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Controlling the Uncontrollable

Co-control as a way to govern value co-creation

by

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Abstract

Title: Controlling the Uncontrollable: Co-control as a way to govern value co-creation

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Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to tackle the paradox of governing free labour by exploring and drawing further understanding to the co-creation process in online brand communities.

Originality: This study is the first to investigate co-creation from the theoretical perspective of the production of space and the first to introduce the concept of co-control in regards to the management of co-creation.

Methodology: A critical netnography of two online brand communities (Dell and Spotify) was conducted to observe how the co-creation process is governed. A qualitative research strategy with an abductive approach was chosen, due to the exploratory nature of the study as it aims to build an improved understanding of the social phenomenon.

Findings: The analysis of the empirical material extracted three major control mechanisms (1) discourse, (2) zones and spatial architectonics, (3) and the reward system. The control mechanisms have the ability to construct multiple layers of control, facilitating the passing down of power, which led to the development of the co-control concept. This new concept encompasses the passing down of power, made possible through spatial architectonics and the intermingling of the control mechanisms, thereby mobilising individuals to control themselves and their peers.

Theoretical Implications: The findings of this study add to the discussion of governmentality in regards to value co-creation. The study further strengthens previous literature of value co-creation in relation to consumer empowerment being a prerequisite for immaterial labour, thereby stressing the importance of finding the correct degree of control. The concept of co-control opens up for exploring how unobtrusive control is utilised or can be utilised through spatial architectonics in other contexts.

Practical Implications: This study provides practical tools to handle the paradox of governing the co-creation process in a non-authoritative manner. The study thereby demonstrates how organisations can approach the balance between control and freedom, by controlling the uncontrollable through co-control and control mechanisms.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Technological advancements have changed the way individuals are consuming and producing, thereby changing the nature of the relationship between consumers and firms. The internet has led consumers to become more informed and knowledgeable. As the opportunities in cyberspace to share knowledge and exchange information are endless, many empowered consumers intend to share their experiences, opinions, and feedback directly with organisations (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). Society has thereby seen a transition towards a more “participatory culture” (Jenkins, Ford & Green, 2013, p.293), which explains why increasingly more companies are eagerly seeking to collaborate with their end-consumers. Instead of excluding consumers in innovation or product development processes, companies have refined consumers into more active participants (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000, 2002, 2004a). The change in the role of the consumer has completely altered the way in which organisations interact with consumers nowadays. Innovation challenges, competitions, and crowdsourcing projects are all examples of ways companies are capitalising on the social production, in other words the immaterial production, that results from the active consumers (Arvidsson, 2008). This company-consumer interaction is essentially what triggers the production of co-created value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a).

This creation of joint value, between the consumer and company, has been coined by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a) as co-creation. At the core of this concept lie the personalised experiences that the end-consumers are actively constructing themselves, as well as the levels of engagement and interaction (Bendapudi & Leone 2003; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). The development of company managed online communities and digital arenas are environments set up to facilitate the co-creation process and enable brands to more closely engage with their consumers (Bhalla, 2016; Füller, Matzler & Hoppe, 2008) and to give them the space necessary to construct their experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). Aside from constructing suitable environments for the process, organisations have begun to search for suitable co-creation tactics to implement (Fujita, Harrigan & Soutar, 2017).

In today’s postmodern society individuals seem to prefer to consume based on experience rather than on functionality (Fisher & Smith, 2011). The communities are able to bring together passionate and interested consumers, who act as change agents (Prpić, Shukla, Kietzmann & McCarthy, 2015) in the collaborative process. Consumption communities as such play a big role in the production of free labour, resulting from the working consumer, and thereby establish themselves to be a valuable resource for brands (Cova & Dallı, 2009). Positive benefits can be yielded if companies empower their consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a) and effectively integrate them in their co-creation process. From a managerial perspective co-creation can pave the way to a competitive advantage (Ramaswamy, 2008), reduce development costs, and appropriate surplus value (Marx, 1973; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). Consumers are essentially a free resource to firms as many

of them are less motivated by monetary terms and more driven by self-realisation (Arvidsson, 2008). The customer value on the other hand lies within the improved brand experiences and services (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). Moreover, co-creating consumers can build new friendships and earn respect amongst the online communities (Arvidsson, 2008). Given the participatory culture, the community platforms, and the necessary virtual tools needed to contribute (Füller, 2010) co-creation has established itself as a value adding process.

Many have focused on managing brands and consumer engagement in online brand communities (Wirtz, den Ambtman, Bloemer, Horváth, Ramaseshan, van de Klundert, Canli, & Kandampully, 2013), however the management of co-creation deserves more attention in order to enhance the understanding of how the process itself is managed. The literature regarding how value co-creation is governed in online brand communities is limited, and this research aims to extend upon this by taking on a critical management perspective. The study focuses on the usage of spatial structures within online brand communities with the purpose of governing and directing value co-creation. Elements of Lefebvre's (1974) concept of the production of space and de Certeau's (1980) spaces and places will be employed to investigate how spatial structures guide the free labour, community members' involvement and the overall co-creation process.

1.2 Thesis Outline

This research study begins with a literature review of value co-creation, from two opposing perspectives, and brand management. This is then followed by a critique of the existing literature where the topic of the study is problematised. A detailed description and motivation of the methodological approach and research strategy will be presented. Next, the theoretical framework will be introduced, where the theory of production of space is conceptualised. In the analysis chapter the empirical findings of the two online brand communities will be presented, interpreted, and compared. The thesis finishes with the key findings and conclusions deduced from the empirical results, the study's contributions, and makes suggestions on areas of interest for further research.

1.3 Previous Research

To better understand the discussions within the literature of value co-creation, the positive managerial and critical marketing perspective will be reviewed. The opposing perspectives produce a deeper insight into the field of study. Existing literature on brand management complements the preceding stream, whilst developing the understanding of its interconnectivity to value co-creation and the applicability for the context of the study.

1.3.1 Value Co-Creation

First introduced and developed by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000, 2002, 2004a), the term value co-creation changed the traditional marketing system in which consumers were initially external to the value creation. Instead, value co-creation has acknowledged the consumer's active and significant role in the value creation process (Pongsakornrunsilp & Schoeder, 2011). Since its introduction many researchers have delved into the field of value co-creation indicating the growing interest of the phenomenon. As a result, two substreams of literature were formed which have an ongoing debate on whether value co-creation should be viewed as positive or critical for society (see Fisher & Smith, 2011; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Zwick, Bonsu & Darmody, 2008). To fully familiarise oneself with the topic it is essential to consider both substreams.

Positive Managerial Perspective

The positive managerial perspective treats the phenomenon as a positive societal element, which increases the value for both the company and the consumer. This substream emphasises how value co-creation benefits the consumer, by allowing “the customer to co-construct the service experience to suit her context”, and includes a collective effort in defining and solving problems (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a: p. 8). The co-construction of personalised experiences lies at the heart of the co-creation process (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). Marketing has seen a shift towards the mindset of service-dominant logic, a logic that adopts a process orientation and embraces the concept of value co-creation (Merz, He & Vargo, 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). It has been emphasised that this shift not only empowers the consumer, but creates value in a mutually-beneficial manner (Grönroos, 2009). The move from tangible to intangible has promoted co-creation into a fundamental aspect of the service-dominant logic, in which consumers' involvement in the process is of high importance (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Fisher and Smith (2011) furthermore argue that the consumers' willingness to tackle and work on fixing the flaws of the brand becomes more apparent when involving them. This can be explained as consumers' view brands as an experience, which is being co-created by both parties (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). The inclusion of consumers in the process has thus underlined the need for the company to enable the empowerment of consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). They further introduce the building blocks of interactions for co-creation of value, which Hatch & Schultz (2010) relate to the concept of branding, where they conclude that brands should allow society to regain control to enhance the value co-creation process.

Lury (2004) stresses the necessity for organisations to reach a balance between freedom and control, as over controlling the co-creation process could lead to a decrease in quality of the immaterial labour. Through tools such as customer management and dynamic platforms, organisations can trigger consumer creativity within the community (Lury, 2004) and subtly guide the value creation in the preferred direction (Arvidsson, 2006). Fisher and Smith (2011) go on to agree that companies need to relinquish control in order for the consumers to hold on to the brand, and emphasise that the brands should provide the materials needed for the consumers to create value. Similarly, O'Hern and Rindfleisch (2010) reiterate that

organisations must find a balance between openness and authority. In relation to the managerial authority in the co-creation process O'Hern and Rindfleisch (2010) have introduced four types of co-creation which entail differing levels of control. The four types of co-creation range from the pure consumer freedom to complete company control: collaborating, tinkering, co-designing, and submitting. Dahl and Moreau (2007) add to the discussion by arguing that giving consumers more autonomy fosters their creativity and their motivation to engage in the process. Moreover, the authority overshadowing the process must be loosened in order for co-creation to become indispensable and achieve its full potential (Cook, 2008).

Critical Marketing Perspective

According to Zwick et al. (2008) the marketing and management techniques of value co-creation and the service-dominant logic are ways in which control over consumers and the market is exercised. They argue that the "co-creation economy" (p.166) capitalises on the free labour generated by the consumers. The critical marketing perspective thereby sees value co-creation as a new form of capitalism, and regards it as a process where consumers are exploited for their intellectual capital (Cova, Dalli & Zwick, 2011; Foster, 2007).

To both facilitate and guide consumer activities, managers employ dynamic platforms, which enable them to guide the activities in their desirable direction (Lury, 2004; Zwick et al. 2008). Working consumers, as phrased by Cova and Dalli (2009) portray those consumers who immaterially add cultural and affective value to the market offering and ultimately drive the value creation (Hardt & Negri, 2004). Any individual who is unaware of his or her creative contribution to the market is considered a working consumer (Cova & Dalli, 2009) and viewed as an "operant resource" (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p.2). As soon as the outcomes of such immaterial labour are appropriated for surplus value, the issue of double exploitation arises (Cova & Dalli, 2009). They go on to explain that double exploitation is where consumers are not paid for their contribution and cooperation and in addition are required to pay a premium price for the goods or services that they co-created. As it is believed that the co-created value is higher than standardised products a premium price is charged (Cova & Dalli, 2009), thereby associating value co-creation with a new form of capitalism (Zwick et al. 2008). Researchers further argue that the double exploitation of consumers can be seen as a threat to the value co-creation process as the trust between company and consumer is broken (Cova & Dalli, 2009).

Zwick et al. (2008) critically approach the notion of value co-creation and see this marketing technique as a new form of control. They go on to call it a "sophisticated technology of government" (p.182) through which the productive and creative labour is exploited and consumers are controlled. The same authors draw parallels between governmentality and co-creation and argue that firms use governmentality to administer and supervise the consumption. Rose (1999) has previously said that a bottom up approach enables the managing of the supposedly free consumers and their activities. Other academics echo this critical view of co-creation and add that the concept is used to restrict the co-creating consumer's freedom through the predetermined and prescribed ways of the organisation (Arvidsson, 2006; Lury, 2004) and thereby ultimately exploit their consumers. Based on the

reviewed literature within the critical perspective, co-creation seems to be a capitalist driven process that facilitates the production of creative labour, seeking monetary value and benefits.

1.3.2 Brands in the postmodern society

According to Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998), the shift in society from modern to postmodern has had a significant impact on how brands are perceived by consumers. The traditional behaviour decision theory suggested that consumers purchased brands based on rationality and available information (Bettman, 1986), whereas consumer culture theory suggests how brands are used to construct an identity (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998).

This change in society has led to a modification of determining brand value, where Arvidsson (2005) argues that immaterial labour adds to the brand value. Brand management is thereby increasingly employing techniques where consumers are encouraged to engage in labour activities (Arvidsson, 2005). Fisher and Smith (2011) reason that traditional brand management still needs to adjust to the postmodern society as it currently neglects the consumer's perception of brands. They claim that this can be accomplished by developing the brand as an open source where consumers are free to create meaningful interactions and experiences (Fisher & Smith, 2011). This bottom up approach invites consumers to construct their own unique meanings of the brand, and thereby enhance the authenticity of the brand, adding to the brand value (Arvidsson, 2005). The bottom up approach is similar to Lury's (2004) argument of seeing the brand as an interface where communication develops the properties of the brand. She sees the surface of the brand as a meeting point where producers and consumers intermingle and collaborate to develop those properties. The brand is thus constructed through the exchange of communication between the inner environment, the organisation, and the outer environment, the consumers (Simon, 1996).

According to Elliot & Wattanasuwan (1998), consumers are what they own, and consumption itself carries a symbolic meaning for the individual. Researchers have thus acknowledged a change in society towards a more participatory culture (Jenkins et al. 2013), as consumers wish to partake in the process when the properties of the brand are formed. They furthermore conclude that consumers, regardless the level of engagement and whether consumers are collaborating or resisting, are engaging in public work.

Researchers have uncovered how members of online brand communities engage in the value co-creation process by participating in new product development (Füller, Bartl, Ernst & Muhlbacher, 2006). Later research emphasised the role of the community as being important in terms of both cultural and affective resources, and thus acts as a type of brand curator (Cova & Dalli, 2009). Fisher and Smith (2010) argue that in order to enhance value co-creation, consumers should be given the relevant resources needed to partake. These resources could, according to Füller et al. (2006) and Hatch and Schultz (2010), be an online brand community where the consumers are free to engage in communication with the brand and other members. Fisher and Smith (2011) further argue that value co-creation thrives better when the control over consumers are loosened. This loosening of control is possible in online

brand communities and their platforms used, therefore establishing them to be the suitable context in which this research study will be conducted.

1.4 Problematization

The existing literature on value co-creation highlights the ongoing debate between the positive managerial perspective and the critical marketing perspective in which value co-creation is either viewed as a quality enhancing process or as a capitalist and exploitative technique. Practitioners and academics have so far studied the mutual benefits yielding from the exchange, the empowerment of consumers through the process (Grönroos, 2009; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000, 2002, 2004a; Vargo & Lusch, 2004), the different forms of co-creation (O'Hern & Rindfleisch, 2010), and that autonomy is required within the process (Dahl & Moreau, 2007; Fisher & Smith, 2011). Opposing research has investigated the exploitation of the working consumers, the restrictive and capitalist nature of co-creation (Cova & Dall'Aglio, 2009; Zwick et al. 2008), and the platforms used to guide consumer activities (Arvidsson, 2006; Lury, 2004). The benefits of free consumer labour have been discussed and the need to supervise it has been recognised, however no research has thus far explicitly explored how the free labour and co-creation is governed within the context of online communities.

A few studies have discussed governmentality and bottom up government in relation to the controlling of free labour (Rose, 1999; Zwick et al. 2008). Governmentality in regard to value co-creation has thus far been investigated by Zwick et al. (2008), and Bertilsson and Cassinger (2011), but requires more attention. Arvidsson (2006) spoke of governing productive autonomy through the means of empowerment, which was further developed by Bertilsson and Cassinger (2011), who brought forth the idea of governing consumers through freedom. The importance of managing free labour and co-creation has been acknowledged from a macro level, existing literature has however neglected to see how this is done at a micro level. Apart from Payne, Storbacka, Frow & Knox (2009) who state that co-creation can be managed through the selected channels, the topic of how and through what mechanisms the co-creation process is managed in practice has been understudied by scholars. This gap in the literature has awakened the researchers interest and has led them to introduce the following research question:

RQ: How is value co-creation and free labour governed in online brand communities?

