

EKONOMI OCH SAMHÄLLE  
ECONOMICS AND SOCIETY



HANKEN

# CULTURAL IDEALS, PRACTICES AND VALUE PROPOSITIONS IN CONSUMER EVERYDAY VALUE CREATION

HELI HOLTINEN



Ekonomi och samhälle  
Economics and Society

Skrifter utgivna vid Svenska handelshögskolan  
Publications of the Hanken School of Economics

Nr 263

Heli Holttinen

Cultural Ideals, Practices and Value Propositions in  
Consumer Everyday Value Creation

Helsinki 2013

# Cultural Ideals, Practices and Value Propositions in Consumer Everyday Value Creation

Key words: consumer behavior, consumer culture theory, cultural ideal, customer value, practice, practice theory, service-dominant logic, value co-creation, value creation, value proposition

© Hanken School of Economics & Heli Holttinen, 2013

Heli Holttinen  
Hanken School of Economics  
Department of Marketing  
P.O. Box 479, 00101 Helsinki, Finland



Hanken School of Economics

ISBN 978-952-232-212-8 (printed)

ISBN 978-952-232-213-5 (PDF)

ISSN-L 0424-7256

ISSN 0424-7256 (printed)

ISSN 2242-699X (PDF)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis has been inspirational, insightful, useful, and fun. I would like to sincerely thank those individuals and stakeholders who have made it possible for me to accept this challenge and bring it to a fruitful conclusion.

First, I want to express my gratitude to my PhD supervisors, Professor Kaj Storbacka and Professor Tore Strandvik. I have been very lucky to work with two intelligent, innovative, open-minded, and critical researchers. I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Anu Valtonen and Professor Stephen Vargo, the pre-examiners of this thesis, for their valuable comments and insightful suggestions. Additionally, I want to thank my PhD colleagues at Hanken and the staff at the department of marketing who have provided highly valuable support and critical feedback during the past five years. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the Finnish Cultural Foundation for making it possible for me to study full-time at the beginning of my studies.

I have been lucky to apply my research in practice while working on my thesis. I want to thank the Fazer Group, and especially Teija Andersen, who started to co-operation with me.

Finally, I am lucky to be surrounded by my husband and my wonderful friends, all of whom have provided support and also the occasionally needed escape from this thesis. I warmly thank you all.

Heli Holttinen

## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>RESEARCH POSITIONING AND OBJECTIVES .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1.	Introduction .....	1
1.2.	Positioning Research within Service-Dominant (S-D) Logic.....	1
1.3.	Research Objectives .....	4
<b>2</b>	<b>KEY CONCEPTS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1.	Cultural Ideals .....	6
2.2.	Practice .....	7
2.3.	Everyday Value Creation and Value Co-creation .....	8
2.4.	Customer Value .....	9
2.5.	Value Proposition .....	10
2.6.	Meaning.....	10
<b>3</b>	<b>ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL TENETS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1.	Ontological and Epistemological Tenets.....	12
3.1.1.	Ontological Tenets in Critical Realism .....	12
3.1.2.	Epistemological Tenets in Critical Realism .....	13
3.1.3.	Reflection of the Ontological and Epistemological Choices .....	14
3.2.	Empirical Research Approach and Methods .....	15
3.2.1.	Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)-informed Approach .....	15
3.2.2.	Data Sources .....	16
3.2.3.	Case Selection .....	16
3.2.4.	Analysis .....	18
3.2.5.	Trustworthiness of Findings .....	18
<b>4</b>	<b>RESEARCH FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1.	Findings of Essay 1 .....	21
4.2.	Findings of Essay 2.....	24
4.2.1.	Food Ideal and its Materialization in Weekday Dinners .....	24
4.2.2.	Enacting a Good Parent Project across Practices and Compromising a Food Ideal in the Weekday Dinner .....	27
4.2.3.	Enacting a Food Ideal Consistently in the most Frequent and Resourceful Food-related Practice: a Weekday Dinner.....	28
4.2.4.	Compromising a Food Ideal in the Weekday Dinner more often than in the Weekend Dinner .....	29

4.3.	Findings of Essay 3.....	31
4.3.1.	Value Propositions as Firms' Proposals for Consumers' Resource Integration in Practices.....	31
4.3.2.	Value Propositions Integrating Sign Value, Experience Value, Exchange Value and Resources .....	33
4.3.3.	Value Propositions as Design Architecture for Reciprocal Sign Value, Experience Value, Exchange Value and Resource Integration.....	36
5	CONTRIBUTIONS, DELIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	38
5.1.	Theoretical Contributions .....	38
5.1.1.	Identification of Four Points on how Practices Inform the Materialization of Cultural Ideals in Mundane Consumption.....	39
5.1.2.	Contextualizing Value Propositions in Consumers' Practices .....	41
5.2.	Managerial Contributions .....	42
5.3.	Limitations and Areas for Further Research .....	44
	REFERENCES .....	45

