Creating value-in-use through marketing interaction: The exchange logic of relating, communicating and knowing. *Marketing Theory*, 6(3), 335–348.
- Beirão, G., Patrício, L., & Fisk, R. P. (2017). Value cocreation in service ecosystems: Investigating health care at the micro, meso and macro levels. *Journal of Service Management*, 28(2), 227–249.
- Biggs, J. (1999). What the student does: Teaching for enhanced learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 18(1), 57–75.
- Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university: What the student does* (4th ed.). Berkshire: Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.
- Binkhorst, E., & Dekker, T. D. (2009). Agenda for co-creation tourism experience research. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 18(2–3), 311–327.
- Boswijk, A., Peelen, E., & Olthof, S. (2012). *Economy of experiences*. Amsterdam: Pearson Education Benelux.
- Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., & Felten, P. (2011). Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design, and curricula: Implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 16(2), 133–145.
- Campbell, C. M., & Cabrera, A. F. (2011). How sound is NSSE? Investigating the psychometric properties of NSSE at a public research-intensive institution. *The Review of Higher Education*, 35(1), 77–103.
- Campos, A. C., Mendes, J., Oom do Valle, P., & Scott, N. (2018). Co-creation of tourist experiences: A literature review. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 21(4), 369–400.
- Cassidy, S. (2004). Learning styles: An overview of theories, models, and measures. *Educational Psychology*, 24(4), 419–444.

- Chalcraft, D., Hilton, T., & Hughes, T. (2015). Customer, collaborator or co-creator? What is the role of the student in a changing higher education servicescape? *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 25(1), 1–4.
- Clothier, A. T., & Matheson, D. (2019). Using co-creation as a pedagogic method for the professional development of students undertaking a BA (Hons) in education studies. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(6), 826–838.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dean, A. M., Griffin, M., & Kulczynski, A. (2016). Applying service logic to education: The co-creation experience and value outcomes. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 224, 325–331.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Dollinger, M., Lodge, J., & Coates, H. (2018). Co-creation in higher education: Towards a conceptual model. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 28(2), 210–231.
- Dolmans, D. H. J. M., Loyens, S. M. M., Marqu, H., & Gijbels, D. (2016). Deep and surface learning in problem-based learning: A review of the literature. *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, 21, 1087–1112.
- Dziewanowska, K. (2017). Value types in higher education – Students' perspective. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 39(3), 235–246.
- Entwistle, N. (2009). *Teaching for understanding at university: Deep approaches and distinctive ways of thinking*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Exley, K., & Dennick, R. (2009). *Giving a lecture: From presenting to teaching* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fleischman, D., Raciti, M., & Lawley, M. (2015). Degrees of co-creation: An exploratory study of perceptions of international students' role in community engagement experiences. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 25(1), 85–103.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research* (6th ed.). London: Sage.
- Franz, R. S. (1998). Whatever you do, don't treat your students like customers. *Journal of Management Education*, 22(1), 63–69.
- Grönroos, C., & Ojasalo, K. (2015). Service productivity as mutual learning. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, 7(2/3), 296–311.
- Grönroos, C., & Ravald, A. (2011). Service as business logic: Implications for value creation and marketing. *Journal of Service Management*, 22(1), 5–22.
- Grönroos, C., & Voima, P. (2013). Critical service logic: Making sense of value creation and co-creation. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 41(2), 133–150.
- Guilbault, M. (2016). Students as customers in higher education: Reframing the debate. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 26(2), 132–142.
- Guneriussen, W. (2012). Opplevelsessamfunnet – en vidunderlig ny verden? Kulturelle spenninger i det senmoderne samfunnet [The experience society: A wonderful new world? Cultural tensions in late modern society]. *Sosiologisk Årbok*, 2, 41–69.
- Hartley, J. (1998). *Learning and studying: A research perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Hermann, K. J., & Bager-Elsborg, A. (2014). *Effektiv holdundervisning: En håndbog for nye undervisere på universitetsniveau [Effective class teaching: A handbook for new university teachers]*. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.
- Holbrook, M. B. (1999). Introduction to consumer value. In B. Holbrook (Ed.), *Consumer value: A framework for analysis and research* (pp. 1–28). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jaakkola, E., Helkkula, A., & Aarikka-Stenroos, L. (2015). Service experience co-creation: Conceptualization, implications, and future research directions. *Journal of Service Management*, 26(2), 182–205.