Intrigued by Bertilsson and Cassinger's (2011) discussion on governing consumers through freedom, it inspired the authors of this research study to extend on this topic. With the abovementioned research question, this study will critically approach the governance of value co-creation through the application of a theoretical lens, the production of space and places (de Certeau, 1980; Lefebvre, 1974), thereby focusing on the spatial architectonics of the communities. Delving into this understudied topic this research aims to improve the understanding of how the value co-creation in online communities is managed by brands and uncover how this autonomous process and free labour is guided by spatial structures.

The governing of a process that is intended to be autonomous and free from company control creates a paradox. Immaterial labour, as recognised by previous scholars should be initiated by consumers and experienced as free from company authority (Cook, 2008; Dahl & Moreau, 2007). This issue of controlling the uncontrollable free labour lies at the core of governing value co-creation. Fisher and Smith (2011), amongst others have stressed the importance for organisations to reach a balance between freedom and control, as an imbalance of too much control might drive consumers away. Whether such balance exists in reality, and exactly how it can be achieved has yet remained unanswered. The researchers of this study strive to incorporate this paradox in the findings of this study. Thus far the paradox has not been at the forefront of the previous literature, however the researchers regard it as an imperative facet of the governance of co-creation.

The relevance of the chosen paradox lies in its applicability to the overall society. Controlling individuals is seen as a taboo subject that closely links to capitalism and has in the past triggered a tension between labour and society. Attempts to minimise this tension have proven to be a challenge as one side is bound to benefit more than the other. It is of significant relevance to tackle this tension as it holds the potential to damage the company-customer relationship. From a governmental perspective, the ability to control individuals unobtrusively can prove useful for upholding peace and order. Letting individuals being perceived as free agents in the process of controlling, allows society to shape the norms and rituals, thus constructing a stable and guiding environment. On a business level, brand managers wish to continue to capitalise on the immaterial labour and benefit from the creative collaboration, while maintaining the consumers trust. Breaking that trust through openly exploiting consumers can be problematic for organisations as it could lead to consumer resistance. Finding a way or practice through which they can handle this paradox would enable them to continue appropriating surplus value. Despite the development of a participatory culture consumers do not want to feel exploited. From a broader perspective this paradox and the governing of individuals and their immaterial labour, is relevant on several levels. The findings of this study thereby strive to be applicable, not only in the context of online brand communities, but also on a governmental and societal level.

1.4.1 Purpose

Given the growth of the managerial and societal relevance in the area of value co-creation over the past years, the purpose of this study is to tackle the paradox of governing free labour by exploring and drawing further understanding to the co-creation process in online brand communities. The purpose strives to provide a solution to how consumers can be unobtrusively controlled, thereby creating an autonomous environment in which consumers feel free, and where both parties yield benefits from the process of co-creation. The research intends to uncover the control mechanisms utilised by brands by investigating two brand communities through the theoretical lens of spatial production. To achieve the purpose, this thesis will (a) provide insight on how immaterial labour is guided in a non-authoritative manner, (b) reveal types of control mechanisms resulting from the predetermined spatial

structures within each community, and (c) present a solution on how the managerial paradox can be handled.

1.5 Intended Contributions

This research will extend on the existing literature of value co-creation by bringing in a new theoretical perspective to the discussion, thus contributing to the present understanding of how co-creation is managed. The theoretical perspective of the production of space and place, enables for value co-creation to be studied from an angle that has yet been unexplored. This will moreover lead to a unique understanding of which control mechanisms organisations are utilising to drive immaterial labour in the preferred direction and drive co-creation to reach its full potential. This study furthermore brings attention to the managerial paradox and contributes by exposing how and which types of control mechanisms are used to handle this paradox. The contributing findings are both theoretical as well as practical, as the identification of such control mechanisms could facilitate organisations in practice to direct immaterial labour in a non-authoritative manner. Lastly, the introduction of the co-control concept will explain how the passing down of power mobilises individuals to control one another.

2 Methodology

This chapter will introduce and argue for the chosen methodological approach of the study. The ontological and epistemological departure points are followed by the research strategy, which includes the critical netnography that this study takes on. An overview will be given on how the empirical material will be collected and analysed. And lastly, the quality of the study will be reflected on and ethical issues will be considered.

2.1 Research Philosophy

Within social science, researchers need to reflect upon the chosen research philosophy by considering assumptions regarding both the nature of science, and the nature of society (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), this reflection and the understanding of basic issues regarding epistemology and ontology is an obligation of the researchers as it contributes to the quality of the research.

The authors of this research acknowledge that multiple truths can exist, and the facts discovered during the investigation depend on the viewpoint of the observer, thus adopting a relativist ontology throughout the research (Collins, 1983; Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). This ontological departure reveals that there are several realities within the field of theory, and the facts and the researchers are interrelated (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). Furthermore, Sale, Lohfeld and Brazil (2002) suggest that multiple realities or multiple truths are based on the individual's construction of reality. The focus of this research lies within understanding the application of theory, and does thus not aim to measure the effect, which means it requires an approach to which interpretation is important.

The epistemology relates closely to the ontology, as social constructionism aims to understand a phenomenon and believe in multiple truths or no truth at all (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). The aim of the research is to enhance the understanding, and Berger and Luckman (1966) explain that reality is socially constructed and ever changing; whether over time, in different contexts, or because of geographical changes. Smith (1983) moreover concludes that there is no portrayal of reality without our minds, therefore acknowledging the observations made within this study are dependent on the researchers. The nature of the research question and the emphasis on the *how* in the question strongly implies that a social constructionist view is required. The chosen theoretical framework of the research includes the perspective of space and place, which is believed to be socially constructed (Bourdieu, 1989; de Certeau 1980; Lefebvre, 1974), meaning this research requires a social constructionist stance. Therefore, the authors acknowledge the production of space and place as a socially produced phenomenon and see reality as socially constructed.

2.2 Research Strategy

The choice between qualitative and quantitative research reflects back on the aim and the purpose of the research (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015; Saunders et al. 2009). This research is destined to be qualitative as it is exploratory in nature, aims to provide an understanding on the governance of co-creation, and includes a social constructionist stance. The situational and interpretive elements (Stake, 2010) of a qualitative study are necessary for this research in order to gain insights on how co-creation is managed in online communities. Moreover, the ability of qualitative research to answer questions of *how* and manage non numerical information (Leung, 2015), ensures it to be the suitable research strategy for this study and the studied phenomenon.

As most qualitative studies are linked to the inductive approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011) the nature of this study initially leans more towards this approach, however the authors have opted for a mixed point of departure thereby making the approach abductive. Abduction consists of mixed characteristics of both induction and deduction (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). The characteristics become apparent in the point of departure as an abductive approach starts with both an understanding of theory and empirical material (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Since this study aims to create new knowledge by combining existing theoretical understanding of spaces and places with new empirical findings in relation to co-creation in online communities, the abductive approach caters towards the direction this study takes on. Moreover, an abductive approach facilitates this study in achieving an enhanced understanding, generate new knowledge, reveal control mechanism enabled through spatial structures, and construct theories in the field of value co-creation (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Hanson, 1958; Kolko, 2010; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Additionally, abduction acquires a perspectival approach (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009), which the authors apply through their theoretical lens.

Abduction links closely to Strauss's (1987) form of grounded theory, as it encourages researchers to enter the field of study with prior knowledge and familiarity (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Strauss (1987) stresses the importance of familiarising oneself with the research area prior to conducting it, thus by establishing an understanding of the production of space the authors followed this approach. Building upon existing theory, while simultaneously collecting and developing empirics allowed the researchers to alternate between theory and empirical material, and thereby generate new theory (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). The back and forth movement between theory and empirics engaged the researchers in an iterative research cycle, another characteristic that the abductive approach shares with grounded theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011, Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). It is thereby argued that conducting an abductive approach with iterative cycles and characteristics inspired by grounded theory, allowed for new theory to surface.

2.2.1 Netnography

In order to capture the phenomenon and fully comprehend how co-creation in online brand communities is managed, a qualitative method that specialises in studying communities and communication in an online context is required (Kozinets, 2010). Internet research methods have in previous years gained popularity and firmly established themselves as an unobtrusive research method that brings light to hidden practices (Hine, 2011). As the study lies within the context of online communities, it aims to answer the research question by analysing online platforms and cyberspaces, which according to virtual ethnography are valid field sites (Hine, 2000). The internet provided the researchers with an additional platform and source from which empirics could be collected from (Bertilsson, 2014) and as online interactions are gaining more attention in today's digitalised world, netnography is a method that makes use of this computer-mediated communication (Kozinets, 1998).

Extending from ethnography, netnography is a qualitative method that seeks to understand consumer cultures and behaviours in an online context (Kozinets, 1998). Netnography, an interpretive method, can capture and enable insights into the "naturally occurring behaviour" (Kozinets, 2002, p. 62) and produce rich and thick cultural descriptions from the collected material (Bertilsson, 2014; Geertz, 1973) of the chosen online communities. The unobtrusive and naturalistic nature of this method, allowed the authors to study the governing of co-creation and free labour without obstructing it, thereby ensuring for authentic empirics to be collected (Bertilsson, 2014; Kozinets, 2002). Being less labour intensive and inexpensive than other qualitative methods, and having the ability to quickly collect empirics (Kozinets, 2002) netnography was an appropriate method for this study given the timeframe and resources available.

Albeit stemming from consumer and marketing research, practitioners have argued that netnography can be applied to a wider field of research areas (Belk & Kozinets, 2017; Bertilsson, 2014). Aspects of critical management such as hierarchies, power, and discourses can be studied using critical netnography (Bertilsson, 2014). Given the managerial paradox, the authors sought to use netnography to further explore such critical management aspects, especially those of power and control through the means of spatial structures. The critical netnography facilitated in achieving the purpose as it enabled the research to provide an insight into how free labour is guided in a non-authoritative manner through the use of spatial practices. Furthermore, a critical netnography facilitated the researchers in gaining an increased understanding of the organisational practices within the selected online communities (Bertilsson, 2014).

2.3 Collection of Empirics

2.3.1 Source of Empirical Material

The nature of the abductive approach required both primary and secondary material to be collected. Primary empirics allowed the researchers of this study to not only produce new insights (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015), but collect material close to the research strategy and research question, thereby adding to the coherency of the findings (Hox & Boeije, 2005). The primary material in this thesis resulted from the netnography, where the co-creation, free labour, spatial structures and practices within the selected online brand communities were observed. Through non-participant observation and the unobtrusive nature of the critical netnography, the authors were able to collect non-reactive and non-intrusive material (Hox & Boeije, 2005).

The collection of secondary empirics enabled for previous literature to be compared, explored, and critiqued (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015; Hox & Boeije, 2005), hence familiarising the researchers with the topic prior to conducting the analysis. The review of previous literature in relation to the field of co-creation and the theoretical framework constituted the secondary sources, and the inclusion of secondary sources ensured that the researchers refrained from repeating theory (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). This combination of primary and secondary empirics was in line with the abductive approach, allowing the authors to build upon existing co-creation theories, whilst gathering new materials through a new theoretical lens and hence generate theory.

2.3.2 Empirical Sites

In order to best explore co-creation online and investigate the research question, two online communities with rich empirical material were chosen. Two communities instead of one allowed for comparison and thereby elevated the analysis. The flexibility of the netnographic method enabled the researchers to choose the most relevant online platforms that qualify for the study's aim. By conducting a community sweep (Kozinets, 2010), which utilised the help of search engines and relevant search terms, the authors were able to narrow down their choice of communities. Kozinets' (2010) guidelines for selecting sites were followed which required the communities to be data-rich, active, relevant, and interactive. An additional criteria set by the researchers was the need for co-creation to be present on the site and co-creation to occur between consumers and the brand. The purposive choice of empirical sites indicates a theoretical sampling approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as the material collected from these sites is critical to contribute to the field of value co-creation. This sampling strategy further adds to the interpretive rigour of the study (Toye, Seers, Allcock, Briggs, Carr, Andrews & Barker, 2013). Based on the guidelines and prerequisites as well as the theoretical sampling, the online brand communities of Dell and Spotify were chosen. Both of the communities accommodate forums and bulletin boards, which foster the exchange of rich

textual material (Kozinets, 2010), and both are public sites, thus enabling the researchers to unobtrusively observe them.

Through the unobtrusive approach, the researchers took on the roles of complete observers (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015), which enabled them to keep their reflexive distance (Bertilsson, 2014). The researchers spent a total of six weeks observing and navigating the communities to fully comprehend the co-creation process, follow the interactions, and lastly identify the spatial structures and control mechanisms in the community. As the purpose entails the investigation of how value co-creation is governed online, an unobtrusive and complete observational approach is suitable to collect the relevant material. This type of observational material, as classified by Robson (2002), is “descriptive observation” (p. 320) and primarily focuses on observing activities, settings, and processes, which align with the theoretical perspective that this study uses to analyse the material. In order to systematically observe the empirical material collected from the sites, the authors established a set of steps: (1) observe the community platform as a whole, (2) observe the spaces and spatial practices within, and (3) observe the element of co-creation and any hidden control elements within the spaces. This systematic and structured observation ensured for the empirical material to be compared (Bryman & Bell, 2011), allowing the study to detect some of the differences between the communities. The researchers believe that collecting the empirical material in this manner enabled for rich descriptions to be produced.

During and after the structured observation, empirics were taken directly from the communities without any transcription necessary, giving the researchers more time to focus on the interpretation and analysis. To adequately analyse the empirics, they were saved both in visual and textual format. The screenshots, taken with the program Paparazzi!, authentically present both the text and the visual cues of the communities (Kozinets, 2010); especially the visual cues are of importance to the study as they illustrate the spatial architectonics, control mechanisms, and free labour amongst the communities. Theoretical sampling was once again employed when selecting interactions and comments that showcased creative labour. In total, 60 posts and 501 comments were collected over a period of six weeks, giving the authors a substantial foundation for analysing how the co-creation process and free labour were managed.

2.4 Empirical Analysis

The analytical processes of classification and abstraction, two qualitative research methods proposed by Kozinets (2002) and Spiggle (1994), were used to approach the empirics. Kozinets (2010) suggests three ways on how to analyse empirics resulting from netnography: coding, contextualization, and classification. Seeing as the researchers of this study decided on an abductive approach and did not fully follow the grounded theory approach, the coding analysis was inapplicable. Instead, the empirical analysis primarily focused on clustering the collected material and creating categories.

Categorisation and abstraction facilitated the researchers to extract valuable material, arrange it, and support the final conclusions that result from the empirical materials. The analytical approach enabled theory laden categories to be grouped into overarching “conceptual constructs” (Spiggle, 1994, p. 493) by abstracting themes and categories (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Moving up an abstraction ladder of theory closely resembles the bottom-up approach, a characteristic inspired by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1976). The communities were analysed separately before they were compared to one another. Comparing the empirical sites and exploring the similarities and differences further facilitated the abstraction of themes and categories (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The comparison enabled the researchers to cluster identified categories into 3 main themes, which resembled the functions of the control mechanisms. Through the continuation of abstraction, the study developed the conceptual construct of co-control. Spiggle (1994) states that overarching constructs can surface from both the collected material or from priori themes. Thus enabling the categorisation process to return to the researchers’ prior understanding and theoretical knowledge; it furthermore enabled analysis and collection to occur simultaneously.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

When conducting netnography ethical issues arise which must be acknowledged by the researchers (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). So far, there has been no clear consensus on ethical boundaries for netnography, however the research aspired to follow the concerns raised by Kozinets (2010) to ensure for an ethically conducted study. His main concerns involve the level of privacy and what constitutes informed consent.

The first concern relates to whether the sites where the empirical material was obtained are private or public. This can be determined by evaluating the number of members, sensitivity of the subject, and the entry to the community (Bertilsson, 2009). As this research focuses on value co-creation, the level of sensitivity in the material is limited, and the authors believe the studied members will remain protected throughout the study. This research collected empirics from online community forums and bulletin boards, which according to Kozinets (2010) are legal public spaces, therefore avoiding any invasion of privacy. Certain areas of the empirical sites were private and required logins to access. To act in an ethical manner, the researchers followed the sites regulations and policies (Bryman & Bell, 2011), respected the private aspects of the site, and therefore only collected publicly available content. The exclusion of the private content did not negatively impact the study’s findings as the publicly available content was sufficient enough to answer the research question and reach the aim of the study.

To protect the members' identity, it is encouraged for researchers to avoid revealing their online pseudonym and real name (Lipinski, 2006), therefore this study opted to disguise this information (Bruckman, 2006). Due to the aim of the research the authors adopted Kozinets’ (2010) minimum cloaked level of concealment, which reveals the names of the communities and allows direct quotes to be used, but changes the names and online pseudonyms of the members. Examples taken from the communities are of importance to the understanding and

answering of the research question, but through the protective actions taken to preserve the member's privacy the research poses no harm to the community (Kozinets, 2010).

The second concern raised by Kozinets (2010) relates to what constitutes informed consent online. The process of netnography includes making an entree, collecting the empirics for analysis, providing trustworthy interpretation, conducting ethical research, and member checks (Kozinets, 2002). Due to the unobtrusive approach and collection of publicly available information this study can forego the informed consent (Bertilsson, 2009) and thereby exclude the member checks.

2.6 Trustworthiness

Since qualitative research have been dismissed on the premises of validity and reliability, practitioners have argued that these concepts are unsuitable for qualitative research and introduced alternative quality assessment tools. In order to establish trustworthiness, this research accounts for the alternative assessment tools developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Those alternative assessment tools are another way of measuring and accounting for the quality of the qualitative research and include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout the research, decisions were made in order to heighten the level of quality within the study.

As the research focuses on understanding the chosen phenomenon, the only credible way to investigate the matter at hand is at the location where the phenomenon appears. The choice of online brand communities thus levels the quality in terms of credibility (Mason, 2002), as the research aims to observe the spatial structures and identify the control mechanisms in this specific context.

Transferability of the research, relates to the generalisation of the research to other contexts, and can be obtained through aggregation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). As the research aims for a more in-depth understanding the transferability can be questioned. However, according to Kvale (1994) who has recognised a shift from generalisation towards contextualisation in postmodern culture, more emphasis is now placed on the contextuality of knowledge, which this research provides. As an attempt to increase the transferability of the study, the authors chose two online brand communities to compare, thereby strengthening the theoretical findings. The analytical discussion within the context of online brand communities is an attempt to start a discussion regarding spatial architectonics in terms of value co-creation and immaterial labour in other contexts as well. Within the analysis, the authors draw parallels from the chosen context to organisational studies by Sewell (1989) and Fleming and Sturdy (2010) to display one way of transferring the theoretical findings, which thereby enhance the overall transferability of the study.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), if the same phenomenon is observed twice, two different things are measured, and emphasising the context of the study can enhance the dependability. In order for the study to account for dependability, it is crucial to reflect upon the changes within the context and the impact this may have had on the research (Trochim,

2006). The authors acknowledge that the chosen communities may or may not exist in the future, but emphasise the current stability of the platforms and the level of consumer activity within. The researchers recognise the dynamic environment within online brand communities, and stress the potential of a different outcome if the platforms are altered in the future. It is further argued that the dependability is upheld by acknowledging that conducting the analysis after changes have occurred in relation to the spatial structures, could add to the findings of this study.

Confirmability refers to the extent of which the empirical results of the research can be authenticated (Trochim, 2006). Throughout and after the analysis, the researchers employed critical subjectivity to assess the level of potential bias by being critical, self-reflexive, and aware (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Reason & Rowan, 1981). The managing of subjectivity ensures that any skepticism facing the study is eliminated and thereby establishes confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researchers furthermore acknowledge that conducting an analysis with multiple observers requires the reflection and measurement of inter-observer consistency (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Throughout the analysis, both observers conducted the empirical material collection separately, afterwards comparing the results in order to increase the confirmability. Through constant comparison and challenging the analysis and interpretation, the research was able to reach interpretive rigour (Toye et al. 2013).

All of the abovementioned quality assessment tools helped the researchers establish trustworthiness within the study, and by enclosing all empirics collected, they ensured transparency. The researchers furthermore emphasise the strength of using unobtrusive netnography, as the researchers are able to keep their reflexive distance (Bertilsson, 2014), thereby limiting the intersubjectivity of the study. Another important element regarding the quality is the ability to contribute to the social awareness and motivate social advancement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Kozinets, 2010). The study intends to enlighten not only consumers, but also managers about the paradox in focus, hence improving their individual constructions and become more aware of their social environment.

2.6.1 Reflection

According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) the level of trustworthiness of qualitative research, depends on the extent to which the researchers exhibit integrity by practicing a high degree of reflection. Due to the unobtrusive approach excluding member checks and the minimum cloaked level of concealment, the researchers became aware of the necessity to reflect upon the collected empirics.

Reflection upon the changing environment within the selected communities was crucial due to the dynamic nature of the internet. The researchers acknowledged that the rapid changes within the communities could threaten the relevance of the study, but stress the argument made by Lincoln and Guba (1985) regarding how the context can enhance dependability of the study. It is recognised that through the unobtrusive approach it is difficult to clarify if the

behaviour of the users truthfully reflected their offline behaviour. The online pseudonyms of the community members, which have been disguised, limit the authenticity of the individuals, therefore causing the researchers to approach the comments in a more critical manner. The non-participant observation risks the understanding of the underlying meanings of the behaviour, however as the consumer perspective was not applied within the study such observations were unnecessary. It is further acknowledged that the empirical material in the form of posts alone is inadequate to study the phenomenon and the researchers therefore included the spatiality and space concepts within the platform to support the findings.

3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter introduces the theoretical perspective of the production of space, which will be applied to investigate the governance of co-creation in online brand communities. Several key concepts and theories are presented in this chapter. Links are made between the production of space theory and online brand communities throughout the discussion. Lastly, the chapter ends with the conceptualisation of theory and the assumptions resulting from this.

The following theoretical perspective is an essential part of this study's method as the applied abduction constitutes a perspectival approach (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). The theory of the production of space, and spaces and places enables the research to uncover new findings in regards to how co-creation is managed in online brand communities, thereby adding to the stream of value co-creation.

Henri Lefebvre introduced the control of production and the use of space as the core of modern society, instead of the economy and the means of production, in his masterpiece *La production de l'espace* (The Production of Space). Another approach to the concept of control through space is by Michel de Certeau in *L'invention du quotidien* (The Practice of Everyday Life), where he, through the story of a man, walks the reader through the use of tactics and strategies on a macro and micro level in society. The aforementioned spatial theories make up the theoretical lens that the researchers use when approaching the collected empirical material. This enables the authors to draw parallels from the production of space theory to the spaces in online platforms, hence merging concepts that have not been combined in previous research. This theoretical framework assists in understanding how organizations govern the process of co-creation through the means of space online.

3.1 Space and Place

To fully comprehend the concept of space, distinguishing between space and place is central. According to de Certeau, a place “implies an indication of stability” (1980, p.117), thus being a constant concept, which is ruled by regulations set by the government, also known as the law of the proper. A place furthermore defines a location where space can be produced (de Certeau, 1980). He suggests that practiced places can be tactically transformed into spaces through the act of spatialising, leading to the argumentation that “space is a practiced place” (1980, p.117). Jenlink (2007) goes on to state that the element of power is an underlying component of practiced place, thereby indicating the significant degree of control that the institutions who create set places have.

3.1.1 Social space

Several philosophers have emphasised that space is socially constructed between individuals, and Lefebvre (1974) aims to clarify the term by stating that social space is the outcome of past actions, which can encourage or prohibit certain behaviour, in which the word *action* should be seen as either production or consumption. He moreover rejects the possibility of it being reduced to a simple object, and highlights the interrelation between the different things involved in their “coexistence and simultaneity” (1974, p. 73).

Lefebvre (1974) further mentions the concept of appropriation in relation to social space and states that appropriated space can be a structure, such as a site. According to him appropriated space thus becomes a natural space that is fitted to a specific group, however this can be obstructed by dominant space. It can therefore occur that instead of shaping the space in accordance to the group’s interest and needs it is shaped in the interest of the power source. This clash between dominated and appropriated space could imply that dominant space may be used by organisations as a tool to manage the co-creation spaces within an online community. Based upon this theory, it is assumed that individuals produce social space within online brand communities, through their consumption of the brand. It is furthermore suggested that the social space is practiced in a place constructed by the brand, thereby allowing the brand to encourage or limit certain behaviour which in the end could foster immaterial labour.

3.1.2 Brand as a place

Lury (2004), states that the brand itself can be seen as an interface, where the communication with consumers forms the properties of the brand. She furthermore indicates that the structure of the interface can inhibit or prohibit exchanges and thereby also behavioural actions. Combining this with Lefebvre’s (1974) social space, allows for the assumption that the online brand community is an interface, which consists of spatial dimensions instructing certain exchanges and behaviour. Arvidsson (2006) argues that brands are a form of immaterial capital, through which consumers are capitalised. He states that brands provide a context where products are consumed, thereby highlighting the space produced when consuming the brand. Moreover, he draws parallels to Goffman’s (1974) frame of action, which relates to the theory of social space (de Certeau, 1980; Lefebvre, 1974) where the brands construct the practiced place through framing.

It is therefore suggested that a brand is an interface, in which consumers and the organisation meet and construct the value of the brand, and the context in which the brand is consumed guides the consumers to engage in labour activities. The social space produced when consuming the product, is thus reflected in their actions towards the brand in the co-creation process. By framing the platform through spatial structures, brands could be able to guide the value co-creation and free labour in a wanted direction.

3.2 Spatial Architectonics and Boundaries

The architecture of space is most commonly assigned by outside actors which produces a “space of the dominant mode of production, and hence the space of capitalism” (Lefebvre, 1974, p.360). Lefebvre (1974) goes on to say that spatial architectonics and its attributes determine the behaviour within a certain space, therefore one can argue that the space constructed by brands is a strategy employed to promote and limit certain behaviour and govern the free-labour in the community. The predetermined spatial architecture is also the first element to frame the community and thereby could have the ability to direct consumers to engage in voluntary work and produce a space of work (Lefebvre, 1974), which consists of fruitful labour activities and production units.

Complementing the spatial architectonics are the spatial boundaries that limit the movement of objects and bodies within the given space (Lefebvre, 1974). Whilst de Certeau (1980) argues that frontiers and spatial boundaries result from spatial stories, Lefebvre (1974) utilises the cell membrane metaphor to highlight the boundary between external and internal space. The inner environment according to Simon (1996) is that of production, which again aligns with Lefebvre’s (1974) space of work. The inner environment of production could thus be translated to the area within the online community where co-creation happens. Zieleniec (2008) further introduces the notion of zoning the city, which uses boundaries to create areas within the city according to their consumption or production functions. Closely linked to that are what he calls gated communities that are similarly enclosed by boundaries, in which space is maintained. As it is assumed that spatial boundaries exist in an online context, online brand communities can resemble gated communities.

Lefebvre (1974) furthermore states that lines, curves, and grids within social spaces are to be considered facets of boundaries and orientation. Resulting from his discussion on spatial orientation and boundaries, he introduces four kinds of spaces: (1) accessible spaces, (2) forbidden territories, (3) places of abode, and (4) junction points. Accessible spaces and forbidden territories are of particular interest to this study as they best reflect online platforms. Accessible spaces, whilst being open to use by anyone are somewhat controlled and guided by rules, whereas forbidden territories offer only limited access to users (Lefebvre, 1974).

3.2.1 Tactics vs. Strategies

Tactics and strategies are key elements of de Certeau’s (1980) spatial practices, which have the ability to shape space and manoeuvre subjects through the predetermined spatial constructs. He illustrates the usage of strategies and tactics through the example of a walk in the city. Strategies refers to the outline of the city, such as streets and avenues that guide the pedestrian from point A to B, whereas tactics are employed by the pedestrian through shortcuts and detours to reject or comply with the strategies (de Certeau, 1980). The movements of the pedestrian are what spatialise and construct spaces in the city, however

these spatial practices are restricted by the spatial order that can either prohibit or inhibit certain actions to take place. An example of such is a fence putting an end to a pedestrians walk, whereas an open place enables more options. It can thus be assumed that within the context of online communities the members represent the pedestrians and the online platform the city in which the members roam through.

Within the predetermined spatial constructs and boundaries, a strategy that helps the pedestrians to navigate the city is required. Urry's (1992) theory of the tourist gaze, is another spatial practice that falls under the strategies employed by the city. Through the use of signs and symbols, the tourist gaze can guide where an individual looks and even direct them through the city. Names can provide an individual with a meaning and have the ability to steer pedestrians and produce paths through the outline of the city (de Certeau, 1980). In relation to online communities, spatial practices as such could frame the consumer experience and actions, and thereby also the immaterial labour. Spatial practices that involve both the movement and interaction of tangible and intangible elements constitute the production of space (Lefebvre, 1974).

3.3 The Power of Space

The abovementioned theories all suggests that space entails a degree of governmentality, which can be utilised to prohibit or inhibit certain behaviour. The following will demonstrate how the literature suggests space is used to govern behaviour, and touches upon the aspect of space as a political instrument, and the framing of disciplinary spaces.

3.3.1 Political Economy of Space

Harvey (2006, cited in Zieleniec, 2008) builds upon Lefebvre's (1974) production of space and focuses on labour power as well as capitalism's impact on spatial structures. He believes that space is produced within societies as it reflects the production and social order. He furthermore argues that spatial forms are the result of capitalism, which align with Lefebvre's (1974) argumentation of how political forces and capitalistic needs are driving the architecture and formation of spatial structures. Zieleniec (2008) summarises Harvey's argumentation by stating that capitalism produces "space and spatial structures necessary for the creation of surplus value" (p.102). This highlights the utilisation of spatial structures as a way to generate and produce surplus value aligning with the critical marketing perspective of value co-creation (Zwick et al. 2008).

Lefebvre (1979; cited in Gottdiener, 1994) furthermore argues that space can be seen as a political instrument, as he mentions that spatial dimensions aim to meet capitalist wants. According to him the state authorises and controls how the space is to be used, constructed, and maintained. He coins such controlled space as "policed space" (Lefebvre, 1979; cited in Gottdiener, 1994, p. 126) which can similarly be transferred to an online brand community

context where co-creation platforms are assumed to be controlled and supervised by the brand.