- Jaakkola, E., Meiren, T., Witell, L., Edvardson, B., Schäfer, A., Reynoso, J., ... Weitlaner, D. (2017). Does one size fit all? New service development across different types of services. *Journal of Service Management*, 28(2), 329–347.
- Karababa, E., & Scaraboto, D. (2018). Consumer-produced, emergent, and hybrid markets. In E. J. Arnould & C. J. Thompson (Eds.), *Consumer culture theory* (pp. 107–125). London: Sage.
- Kuppelwieser, V. G., & Finsterwalder, J. (2016). Transformative service research and service dominant logic: Quo vaditis? *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 28, 91–98.

- Loyens, S. M. M., Gijbels, D., Coertjens, L., & Coté, D. (2013). Students' approaches to learning in problem-based learning: Taking into account students' behavior in the tutorial groups, self-study time, and different assessment aspects. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 39*(1), 23–32.
- Lumpkin, A., Achen, R. M., & Dodd, R. K. (2015). Student perceptions of active learning. *College Student Journal, 49*(1), 121–133.
- Marton, F., & Säljö, R. (1976). On qualitative differences in learning: I – Outcome and process. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 46*(1), 4–11.
- Mathis, E. F., Kim, H. L., Uysal, M., Sirgy, J. M., & Prebensen, N. K. (2016). The effect of co-creation experience on outcome variable. *Annals of Tourism Research, 57*, 62–75.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Ng, I. C. L., & Forbes, J. (2009). Education as service: The understanding of university experience through the service logic. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 19*(1), 38–64.
- Oppermann, M. (2000). Triangulation – A methodological discussion. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 2*(2), 141–146.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004a). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 18*(3), 5–14.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004b). *The future of competition: Co-creating unique value with customers*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing.
- Prebensen, N. K., Vittersø, J., & Dahl, T. I. (2013). Value co-creation significance of tourist resources. *Annals of Tourism Research, 42*, 240–261.
- Prebensen, N. K., Woo, E., Chen, J. S., & Uysal, M. (2013). Motivation and involvement as antecedents of the perceived value of the destination experience. *Journal of Travel Research, 52*(2), 253–264.
- Raaheim, A. (2011). *Læring og undervisning [Learning and teaching]*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Ramsden, P. (2003). *Learning to teach in higher education*. London: Routledge.
- Saunders, D. B. (2015). They do not buy it: Exploring the extent to which entering first-year students view themselves as customers. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 25*(1), 5–28.
- Sivertstøl, N. (2016). Samskaping av tjenester: Fire måter kunder skaper verdi på [Co-creation of services: Four ways customers create value]. *Magma, 7*, 64–73.
- Smørvik, K. K. (2014). *Opplevelsesskaping i dynamiske opplevelsesrom: En studie av turistenes opplevelser på Hurtigruten [Experience creation in dynamic experiential spaces: A study of tourists' experiences on the Norwegian Coastal Steamer]*. Bodø: University of Nordland.
- Smørvik, K. K., & Vespestad, M. K. (2017). Co-creating cross-border learning experiences. *Lumen, 2*, 21.
- Thompson, C. J., MacInnis, D., & Arnould, E. J. (2018). Conclusion: Linking CCT and consumer research: Consumers' mobilization of co-created resources. In E. J. Arnould & C. J. Thompson (Eds.), *Consumer culture theory* (pp. 318–346). London: Sage.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing, 68*, 1–17.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). From goods to service(s): Divergences and convergences of logics. *Industrial Marketing Management, 37*(3), 254–259.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2017). Service-dominant logic 2025. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 34*, 46–67.
- Vespestad, M. K., & Clancy, A. (2019). Service dominant logic and primary care services. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences, 11*(1), 127–140.
- Vespestad, M. K., Lindberg, F., & Mossberg, L. (2019). Value in tourist experiences: How nature-based experiential styles influence value in climbing. *Tourist Studies, 19*(4), 453–474.
- Vespestad, M. K., & Smørvik, K. K. (2019). Co-creation as a tool to overcome cross-cultural differences in educational experiences? *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education*. forthcoming. doi:10.1080/10963758.2019.1685391.
- Wardley, L. J., Bélanger, C. H., & Nadeau, J. (2017). A co-creation shift in learning management: Work design for institutional commitment and personal growth. *Higher Education, 74*, 997–1013.
- Woodall, T., Hiller, A., & Resnick, S. (2014). Making sense of higher education: Students as consumers and the value of the university experience. *Studies in Higher Education, 39*(1), 48–67.