3.3.2 Disciplinary Spaces

Foucault (1977) introduces the concept of disciplinary spaces in which governmentality and the power within is operated and exercised. Space in accordance to Foucault is fundamental for power to be exerted in and is the base of community life. He thus argues that power and knowledge can be exercised through controlled spatial dimensions as well as governmentality. Disciplinary space further extends and develops disciplinary societies, which are guided by the space and their type of behaviour instilled by the spatial foundation (Foucault, 1977). One can thus draw parallels between disciplinary societies and online brand communities as both are instructed to behave in certain ways. The space that brands construct and allow the community to use will automatically instil certain mannerisms, interactions and behavioural conducts which the brand wishes to direct in regards to the co-creation process.

3.4 Conceptualisation

As an attempt to conceptualise the production of space in the context of online brand communities, the researchers have developed several assumptions by combining existing theory and literature. By combining Lefebvre's (1974) theory of social space, and Lury's (2004) view of the brand as an interface, the researchers argue that it is possible to apply the theory of space and place to the context of online brand communities. It is further argued that the users within the communities reflect the mobile elements (de Certeau, 1980) who create social space of their own by engaging in consumption and production.

The researchers argue that the social space produced when consuming a product is reflected within actions and behaviours towards the brand, leading to the assumption that through spatial structures, the brand is able to guide the value co-creation process. Parallels are furthermore drawn to Zieleniec's (2008) theory of city zoning, and the idea of an online brand community resembling a gated community. The spatial practice of zoning could be seen as a way for brands to direct the members towards a function specific area in which they can contribute. The space that brands construct for the community could have the potential to automatically instil a certain behavioural conduct.

The community is moreover assumed to be a place of work, where consumers and brands combine their efforts to co-create value. The degree of governmentality present in the dominant, policed, and disciplinary spaces cause the researchers to believe that space can be employed as a way to manage immaterial labour and thereby the co-creation process. The brand could therefore resemble a capitalist system that utilises space as a political instrument to regulate the creative labour and generate surplus value.

4 Analysis

The following chapter introduces the empirical findings whilst analysing the results simultaneously. The communities will be presented and analysed separately in regards to how they manage co-creation and free labour through the production of space. Throughout the analysis the relation to the theoretical perspective will be highlighted. The chapter continues with a combined discussion of the commonalities and differences of the communities in regards to the main control mechanisms that were identified. Lastly, the paradox discussion summarises the main findings and concludes the chapter.

Initially, it appears that both communities engage in the co-designing form of value co-creation, as it seems that users are given autonomy. However deeper observation of the communities found that the spatial structures of Dell and Spotify have led both communities to engage in the value co-creation form of tinkering (O'Hern & Rindfleisch, 2010), in which both brands have control over the contribution of value from the members, and the power to select which ideas to implement. These structures have thereby developed a restricted space, controlled by the brand in which the members are seemingly free to contribute to the creative process. When analysing the empirical material, categories were clustered to develop overarching themes related to the strategies employed by the brands. It involves the entry to the community, how users are motivated, and how the labour is framed.

4.1 Dell IdeaStorm

Two Dell communities were discovered, however due to the prerequisites set by the researchers the following analysis will only focus on the community that entails the element of co-creation. Whilst the main Dell community offers various experiences and opportunities, it is the IdeaStorm community, separated from the main community that fosters Dell's co-creation process. IdeaStorm is a platform that has been created solely for the purpose of co-creation and to engage consumers in this process (see *Appendix A*). It gives the consumer a more active role to partake in online brainstorm sessions. This community enables consumers to share their ideas, comment, and engage with other members on their ideas, vote for ideas; all of which actively involve the consumers in the value creation process. The community is divided into three main zones: Ideas, Storm Sessions, and Submit Your Idea; all of which represent a different purpose. Since its launch in 2007, IdeaStorm has fostered 26,218 ideas to be submitted and seen more than 500 of those implemented (Dell, 2007). This indicates that the community has been successful in generating ideas and input of value to both Dell and the consumer.

4.1.1 Community Entry

The empirical materials highly suggest a degree of control being implemented from the start when members sign up for the community. This is mainly done through the use of discourses¹ in which the brand displays the power it holds, and can be seen in the Terms of Use, Guidelines of the Community, and the Idea Review process within the community.

Terms of Use

Before fully entering the community, users are asked to agree to the Terms of Use, in which Dell employs legal discourses to govern and control the behaviour. The empirical material below shows how the users are waiving their right to any compensation or acknowledgement from the value produced within the community:

You also agree that we are free to use any of the Materials or any comments, information or ideas contained in any content or communication you submit to us or the Site, without notice, compensation or acknowledgement to you, for any purpose whatsoever, including but not limited to advertising and marketing, modifying the Site and developing products and services. (Dell, 2010)

This usage of legal discourse aims to claim ownership of the value created, hence waiving the members' right of intellectual property. By agreeing to the Terms of Use members give their consent for Dell to use their ideas, an illustration of how the brand is exploiting the free labour generated in this community. It is the legal discourse that readily restricts the IdeaStorm community members in their behaviour and sets the tone.

Guidelines of the Community

The Guiding Principles set by Dell are there to ensure that IdeaStorm runs smoothly and that the members act in a certain way. These principles implicitly control the way the community members act and behave throughout the co-creation process. Dell tells its members to be relevant, civil, ethical, and interesting as can be seen in the empirics below:

Be interesting – Ultimately, the value of this site is in the ideas presented and the level of discourse. All users should foster a creative and valuable exchange of ideas. (Dell, 2007)

Be yourself – The goal of IdeaStorm is to encourage the sharing and discussion of individual ideas, comments and solutions. We hope you will contribute your own ideas and comments. Please, no pitching for commercial interests. (Dell, 2007)

By setting such guidelines Dell urges its members to be creative and produce high quality ideas, that in return the brand hopes to gain surplus value from. The guidelines furthermore

¹ Discourse: A way of verbal or written communication that embeds and transmits power (Foucault, 1978)

forbid any sort of advertising to occur on the platform and aim to ensure that only relevant content is posted in order to align with their co-creation strategy. It is clearly stated how the brand wishes the users to act and clearly states which actions are unwanted.

We expect users to provide their own input and responses, as this site is a forum for ideas and is not designed for Q&A with Dell or responses to specific customer questions. (Dell, 2007)

Through the use of such regulatory discourse, Dell is able to govern and set limitations to the behaviour of the users and guide it in the preferred direction. The application of both legal and regulatory discourse enable Dell to immediately govern the free labour from the beginning onwards and assert their control.

Defining the process

The empirical findings have illustrated that the community engages in a tinkering form of co-creation. Regulatory discourse is employed in order to inform the members whether their idea has been implemented or received one of the other statuses assigned by Dell. The review process of the contributed ideas together with the discourse explicitly displays Dell's power and control when it comes to the final decision.

New: Every idea starts with this status upon submission.

Acknowledged: Every idea is read by the IdeaStorm team within 48 hours to ensure that each submission is truly an idea and it passes the Terms of Use.

Under review: The idea is being reviewed by the appropriate business team for further investigation.

Already Offered: The idea is already part of a product or service that is already offered by Dell. Ideas that receive this status will also receive a conclusion by the IdeaStorm team with a reference to where the customer can see where the idea is already offered.

Partially implemented: Some ideas are implemented in stages. Items given the status partially implemented are still available for future consideration.

Implemented: Dell has taken action and the idea has been put into production.

Not planned: There are times where an idea, although interesting, is not in line with the business plans and will not be implemented.

Archived: All ideas that have not received the status of Under Review, Partially Implemented or Implemented after six months will be given this status. These ideas will no longer be viewable on the site, however are still viewable by the Dell teams. (IdeaStorm, 2017)

While the review process in itself is allusive it is certain that Dell has the final say in the co-creation process. Despite the control that the brand articulates, the review status of each idea offers the members a degree of transparency within the process which is a key building block for co-creation interaction (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a).

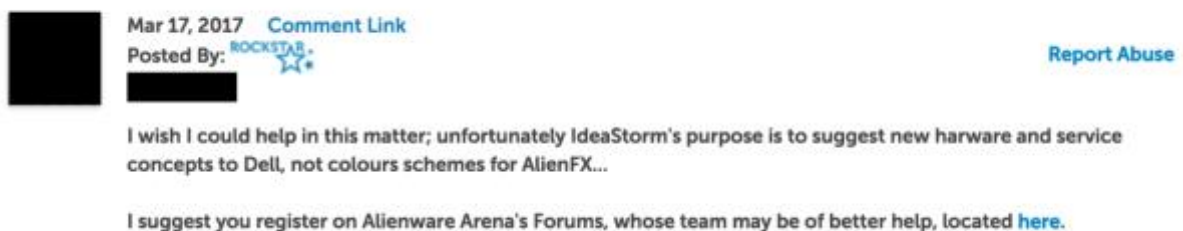
4.1.2 Motivating Users

The empirics show several strategies employed to motivate the users in generating content and value to the brand and the community itself. The two techniques employed within IdeaStorm are the promotion of members and the reward system.

Rockstars

Within this community, users can achieve a ranking based on their level of engagement. Members do not receive individual labels, instead they are awarded points. The “Top Contributors” list ranks those members with the highest number of points which have been accumulated from the number of votes casted, ideas submitted, comments posted, and activity. The ranking system encourages members to become more involved and highlights the active and vital members.

Selected members get promoted and become part of the Dell Community Rockstars, these members stand out as they have been awarded with a distinctive logo. The Rockstar Community acknowledges and celebrates influential members and promotes creative and productive behaviour amongst community members. This strategy not only incentivises other members to become more active but empowers the Rockstars to continue sharing their knowledge with Dell. The Rockstar Community in itself does not have its own space on the platform, but is rather a technique employed in the social space shaping the social dynamic within it. By appointing selective users to Rockstars allows for Dell to exploit the free consumer labour and harvest the needed behaviour that is developed through the interactions between the Rockstars and the other members. Rockstars, who have a higher degree of power than the normal users, are able to exercise this power amongst the community and help guide the behaviour of their fellow members.



Comment #2 – Dell

The above comment not only demonstrates that a user employed a tactic, using the space for other purposes than the intended one, but also shows the Rockstars power and ability to help steer that user in the right direction. Evidently, the Rockstar program is designed to motivate and incentivise members to be active and to utilise the Rockstars as a tool to internally govern the co-creation process.

Reward system

IdeaStorm members have the ability to support others by voting for their idea and leaving comments. The process of voting and receiving votes enables the community and the individuals within to self-govern to a certain extent. Through voting and frequent commenting those users who engage on a daily basis gain points, which accumulate to their symbolic capital. Symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1989) is a credit, or a point in this case, that is obtained for being recognised as an active and contributing member.

The reward system can be seen as an incentive strategy as members have social values that exceed their motivations for monetary value (Arvidsson, 2008). As consumers seem to be more concerned about their status amongst the society (Arvidsson, 2008), Dell is able to capitalise on this and employ this reward system to motivate members to continuously participate in their co-creation process. Not only does it enhance the interactivity amongst the community, but also puts the users under social pressure to submit creative ideas that are worthy of a vote by their fellow members. Active members with high point scores may eventually be promoted to Rockstars whose labour then is no longer free as they are paid in form of merchandise, events, gifts. Paying consumers for their free labour brings about the critical marketing perspective and the concept of exploitation where the value created exceeds the monetary value received (Marx, 1973). By capitalising on the consumers non-monetary motivations (Arvidsson, 2008) and paying selected users in monetary value implies that Dell is exploiting its members.

4.1.3 Framing Labour

The production of space has in the past been seen as a political instrument for the state (Lefebvre, 1979; cited in Gottdiener, 1994), which after closer observation of IdeaStorm can also be said for Dell. Through the concept of zoning, spatial boundaries, and the creation of social spaces Dell has been able to frame and exploit the free labour. Prior to analysing the labour, a distinction must be made between creative labour and functional labour. The authors view functional labour, as labour that enhances the perceived quality of the community, and limits the pressure on the community's support department by allowing assistance between members. Creative labour on the other hand is understood as the labour that contributes to value co-creation.


Zones & Spatial Boundaries


Dell's decision to create a separate platform showcases the cultivation of a gated community (Zieleniec, 2008) that operates within predetermined boundaries. The spatial frontiers and boundaries (de Certeau, 1980; Lefebvre 1974) indicate that the spatial orientation of IdeaStorm is to keep and maintain the co-creation process on a singular platform where like-minded members can work together and purely focus on product development and service ideas. The creation of such boundaries thus implies that Dell aims to facilitate innovative exchanges and foster creative behaviour. To better frame the free labour, the community consists of zones, which align with Zieleniec's (2008) concept of city zoning.

The *Ideas* zone consists of a Comments Page where members can read about recent and trending ideas posted by fellow community members, along with the implemented ideas (see *Appendix B*). This is the only space where members can directly communicate with each other. The zone offers a relaxed and energetic environment which allows members to share. The Categories list on the right-hand side helps navigate the consumers through the overwhelming amount of ideas within the space. Acting as a sign within the zone, this navigation tool helps guide the community members gaze (Urry, 1992) within the space and facilitates the paths that are taken. This space is the heart of Dell’s value co-creation process where product innovations, improvement suggestions to Dell’s service, and ideas on how to enhance the platform itself are produced. High level of activity is evident in the so far 102,000 comments, 745,904 votes, and approximately 26,000 submitted ideas (IdeaStorm, 2017). This zone is to be considered a space of work (Lefevre, 1974) as this is where the ideas are generated and creative labour is practiced. This space of work has developed itself to the communication hub between the producers and the consumers where they collectively co-create the experience of the brand, as can be seen in the example below:

ideaStorm should be more than a glorified suggestion box.

January 25, 2011
Posted By: [Redacted]
Status: *Implemented* **40** VOTES

Promote  IdeaStorm desperately needs a makeover in order to make the site successful. A new home page and content would go a long way in helping improve things. The home page needs to do more than just show the top ideas in order to make visitors want to participate. Dell could still show some of those ideas but also some of the newly posted ideas as well as other content such as the ideas in action posts, storm sessions, member spotlights and Dell product announcements. If done properly it would make the site inviting to new visitors and keep it interesting for older ones as well.



Status Update: We have changed the home page to reflect Recent and Trending idea as well as featured content in an upgrade to the site. Thank you for Posting!

Post 29 – Dell

Feb 17, 2011 [Comment Link](#)
Posted By: [REDACTED] [Report Abuse](#)

I am little bit addicted to visiting Ideastorm theseday, I think that It's amazing system but the one thing I suggest to Dell is that It's better to show how my idea's impleted. That's not enough for IdeaStorm Members to feedback "IDEA Recap" or "Commented by dell" How about showing Picture in Process of implement ideas.. something visual etc... us. ?

Jan 31, 2011 [Comment Link](#)
Posted By: [REDACTED] [Report Abuse](#)

Thanks for the comment [REDACTED] I'd be interested to see what others think could be added or changed as well.

Jan 29, 2011 [Comment Link](#)
Posted By: [REDACTED] [Report Abuse](#)

Great suggestion Cy. Internally, we (or at least I) have been focused on the longer-term evolution of the platform... but your post is a helpful reminder that IdeaStorm is social software, and we should be planning for more regular and incremental improvements.

IdeaStorm Members: What other suggestions do you have for updates to the home page?

[REDACTED]

Comments #217 #218 #219 – Dell

The *Storm Sessions* zone is a space where Dell more openly suggests and asks its members to share their experiences and ideas on a certain topic (see *Appendix C*). In comparison to the *Ideas* zone where members are open to share ideas on any topic and are the ones who initiate the conversation, the conversation in *The Storm Sessions* zone is mainly driven by Dell. Although this zone seems to have been inactive since 2014, the netnographic approach enabled the authors to view the archived material. Each topic had a designated space in which ideas were brainstormed, this structure enabled for the co-creation process to be more concentrated however also more explicitly controlled. Co-creation was accordingly steered in the wanted direction, whilst limiting the member's behaviour and only instilling certain types of ideas to be brought forth. The example below illustrates how Dell aimed to engage their members on a given topic:

Here is where the IdeaStorm community can help. We need your ideas on the kind of information you would like to see in the buying guide. Here are a couple of examples to get you started:

- The system's warranty status
- The definition of scratch and dent

Here is your chance to let us know how to make the buying guide work best for you. We look forward to reading your idea. (IdeaStorm, 2012).

The creative labour in this sense was more limited than in the *Ideas* zone, due to the control that Dell exerted through its regulatory discourse and the spatial frame in which the members were expected to produce ideas. This zone has experienced inactivity for several years, which can be due to the imbalance of control and freedom, hence highlighting the managerial paradox in practice. This imbalance demonstrates that when Dell raised its control over the

co-creation process the activity level appeared to drop, hence amounting to fewer ideas being submitted.

The *Submit Your Idea* zone is what Lefebvre (1974) would call a forbidden territory, since it is only accessible for community members (see *Appendix D*). This does not mean that the co-creation process is a forbidden territory, as the ideas and comments can openly be viewed by the public. Thus *Ideas* and *Storm Sessions* zones are accessible spaces (Lefebvre, 1974), which allow for a more open and transparent co-creation process. This zone's purpose however, is entirely for members to pitch and submit their idea to the IdeaStorm Team who then, if it passes the Terms of Use, label the idea with an "Acknowledged" status. Moreover, the submission process is further implicitly guided by the "Tips" and regulatory discourse that can be found on the right-hand side of the webpage.

Tips for Posting Your Ideas

- Choose a title that summarizes your idea
- Use the duplicate checker to avoid posting an idea that was already suggested
- Include a picture if it helps illustrate your idea
- Fully explain your idea in wording that can be easily understood
- Reply to questions or comments on your idea
- If you need assistance with Dell products please contact Dell Support for your region or post your issue on the [Dell Community Forums](#).

Tips for how to submit ideas on IdeaStorm – Dell

With the abovementioned “Tips” Dell instructs members on how to submit an idea and urges them to engage with any comments or feedbacks made to their idea. Thereby they, ensure that members act in a manner that benefits the community and the co-creation.

Social Space

In light of de Certeau’s (1980) city concept, IdeaStorm resembles the city and Dell the capitalist *government* that runs the city. The researchers identified two additional actors that are imperative to the supervision and operation of the city. The Dell moderators, distinguished through the Dell logo, represent the *law enforcement* of the city as they uphold the rules and regulations set by the government. The Rockstar members have been coined as *tour guides* due to their extensive knowledge of the brand and the platform, thereby helping to guide the members in the appropriate direction. The tour guides ensure that the *pedestrians*, community members, follow the paths set out by the government and keep them on track.

The platform, a company run place and environment, facilitates the actions between participants, whilst enabling, suggesting, and limiting certain actions. Whilst the social space is initially constructed by Dell’s political force it is also developed through the synergy of mobile elements (de Certeau, 1980), in other words the members that pass through it. As a product of Dell’s political force, the activities within the given space are more inclined to be controlled and regulated by the brand, hence embodying a degree of governmentality.

Given the predetermined spatial structure of the space, the members are limited in their movement within the community. De Certeau’s (1980) tactics and strategies can be applied to the movement of members as Dell employs certain strategies to foster the co-creation process. Through the use of names and symbols Dell is able to create a meaning for the users and steers them in the favourable direction. The passages, resulting from such tools, guide the user’s movement between zones and continues to spatialise the platform. Despite the limited social spaces available on the platform, members are still able to employ tactics and engage in rebellious behaviour that do not align with Dell’s guiding principles. In such a case, Rockstars or Dell moderators are quick to exercise their control and promptly delete or comment on any unrelated content:



Comment #3 – Dell

This example of shutting down tactics and rebellious behaviour employed by members demonstrates the degree of control Dell exercises amongst the community and how it utilises the Rockstars functional labour to their benefit.

4.2 Spotify Community

The Spotify community welcomes visitors with an overview of the amount of online members, amount of solutions, and amount of total members (see *Appendix E*). The community has roughly 6.2 million members, and accounts for 24,276 solutions (Spotify, 2017a). The community allows its members to find solutions, share ideas, and discuss and engage with other members who share the same passion for the brand and music. When entering the community, signs are used to guide the user's gaze through the community (Urry, 1992). This can be seen in the menu where the user has the option of visiting 6 zones; Welcome, Community Blog, Help, Music Chat, Rock Stars and Ideas. The names of the zones intend to give them a meaning that is familiar to the users and the use of symbols implicitly directs the passage that the user will take. Once entering a zone, the user is open to create their own passage through the space provided.

4.2.1 Community Entry

As with Dell, the Spotify brand shows the power that it holds through the use of legal discourses.

Terms of Use

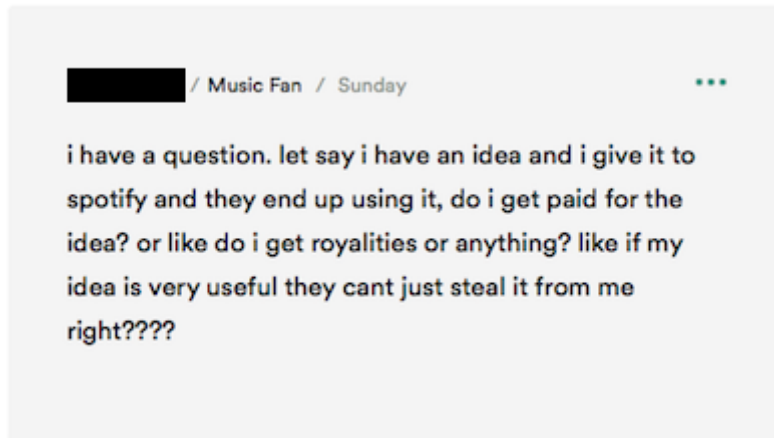
The Terms of Use is the first document the users must agree with to enter the community, and is a way to explicitly govern behaviour and manage the value co-creation process through the use of legal discourses:

This document (the "Agreement") is a legally binding agreement between you and Spotify Sweden AB, a company registered in Sweden under number 556786-5729 ("Spotify") that governs your use of Spotify's support community available at <http://community.spotify.com> (the "Spotify Support Community"). (Spotify, 2017c)

The Agreement is hence a way to govern the users and stress several points in which Spotify waves the liability and claim ownership of the content produced. As seen in the empiric below, Spotify retains the right to own the content produced within the community:

You grant the Spotify Group a non-exclusive, royalty-free, perpetual, worldwide license to use, reproduce, modify, make available to the public, publish, translate, create derivative works from and distribute any Content that you post on or otherwise provide through the Spotify Support Community and to exercise all copyright and publicity rights with respect to such Content. (Spotify, 2017c)

The empirical material suggests some members are still trying to reject this legal discourse by showing ignorance within the community:



Comment #39 – Spotify

The tactic of playing ignorant, however, does not limit Spotify in obtaining ownership of the ideas developed within the community.

Guidelines of the Community

The users also agree with the guidelines set by the brand regarding behaviour within the community. The brand includes three important regulatory discourses, in which they aim to direct or limit the behaviour, and frame the value co-creation process.

Please only post information relevant for the thread and avoid discussing personal matters or topics unrelated to Spotify services. (Spotify, 2017b)

This discourse clearly states that personal information is unwelcomed by the community, thereby aiming for all content to be brand related, and potentially add value. The below empirical material states how advertisement of commercial products or services is unwanted, and the brand thereby aims to be the only voice within the community:

Do not post information or create threads for the promotion or advertisement of commercial products or services. (Spotify, 2017b)

The last discourse refers to the way users can recognise Spotify moderators in the community based on their avatar, thereby making the users aware of their presence through the employment of symbols (Urry, 1992):

Spotify employees and moderators will identify themselves in the Community by using the Spotify logo as avatars. Do not use any Spotify logo or trade name as your avatar or user name, or otherwise pose as a Spotify employee or moderator when posting in the Community. (Spotify, 2017b)

Defining the process

The brand aims to promote idea generation through their idea exchange. The brand retains the right to implement or reject the idea, and uses regulatory discourses in the process. The below empirical material suggests a use of regulatory discourses in which the brand aims to display control:

March 2017 Ideas Review

Every month the Community Team reviews our Ideas Board and present the ones we've updated in the past 31 days.

We're here to take a look at the ideas we updated for you all in March. Curious what we implemented last year? Well check out our [Yearly Ideas Review: 2016 here.](#)

IMPLEMENTED:

1. [Option to Disable 'Behind the Lyrics'](#).

GOOD IDEA:

3. [Bring back "Year in Music" on demand.](#)

4. [Sleep Timer.](#)

CASE CLOSED:

24. [Spotify Connect for Windows Phone.](#)

25. [Add Local Files Syncing to Windows Phone App.](#)

NOT RIGHT NOW

7. [Organize 'Your Music' by genre.](#)

8. [Headless client for Linux servers.](#)

From Post 21, March Ideas Review – Spotify

The above post displays how Spotify has marked the ideas with Implemented, Case Closed, Good Idea, or Not Right Now. Other reviews also include the status of Under Consideration, and Watch This Space, which provide the members with a sense of transparency of their creative labour. In order for the brand to communicate these regulatory discourses to the members, a blog has been designed to communicate the process:

The Community team talks with various other Spotify teams several times a month about the ideas that have over 100 kudos. It's from these meetings that we apply one of the following statuses to each idea:

Good Idea, Give It Some Kudos - We like this idea. A decision has not been made but we want to see how much the Community continues to vote on it.

Not Right Now - We talked about this internally and it's not on our timeline for the next few months or more.

Under Consideration - This has been brought up internally.

Watch This Space - This feature is coming. We have a rough timeline for its release.

Implemented - This feature has rolled out.

From Post 22, The Ideas Board: How your feedback reaches Spotify – Spotify

The empirics hence show how Spotify retains the right to decide which ideas to implement, which to close, and which to encourage. Thereby showing how the value co-creation can be characterised as tinkering (O'Hern & Rindfleisch, 2010).

4.2.2 Motivating Users

Similar to Dell the Spotify Community utilises the same techniques to motivate its members; promotion of members and the rewards system.

Rockstars

Members of the community are ranked, dependent on their activity. The start level is "Newbie" and allows for posting, sharing ideas, using a signature and choosing an avatar for their profile in the community. Moving up the ladder, already after a day of membership, promotions arrives, and after the second login, the user is allowed the possibility to use private messaging with other members. There are a total of 30 ranks within the community, congratulating the user on their new rank, and some giving them more features within the community such as interacting with tweets, mention other members in the community, and at the top of the ladder lie the three most prestigious ranks of the community: Rising Star, Rock Star, and Top Star (Spotify, 2017a).

Through the use of regulatory discourses, the moderators are furthermore praising the good work from the Rock stars to promote good behaviour within the community. The empiric below illustrates a blog post highlighting the "Post of the Week", which resembles good behaviour within the community:

Post of the Week: I can't log in and nobody from Spotify will respond to me

██████████ / Moderator / 2017-04-06 01:30 PM



Happy Thursday folks!

Welcome to another **Post of the Week***.

**For the uninitiated; do a super cool post > get a super cool shout-out. Simples 😊*

This week we we raise our coffee mugs with pride, to one of our newest Rising Stars, ██████████

Check out this [awesome thread](#) - in fact, I'm thinking of renaming this to "Thread of the Week".

We see lots of users who have trouble logging into Spotify. There can be many reasons why this occurs and taking a step back to assess the full situation, can really help;

"... When you registered for Spotify did you use your Facebook details or create a username? If you registered via Facebook you can reset your password at Facebook.com"

"If you used Spotify, be sure to check your email Spam filter. I'd also look through your inbox to confirm you received a confirmation email from Spotify when you registered."

His TOV is spot on here. Calm, simple and to the point. Very Spotify. We love it!

Congratulations ██████████ have a month of Premium on us 😊

Post 11, Post of the Week – Spotify

In order to keep the interest, the top 10 contributors are emphasised on a scoreboard in the community. The scoreboard is based on a metrics called “Community Score”, which reflects their level of engagement. It is furthermore determined on a 90-days window, which forces the members to engage frequently and align with Spotify’s guidelines.

Reward System

The community uses kudos which reflect their point system. This technique allows members to engage with one another, but also limits the members to add irrelevant content, which can be seen as a passive prohibition of action. By waiving the right to give kudos to the members, they hand over part of the control, and they thus become self-governing individuals. Kudos within the community are seen as symbolic capital for the members. The usage of symbolic capital harvests good behaviour from the members and motivates their non-monetary terms (Arvidsson, 2008). The members obtain kudos if they post helpful comments or contribute with ideas. The goal for the engaged community member is to reach the Rock star level, as it opens up for more features within the community. The symbolic capital in the form of points can be used for Spotify goods and services, and thereby be transformed into monetary value. As with the Dell community, the members of the Spotify community are exploited for their free labour, as the value created exceeds the monetary value received.

4.2.3 Framing Labour

As with Dell, the empirics suggest that Spotify is exercising the technique of zoning (Zieleniec, 2008) to frame the actions of members (Goffman, 1974), thereby shaping the consumers' freedom whilst capitalising on them (Arvidsson, 2006).

Zones & Spatial Boundaries

The *Welcome* zone is constructed by two sections: Community Blog, and Newcomers and Contribution (see *Appendix F*). The Newcomers and Contribution area, makes new members aware of their expected contribution to the community. This type of contribution varies dependent on what zone they find themselves in. The *Welcome* zone provides the users with a guide, in which different symbols are explained to the member. The symbols are identical across the platform, and allow the consumer easy recognition. A Spotify logo next to a post indicates it has been posted by a moderator, which displays a sense of authenticity for the consumers. A tick mark next to a post shows a solution has been found, while the absence of one indicates to members that they can be a part of collaborating on a solution.

The *Community Blog Zone*, appears to be open for everyone to participate in, however in-depth exploration discovered that only higher ranked community members are allowed to post (see *Appendix G*). All blog posts and comments are submitted directly to Spotify for review before publishing, indicating explicit spatial boundaries within the zone. Within the zone a pattern was noticed as all Ideas Review end in the same manner, where the moderators praise the members, which constructs an encouraging working environment.

The *Help* zone is structured with 11 pre-defined sections to post within (see *Appendix H*). The *Help* zone is designed for community members to assist each other in using the brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2011), and this zone thereby contributes solely with functional labour as the spatial boundaries highlight the purpose of the zone. The space within this zone is developed on the basis of helping others, and aims to limit the pressure on Spotify's support department.

The labour in this zone is efficient as the members assist one another, whilst benefiting from their own immaterial labour as they climb up the ranking system. The example below showcases the free functional labour between members:

Solved ✓ **[Solved] How to get the full list of genres ?** ...

██████████ / Music Lover / 2013-08-29 07:35 AM

Hi all,

I like to use the "*genre:Blues*" keyword in the search field, but some main genres are not searchable (i.e. Indie, World, Rock, etc...). So I was wondering where can I get the full list of searchable genres.

Thanks,
spotify:user:██████████

Solved! [Go to Solution.](#)

Everyone's Tags (5): [genre](#) / [linux](#) / [mac](#) / [search](#) / [Windows](#) [View All \(5\)](#)

[Linux](#) [Mac](#) [Windows](#)

REPLY + 0 LIKES 1 person had this problem.

Post 23 – Spotify

Solution ...

3 people liked this

██████████ / Rock Star / 2013-08-29 08:44 AM

Hi, and welcome to the community!

Feel free to check out [this Google doc](#) which has all the 944 genres in Spotify. Yes, there are quite a few there, but nothing that Ctrl+F can't handle!

██████████

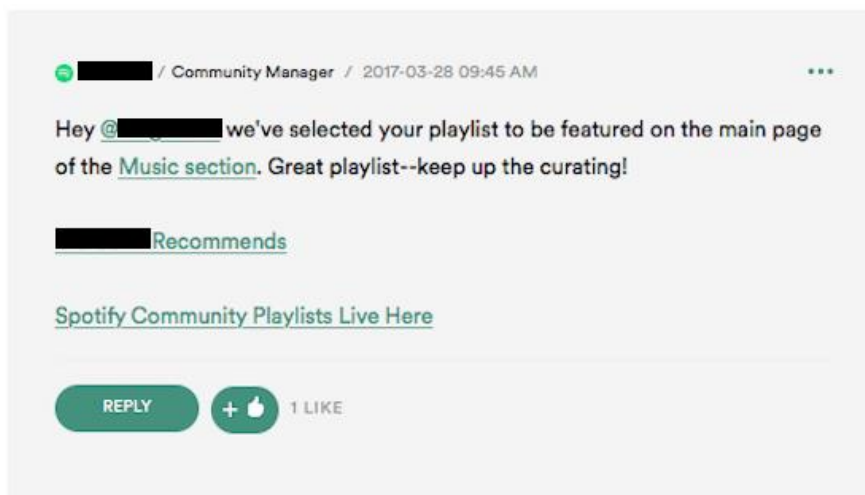
This post was by ██████████ - I do not work for Spotify!
If this solved your issue - [Mark it as a solution!](#) If you like my post - [Please add Kudos!](#)
|| [Spotify Profile - ██████████](#) | [Feel free to PM me - Here](#) ||

REPLY + 3 LIKES

Comment #217 – Spotify

The above example shows that the solution received 3 kudos and the Rock star user thereby gained additional symbolic capital for their functional labour.

The *Music Chat* zone is characterised by the element of sharing and inspiration and consists of the following sections: Music Posts, Featured Playlists, Content Questions, and Music Playlist Exchange (see *Appendix I*). The community members frequently share their recommendations and playlists with one another and allows for informal communication between the members. The Content Questions section is used by members to report bugs or request artists. They thereby help to correct the flaws within the platform (Fisher & Smith, 2011), and contribute with creative labour to the brand. The Featured Playlists section, run by Spotify, decides which playlists from the Music Playlist Exchange section should be featured. This is a prime example of how a brand taps into the intellectual capital of its members. This section is seen as a forbidden space as users cannot make adjustments to the playlists unlike the Music Playlist Exchange where they are free to make changes. Through the construction of this zone Spotify is able to harvest the inspiration in form of playlists. The below empiric shows an example of how creative labour was initiated by the community member, and Spotify took advantage of the labour by using the member's playlist as a featured playlist.



Comment #128 – Spotify

The *Rock Stars* zone is a space where the most active and loyal members are acknowledged, and where members apply to be a part of the Rock star program (see *Appendix J*). As previously mentioned this program promotes good behaviour and aims to limit bad behaviour from community members. The Rockstar members can be seen as model citizens of the community, who have the ability to guide their fellow members and have earned the right for more functions within the space.

The *Ideas* zone is a space that allows for sharing ideas between the members and the brand (see *Appendix K*). The active exchanges that facilitate the creation of value develop this zone into a space of work (Lefebvre, 1974). The post below displays an example of an idea Spotify decided to implement, to improve the brand value for the consumers. It moreover showcases the ideas put forth by community members, who aim to improve their usage and experience of the brand.

Browse: Follow Charts Playlists

Submitted by [REDACTED] on 2015-03-10 05:26 PM

In the new desktop update, there is a charts playlist. However we cannot follow the playlist, so that we have quick access to it.

Please allow us to follow the charts playlist, as they are really good.

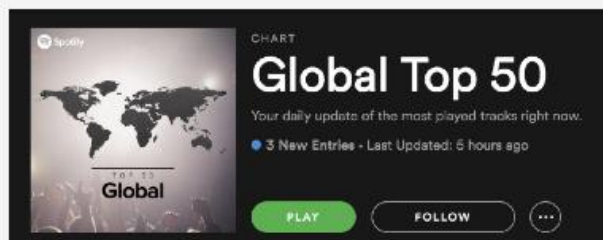
OPTIONS ▾



Status Update

Updated: 2016-12-06

Hey @ [REDACTED] and everyone that voted for this idea. As of today you can follow CHART playlists and download them offline if you're a Premium user. Thanks for continuing to bring your feedback to the Ideas Exchange--we're listening!

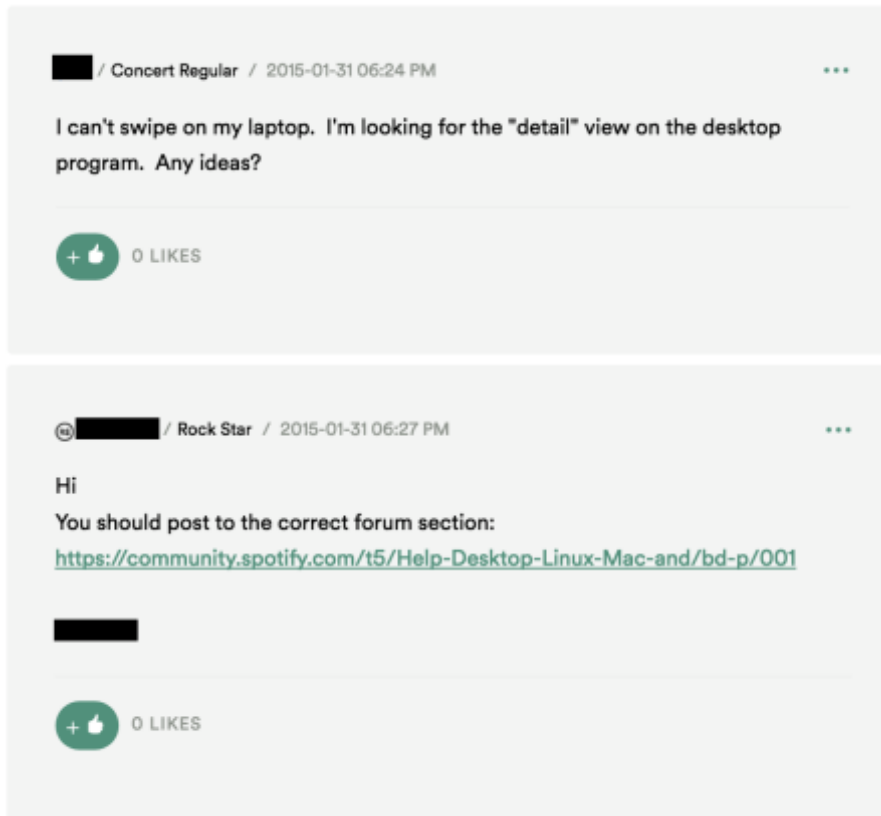


Post 24 – Spotify

Social Space

As seen in the Dell community, the social space has been assigned and developed through different actors, which were identified by employing de Certeau's (1980) city concept. The community, resembling a city consists of the following four actors: *government*, *law enforcement*, *tour guide*, and *pedestrians*.—The law enforcement is using short-term tactics to help guide the members between the different zones through regulatory discourses, to ensure they follow the legal discourses set by the government. The law enforcement furthermore clarifies its role as an intermediary between the pedestrians and the government.

The regular users, the pedestrians, are employing tactics in the same manner as the man in de Certeau's (1980) city. The rebellious behaviour from the regular members happens through tactics. The empirical material below shows an example of such where a user requested help on a blog post, rather than in the Help section:



Comments #215 #216 – Spotify

Instead of helping the regular user, the Rock Star is guiding the user to the Help section, thereby emphasising that help will not be provided outside that specific zone. The empirics thereby suggest that rebellious behaviour in terms of tactics employed by the users are rejected by the Rock Stars within the community.

4.3 Discussion

The analysis of both communities identified similarities and differences in how certain control mechanisms were utilised within the produced space and how this determines the outcomes. Several control mechanisms emerged from the empirical findings that both communities employ to govern their co-creation process. The main mechanisms discussed are: discourse, spatial architectonics, and the reward system. This discussion aims to give an enhanced understanding on how and which mechanisms are utilised for governance in the value co-creation process. Finally, the paradox will be discussed in light of the strategies and aims to answer the research question: *How is value co-creation and free labour governed in online brand communities?*

4.3.1 Discourse

Both communities employ the technique of discourses to control the behaviour from the entry and throughout the continuous use of the community. Both the legal and the regulatory discourses emphasise the need for members to be active contributors and state that the content produced is property of the brand, thereby letting the members waive their intellectual property for their labour. Regulatory discourse throughout the platform and comments posted by brand moderators or Rockstars showcase the brand's supervision over the community dynamic and conduct. This strategic use of discourse is employed to secure the legal rights of the company, allowing for exploitation of the consumers. The rules and regulations within the community dictate a respectful and productive behaviour which is expected of the members, and even though the rules are present in the form of legal discourses, the empirical material suggests that members of the community have good intentions of providing ideas for the improvement of the brand. The implicit control that both communities exercise through discourse is further reinforced through the spatial architectonics.

4.3.2 Zones and Spatial Architectonics

The spatial architectonics of the co-creation process differs between the two communities and is a key structural aspect that frames the community members. While Spotify incorporates the co-creation process as one of the main zones amongst its community, Dell has created both a separate platform and creative community solely for the purpose of value co-creation. With a gated community (Zieleniec, 2008) such as IdeaStorm the purpose is evident and the focus and pressure lie within the production of value. The behaviour of users is thus more restricted within the confined space compared to the Spotify community, where consumers have access to more zones and movement appears to be freer. Analysis of both communities suggest that fewer spatial boundaries enable for consumers to more easily create their own social spaces and exercise their ideas more freely, which could lead to improved co-created value. Despite

some of the structural differences it becomes clear that both communities aim to capitalise on the participatory culture (Jenkins et al. 2013) which society is moving towards and by offering places such as the *Idea* zones the brands are able to boost their value co-creation.

While the spatial structures surrounding the co-creation differ, both communities utilise the concept of zones (Zieleniec, 2008), each of which is distinguished by symbols and names in order to direct the member in the community. The act of zoning and creation of spatial boundaries have enabled both brands to visibly differentiate areas within the community based on their functions. The functions of the zones, production or consumption, hence promote the type of labour that is to be produced by members. The analysis of the empirical findings indicates that the zones of production foster creative labour, whilst those of consumption foster functional labour. Functional labour is thus produced by members in the *Help* zone for example in order for it to be consumed by fellow members, whereas in the *Ideas* zone consumers are expected to contribute with creative labour in order to produce value. Therefore, it can be said that both brands frame the behaviour through the spatial construction of the zones and spatial boundaries. Spatial architectonics thus prove to be a technique of managing the direction of free labour.

4.3.3 Reward System

The reward system, employed by both communities, is another technique through which the brands were able to give their consumers perceived autonomy and capitalise on the member's self-governance. Publicly awarded points are translated into symbolic capital, which seem to motivate the members more than any monetary or private reward (Arvidsson, 2008). By rewarding creative labour and the competitive nature amongst consumers, brands continue to drive the consumers to produce value whilst overseeing the co-creation process. The voting rights that the members are given are perceived as autonomy and mask the real power that lies with the brands as they are the ones who award the points. Moreover, the Rockstar promotion not only rewards highly active members but also passes down power to the members, while both brands ultimately still possess the majority of power. The analysis of both Dell and Spotify indicate that they similarly leverage the reward system and the Rockstar promotion strategy to control the uncontrollable free consumer labour. The empirical findings demonstrate that promoting and rewarding members stimulates their activity levels and ensures for co-creation to be an ongoing process.

4.3.4 Multilayered Control

The analysis of the brand communities revealed that there are multiple types of control that coexist. These findings suggest a division and passing of power, leading the authors to coin the concept co-control. The following discussion will elaborate on the newly found concept of co-control, the levels of control present in the communities, as well as identify which control mechanisms were utilised to hand down power.

Co-control: Mobilising Individuals

Co-control, as defined by the authors, represents the passing of power through multiple layers created by spatial architectonics and control mechanisms, in order to mobilise individuals to control their peers. The passing of power through multiple layers obscures the origin of control, allowing for unobtrusive governance of the co-creation process and thereby retaining the quality and authenticity of the value.



Figure 1: Co-control in Online Brand Communities

Building upon de Certeau's (1980) concept city the authors were able to identify four layers of control, each represented by a different actor as can be seen above. The passing down of power from a macro to micro level is a way both communities have been able to manage the free labour in a non-authoritative manner and hand the members perceived autonomy. Certain control mechanisms which hand over freedom can serve as a distraction from the underlying control in the co-creation environment (Fleming & Sturdy, 2010). The freedom members receive aligns with the Sewell's (1998) chimerical control, as it can be seen as perceived autonomy. The dimension of the chimerical control is displayed as horizontal within both communities, as the members become self-governing subjects who surveil each other, thus instilling a high degree of self-discipline (Sewell, 1998). Essentially, in regards to both communities the power at the governmental level, lies within the legal discourse of the regulations and principles and the reward system. These control mechanisms all impact and instruct the behaviour of members, thereby strongly implying that the type of control exercised within the communities is bureaucratic control (Edwards, 1979). It is at this level that the government dictates the legislation of the city and the expected behaviour.

Zoning is utilised to create a city, in this case a community, where the government can inject control in the form of law enforcement to regulate and uphold the legislation. It can therefore be said, that the passing down of power from the government to the law enforcement, occurs through the control mechanism of zoning. The law enforcement displays its power by sharing

clear guidelines within each of the zones in order to stress the spatial boundaries, and thereby facilitate in upholding the spatial strategies set by the government. Transferring power from the law enforcement to the tour guides involves the control mechanism of promoting members, which in the case of both communities is also known as the Rockstar program. The power given to the appointed tour guides is used to guide members through the spatial architectonics and stress the importance of complying with the brands guidelines. The relationship between these two parties enables members to trust the tour guides and let themselves be guided through the process. Due to their close proximity and interaction with the members, the tour guides are crucial actors as they are able to disguise the brand's control. It is thereby suggested that co-control is used to create a more relaxed working environment, hence allowing the brand to direct the autonomous process (Arvidsson, 2006).

While the members are controlled by the aforementioned actors they also engage in self-governance, another form of control, which both Dell and Spotify have been able to capitalise on. The reward system and the promotion program exercise a certain degree of normative control, which in the context of online brand communities is a subtle type of control that entails internalised shared norms amongst consumers and limits the need for surveillance (Fleming & Sturdy, 2010). This type of control is successfully utilised in the community, as most members share the drive for self-realisation and similar social values (Arvidsson, 2008). Through those mechanisms, the element of self-governance, and the other levels of control the brand communities have been able to mask their bureaucratic control. The analysis revealed that the handing down of power has enabled the brands to control the co-creation process and member behaviour as they have the law enforcement and tour guides to exercise the control on their behalf. This can be linked to Sewell's (1998) finding of shifting the location of control from the management to the community members within the horizontal dimension of chimerical control, thereby allowing them to adopt the norms set by the brand.

The co-creation process appears to be free from company control despite the several layers that have been developed through control mechanisms and spatial architectonics. Evidently, both brands have mobilised individuals within the community to control their peers, thereby illustrating co-control being applied in practice. The empirical findings have therefore demonstrated that co-creation can be governed through multiple layers, co-control, in order to lower the prevailing degree of governmental control.

Degree of Control

After having identified that both communities utilise co-control to implicitly govern the free labour it also became apparent, when comparing the empirical findings that the degree of control had a direct impact on the free labour. The analysis highlights that while Spotify was able to find the right balance between bureaucratic and normative control, thus fostering more creativity (Frenkel, Korczynski, Shire & Tam, 1999), Dell struggled to find this balance. The high degree of control in IdeaStorm was evident in the *Storm Sessions* zone through the use of restricted spatial boundaries and direct regulatory discourse, where members had little space and limited opportunities to employ their own tactics to avoid the brands strategies. The spatial restrictions therefore cause the dominant spaces to outweigh the appropriated spaces. This high level of control is an indicator of the disciplinary spaces (Foucault, 1977) and

policed spaces (Lefebvre, 1979; cited in Gottdiener, 1994) present in the IdeaStorm community. Hence, an imbalance between control and freedom occurs, which can cause the quality of the immaterial labour to diminish and with that also the value (Lury, 2004). Low activity levels and participation in the *Storm Sessions* zone are thus a result of too much company control and has ultimately affected the free labour.

This study agrees with previous researchers' argument for organisations to loosen their control over consumers (see Fisher & Smith, 2011; Lury, 2004; O'Hern & Rindfleisch, 2010). However, the findings suggest that while the concept of co-control fulfils the purpose of providing the illusion of loosening control, the brand continues to retain the control. This can be done by implementing the aforementioned control mechanisms in order to create a multilayered control environment, where organisations can inject freedom into the bureaucratic control, and thereby support the arguments made by Fleming & Sturdy (2010). Brands are able to shift the attention away from bureaucratic control as they hand down the power to establish co-control, which can be seen as control through freedom.

4.3.5 Paradox Discussion

In the problematization, the managerial paradox of controlling free labour was highlighted, and this research has attempted to solve this paradox by introducing the theoretical perspective of space, as well as the concept of co-control. An analysis of the empirical sites has enabled the researchers to better understand how the managerial paradox is handled in practice. As previous literature suggests, value co-creation should be perceived as free from company control and be initiated by the consumers. Through the spatial constructs and the creation of zones the brands were able to frame the labour in a manner that covered up their bureaucratic control. The spatial architectonics facilitate the employment of certain control mechanisms which coexist and thereby make use of multilayered control. The coexistence of the control mechanisms allows for a balance between bureaucratic control and normative control, therefore exercising control through freedom (Fleming & Sturdy, 2010). The paradox is dealt with by handing down power in order to mobilise individuals to engage in co-control, thereby giving community member's perceived autonomy.

5 Conclusion

This chapter summarises the main findings of this study and draws conclusions based on the empirical analysis. Key theoretical and practical contributions are discussed, followed by acknowledging some of the study's limitations and ending with suggestions for future research in this field.

This research study has thoroughly explored the governing of value co-creation in online brand communities through the use of spatial structures and has extracted several control mechanisms together with an overarching concept in regards to the research question:

How is value co-creation and free labour governed in online brand communities?

To reach the aim and purpose of this study, the empirical material was gathered through a critical netnography of two online brand communities and analysed through the theoretical lens of the production of space. This enabled for a comparison between the communities and a new angle on the highly-relevant topic of value co-creation. Being an exploratory study, the researchers focused on enhancing and deepening the understanding of how the immaterial labour in co-creation can be subtly directed without excessive company control. Aside from ensuring to meet the research question, emphasis was placed on solving the managerial paradox.

5.1 Controlling the Uncontrollable

The analysis of the empirical sites showcased that the brand is the architect of the spatial structures, which enable the implementation of control mechanisms and frame the community members. The study revealed three control mechanisms that brands employ to motivate and frame free consumer labour and thereby subtly govern the co-creation process. The identified control mechanisms include the discourse, zones and spatial architectonics, and the reward system. As discovered in the discussion these control mechanisms have the ability to construct multiple layers of control, facilitating the passing down of power. The layers resulting from the control mechanisms have been coined as the *government*, *law enforcement*, *tour guides*, and the *pedestrians*. Carrying different degrees of power, each layer is involved in controlling the working environment of the community. Through the multiple layers it becomes difficult for the consumer to detect the brand's underlying control, which thereby results in a co-creation process that appears to be free from company control. The finding of this multilayered control has demonstrated that brands are able to retain their control, whilst seemingly injecting freedom into the working environment.

The discovery of the control mechanisms and the multiple layers led the research to develop the concept of co-control. The newly constructed concept encompasses the passing down of power, made possible through spatial architectonics and the intermingling of the control

mechanisms, and ultimately mobilises individuals to control themselves and their peers. The finding of the co-control concept is of particular interest to the managerial paradox as it provides a solution to controlling the uncontrollable immaterial labour. Co-control reveals how consumers can unobtrusively be governed through freedom in the context of online brand communities, thereby maintaining the authenticity of the created value.

The study furthermore affirms that it is essential for organisations to reach a balance between control and freedom. This became evident through the analysis and comparison of the empirical sites as it was uncovered that too much bureaucratic control resulted in inactivity and lower engagement from the community members in the co-creation process. The research therefore deducts that the imbalance can be bettered by employing the notion of co-control and injecting freedom into the process. It is however also acknowledged that there exists no true balance between freedom and control, rather a perceived balance from the consumer perspective, as the control ultimately originates from the brand itself. This means, regardless of the true balance, the value co-creation and immaterial labour will only be affected by the control exercised through perceived freedom. This concludes that even though value co-creation should be perceived as free, control is still exercised in a subtle manner that hides it from the consumer through the layers.

On a wider scheme, the findings from this study indicate that in today's postmodern society, individuals are increasingly expected to produce value and engage in collaborative activities. The development of the participatory culture signifies that consumers are willing to partake in voluntary work and it seems that it is becoming a habitual and routine part of their consumption journey. The transformation from production to consumption no longer allows for a passive consumer society, but has shaped an active one instead. As brands are becoming a bigger part of consumers' lives, so is the need for self-identity and self-realisation (Arvidsson, 2006), both of which are growing motivations for individuals to partake in voluntary consumption as it is believed to carry symbolic meaning (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). Capitalism has in the past seen tensions between labour and society, however this research implies that consumers have become increasingly immune and accepting to the soliciting of their ideas and are instead acting on their own interest by focusing on creating a superior personalised experience. The researchers hence believe that a lower tension between the two parties, results from the combination of more immune consumers and the improved ability of brands to govern through co-control.

5.2 Contributions

This study contributes to the literature of value co-creation by (a) bringing in a new perspective of space and place, (b) uncovering control mechanisms and how they are used to handle the managerial paradox, and (c) introducing the co-control concept in which community members are mobilised as police to control their peers. The strengths of this research lie in both its theoretical and practical contributions, as the application of a new theoretical perspective enabled the exploration of how the paradox is handled in practice, whilst discovering the theoretical concept of co-control.

5.2.1 Theoretical

Building on Bertilsson and Cassinger's (2011) study on the governmentality of co-creation, this research has gone on to investigate the mechanisms of control and management utilised by brands to obscure their control. By taking on the theoretical perspective of space and place, this research is the first to examine co-creation from this angle and adds to the understanding of how consumers can be governed through freedom. The researchers were able to discover how co-creation is managed within online brand communities, which opened up for a new discussion regarding spatial theories in an online context. This study therefore, specifically contributes to the discussion initiated by Bertilsson and Cassinger (2011), but also to the general literature of value co-creation and brand management. Moreover, it exemplifies the applicability of Lefebvre's (1974) production of space theory to co-creation in the context of online brand communities.

Drawn from the empirical material and analysis, the research developed the concept of co-control that provides a solution to handling the paradox. Co-control suggests a new way of managing immaterial labour in online communities and endorses control through freedom by masking the control through several layers. The discovery of co-control complements existing brand literature that states that subtle practices and ambience can guide consumer actions through a bottom-up approach (Arvidsson, 2006), which co-control has proven to do by creating a "free" environment.

5.2.2 Practical

The findings of this study agree with previous practitioners who state that empowerment fosters value co-creation (Cook, 2008; Cova & Dallı, 2009; Dahl & Moreau, 2007; Fisher & Smith, 2011; Lury, 2004; O'Hern & Rindfleisch, 2010, Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) and the analysis of normative and bureaucratic control restate the importance of having a balance between freedom and control (Fisher & Smith, 2011). Based on the issue found in the discussion concerning the imbalance between normative and bureaucratic control, the study highlights the ability of disguising and masking the company control through a constructed multilayered control environment. The identified control mechanisms and the concept of co-control are findings of high practical relevance as they uncover how organisations can govern their co-creation process in a non-authoritative manner whilst preserving the creative immaterial labour.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

Throughout the study more limitations were realised alongside to the previously mentioned methodological limitations. The two empirical sites studied were sufficient for the authors to reach the aim of investigating how co-creation and free labour are managed. However, it must be acknowledged that the presented findings, which were extracted solely from the two observed online communities, are partially limited. While the generalisability of the study

may be affected by this, the authors place a greater emphasis on the contextuality of the findings. Being a qualitative study the authors thus encourage future research to generalise the findings within a similar context of online brand communities. The findings from this study could be tested on a wider scale by analysing several online communities and thereby elevating the opportunity to cross-compare.

As this study takes on a critical management perspective it would be interesting to replicate the study and explore the consumer and managerial perspectives. Further research could include conducting qualitative interviews in order to understand how the consumers perceive the company control or vice versa how the brands perceive their management and degree of control over the co-creation process. Through participant-observation researchers would be able to understand the consumer's perspective more extensively. In particular, gaining more understanding from a managerial perspective on how they view the paradox and what measures they take apart from constructing space and implementing control mechanisms would be an interesting addition to the existing study. This study was unable to draw conclusions on whether exploitation of consumers do in fact harm the value co-creation process, as argued by Cova and Dall'Aglio (2009), therefore presenting an area that is still open for exploration.

The scope of the study purely focused on value co-creation in online communities, however it is also recognised that value co-creation can occur on social media platforms. An investigation of third party platforms, in specific social media sites, would be an intriguing extension to conduct to add to the findings in relation to online brand communities. This could potentially lead to a comparative study between company managed platforms and externally managed platforms in regards to the degree of governance of co-creation. Another topic the authors found interesting would be the exploration of how customer resistance can be converted into valuable immaterial labour and add value.

Based on the contribution of co-control, the authors stress the relevance of this specific concept in today's society. The introduction of the term not only solves the managerial paradox in focus, but can facilitate the government amongst others in control the citizens. This could potentially solve societal issues where unobtrusive control is a prerequisite for success, and it is encouraged to apply the concept of co-control to other contexts, theoretical as well as practical, to elevate the level of knowledge in society.

6 References

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7 Appendix

Appendix A – Dell IdeaStorm Homepage

IdeaStorm can help take your idea and turn it into reality.

OVER 26,170 IDEAS SUBMITTED. 745,904+ VOTES. 102,415+ COMMENTS. 550+ IDEAS IMPLEMENTED.

SUBMIT YOUR IDEA

IDEAS | STORM SESSIONS | SUBMIT YOUR IDEA | Member Login | Join IdeaStorm

Featured

Lightweight Precision

Posted by: msrdk

I would like to see a Light Weight (truly portable) Precision class Laptop. I need the graphis proc ...

Learn More

10 Votes | 6 Comments

Recent Ideas

Alienware 17 2017-2018

Trending Ideas

Alienware 17 2017-2018

Top Recent Contributors

jervis961
36391 Points
179 Ideas
12226 Votes
Last Activity : Apr 11, 2017

bedblood
20759 Points
221 Ideas
3044 Votes
Last Activity : Apr 11, 2017

phubert
15625 Points
359 Ideas
5501 Votes
Last Activity : Mar 29, 2017

Appendix B –IdeaStorm Ideas Zone

IDEAS | STORM SESSIONS | SUBMIT YOUR IDEA | Member Login | Join IdeaStorm

Comments Page (1 of 21)

Ideas: **All** | Recent | Trending | Comments | All | 1 2 3 4 5... 21 Next

Alienware 17 2017-2018

Apr 12, 2017
Posted By NVolta42
Status: New **2 VOTES**

Google translate (french ---> english) Hello, I am giving you some ideas to improve the Alienware range To start one of the big problems of the Alienware with gpu series 10, it is the lack of USB 3.0. Adding 2 more on the sides would make the product easier to use, because having to use a USB HUB is really not pratical to plug in (blu-ray player, sd card reader, keyboard-mouse, usb headset, external hdd, smartphone, audio dac, etc...). To continue on the defects, there is that of the temperatures of the components and the distribution of the heat. Ini ...

2 Votes | 0 Comment

Categories: Gaming, New Product Ideas, Alienware,

Better ergonomic mouse based on fingerstyle guitar

Mar 28, 2017
Posted By EGA
Status: New **2 VOTES**

Three years ago I began to suffer from RSI caused by prolonged and intense mouse use as part of my work as an environmental modeller. My office (an engineering firm) generously offered to pay for whatever equipment I

Categories

All Categories

Product Ideas

- Accessories (Keyboards, etc.)
- Alienware
- Broadband and Mobility
- Desktops and Laptops
- Mobile Devices
- New Product Ideas
- Operating Systems
- Printers and Ink
- Servers and Storage
- Software

Dell Ideas

- Advertising and Marketing
- Dell Community
- Dell Web Site

Appendix C – IdeaStorm Storm Sessions Zone

Welcome to Storm Sessions!

View Archived Sessions

Storm sessions are hyper focused idea generating sessions centered on a specific topic or theme and open for a limited time. You can also submit ideas for future sessions to the "Storm Sessions Topics" category.

What is the SSD effect on data center performance?

Duration: Mar 19, 2014 - Jun 1, 2014

Posted by: Cy_J

Status: Archived

Samsung and Dell are partnering to gather your ideas around the effects of SSDs on Data Center performance. [1 Ideas](#)

How are SSDs in notebooks increasing productivity?

Duration: Mar 18, 2014 - Jun 1, 2014

Posted by: Cy_J

Status: Archived

Samsung has partnered with Dell in this Storm Session to gather your ideas around how SSDs in notebooks are increasing productivity. For consumers, Samsung SSDs can be found in [2 Ideas](#)

Top Recent Contributors [Show More](#)

jervis961

36391 Points
179 Ideas
12226 Votes

Last Activity : Apr 11, 2017

bedblood

20759 Points
221 Ideas
3044 Votes

Last Activity : Apr 11, 2017

phubert

15625 Points
359 Ideas
5501 Votes

Last Activity : Mar 29, 2017

jmxz

11549 Points
276 Ideas
1688 Votes

Last Activity : Apr 3, 2017

winooffice

8027 Points
107 Ideas
1174 Votes

Last Activity : Apr 11, 2017

Appendix D – IdeaStorm Submit Your Idea Zone

Shop Support Community

Search

Dell Inc. IdeaStorm

IdeaStorm can help take your idea and turn it into reality.

OVER 26,172 IDEAS SUBMITTED. 745,906+ VOTES. 102,421+ COMMENTS. 550+ IDEAS IMPLEMENTED.

SUBMIT YOUR IDEA

IDEAS

STORM SESSIONS

SUBMIT YOUR IDEA

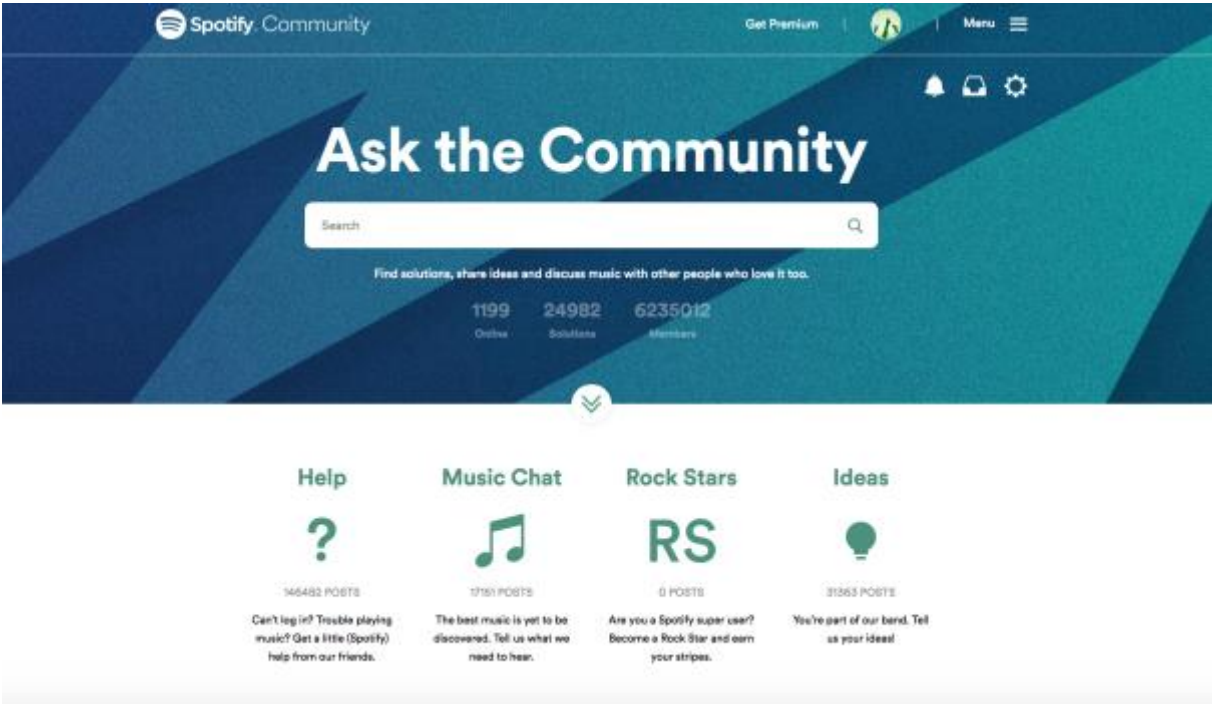
[Member Login](#) | [Join IdeaStorm](#)

Please login to IdeaStorm to Submit an Idea.

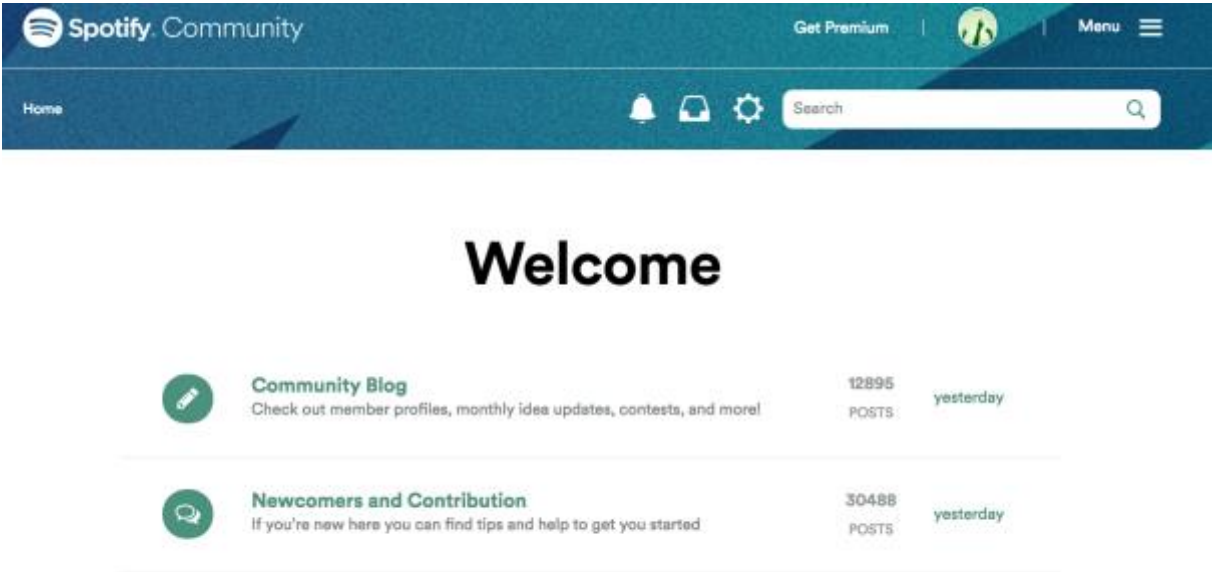
Tips for Posting Your Ideas

- Choose a title that summarizes your idea
- Use the duplicate checker to avoid posting an idea that was already suggested
- Include a picture if it helps illustrate your idea
- Fully explain your idea in wording that can be easily understood
- Reply to questions or comments on your idea
- If you need assistance with Dell products please contact Dell Support for your region or post your issue on the [Dell Community Forums](#).

Appendix E – Spotify Community Homepage



Appendix F – Spotify Welcome Zone



Appendix G – Spotify Community Blog Zone



[BLOG OPTIONS](#) +

The Tip-Off: Lød



JackS / Moderator / Friday



Read more...

부산오피 부산권마늘 [Everyone's Tags: funchoiceL... (0)



2 LIKES

Latest Articles

The Tip-Off: Lød

May 19, 2017 : new indie albums worth a listen

Post of the Week: Help with Premium for Family Inv...

10 New Indie Songs For You This Week

New RSP Prize: Headspace

The Tip-Off: Destiny Potato

May 12, 2017 : new indie albums worth a listen

Post of the Week: Unwanted reverb on songs

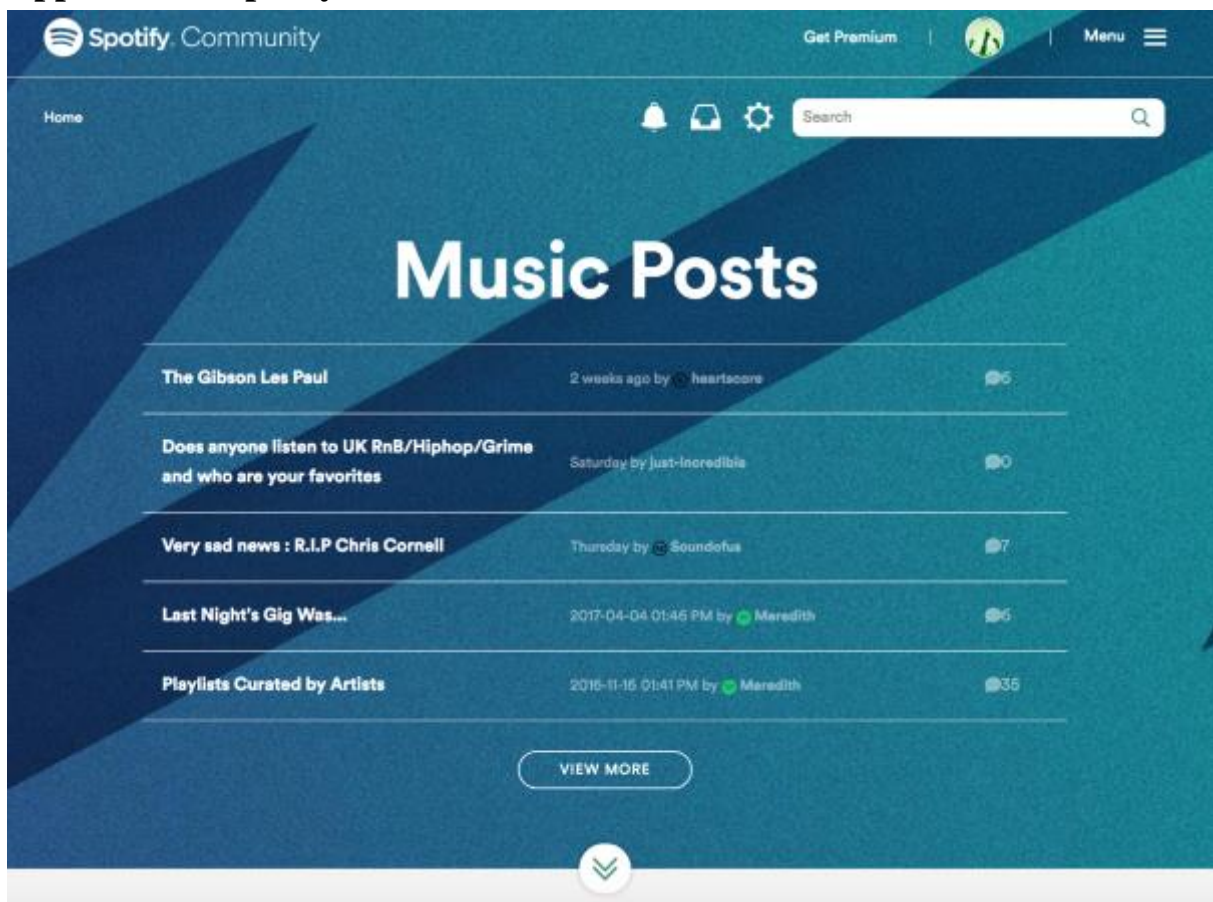
10 New Indie Songs For You This Week

The Tip-off: Bright Light Bright Light

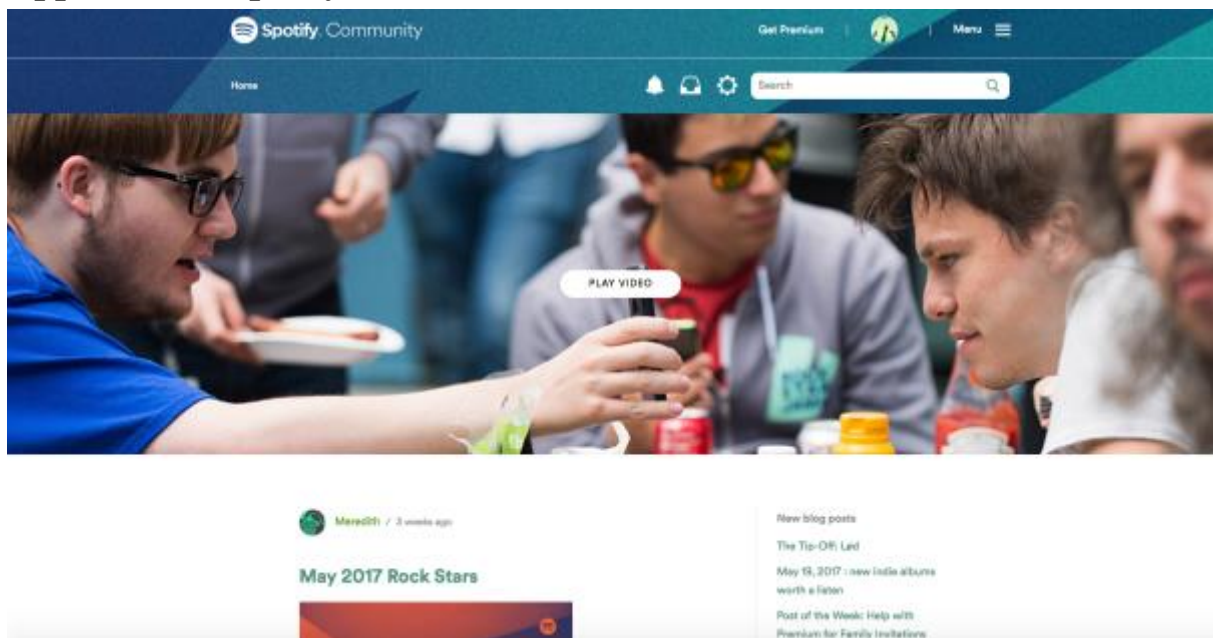
Appendix H – Spotify Help Zone

Category	Description	Posts	Time
Accounts	Get help with logging in, passwords, and account settings.	263326	11m ago
Subscriptions	Ask here for help with Premium, payments and trials.	8664	10m ago
Premium for Family & Student Discounts	Get help verifying your Student Discount or Premium for Family.	4712	32m ago
Desktop (Mac)	Discuss Spotify for Mac	15985	21m ago
Desktop (Linux, Windows, Web Player)	Discuss Spotify for Linux, Windows and Web Player	181055	yesterday

Appendix I – Spotify *Music Chat Zone*



Appendix J – Spotify *Rock Star Zone*



Appendix K – Spotify Ideas Zone

The screenshot shows the Spotify Community Ideas Zone homepage. At the top, the Spotify logo and 'Community' text are on the left, and 'Get Premium' and a user profile icon are on the right. Below this is a navigation bar with 'Home', notification, share, and settings icons, and a search bar. The main banner features large white text on a blue background: '36,697 Ideas, 2,639 Live, 338 Implemented.' Below the banner is a 'More' button. The content area includes a post by 'Meredith / 3 weeks ago' titled 'April 2017 Ideas Review' with a thumbnail image that says 'Monthly Ideas Review'. To the right, a 'Related Blog Posts' section lists 'The Tip-Off: Led' (dated May 19, 2017) and 'Post of the Week: Help with Premium for Family Invitations', with a 'VISIT BLOG' button at the bottom.