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Essays.....	58
------------	-------------	----

## TABLES

Table 1	Description of Weekday Dinner Cases .....	17
Table 2	Weekday Dinner Meals among Finnish Households .....	26

## FIGURES

Figure 1	Research Positioning.....	3
Figure 2	Theoretical Focus of the Thesis.....	4
Figure 3	Consumers' Value Creation in a Practice .....	21
Figure 4	Value Propositions as Experienced by Customers .....	33



# **1 RESEARCH POSITIONING AND OBJECTIVES**

## **1.1. Introduction**

This thesis investigates consumer value creation as an everyday sociocultural and situational phenomenon. It examines how practices and cultural ideals inform consumer value creation in their everyday lives. Additionally, it investigates how consumers experience and evaluate value propositions with respect to their value creation in practices.

Three essays form the backbone of the thesis: 'Social Practices as Units of Value Creation: Theoretical Underpinnings and Implications' (Essay 1), 'How Practices Inform the Materialization of Cultural Ideals in Mundane Consumption' (Essay 2), and 'Contextualizing Value Propositions: Examining how Consumers Experience Value Propositions in their Practices' (Essay 3). This summary highlights the antecedents, key concepts, findings and contributions of the essays. Chapter 1 positions the research within S-D logic and introduces research objectives. In Chapter 2 key concepts are introduced. Chapter 3 presents ontological and epistemological tenets as well as research approach and methods. The focus of Chapter 4 is on research findings. The summary ends with Chapter 5 that summarizes contributions as well as presents the delimitations of the thesis as areas for further research.

## **1.2. Positioning Research within Service-Dominant (S-D) Logic**

This thesis aims at contributing primarily to Service-Dominant (S-D) logic which inspires, invites and synthesizes ideas from fragmented research streams of marketing, in order to provide market and marketing theory that fits with the present and the future (Gummesson 2004; Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008; Bolton 2006). According to S-D logic, value is not embedded in offerings but it is created in use in context (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008). Furthermore, S-D logic has examined and conceptualized how value is co-created in value networks where social actors, such as consumers and firms, integrate resources and exchange service for service where service (singular) refers to applying skills and knowledge for the benefit of other social actors (Vargo and Lusch 2008, 2004; Lusch, Vargo and O'Brien 2007; Gummesson and Polese 2009; Merz, He, and Vargo 2009; Korkman, Storbacka and Harald 2010). S-D logic has also highlighted the importance of a value proposition concept in co-creation of value (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008; Ballantyne, Frow, Varey and Payne 2011; Frow and Payne 2011). Firms can only offer value propositions (Vargo and Lusch 2008) - it is always a customer or other beneficiary who accepts them. Thus the firms get an opportunity to co-create value with their customers with the help of the value propositions (Grönroos 2008). As a value proposition ties firms and their beneficiaries together, it becomes one of the central concepts of marketing. At the same time, only less than 10 per cent of firms have managed to successfully develop and communicate their value propositions (Frow and Payne 2011).

This research addresses two research gaps within S-D logic. First, even though S-D logic research emphasizes that value is not created in a vacuum (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008), it has not focused on examining how a sociocultural setting informs value creation (Edvardsson, Tronvoll and Gruber 2011). There are few exceptions though. Informed by Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) contributions, Peñaloza and Venkatesh



(2006) emphasize the sociocultural nature of value creation and the idiosyncratic interpretation of value, and therefore they incorporate meanings into value creation. Drawing on CCT, Arnould, Price, and Malshe (2006) conceptualize consumers as social agents who use their social, cultural, physical, material and economic resources in order to achieve their life-projects and goals. In the examination of triple bottom line (TBL) firms from S-D logic and CCT perspectives, Peñaloza and Mish (2011) show how cultural meanings and values become re-produced and institutionalized in the market place from the macro level to the micro level. At the macro level TBL firms have their own worldviews which they aim to spread so that the worldviews become institutionalized as industry norms and standards at the mezzo level. The standards and norms form the basis for individuals' preference judgements and interpretations at the micro level. Their study shows how consumers' subjectively experienced value is linked to a signification process informed by cultural discourses and norms. Finally, drawing on social constructionist theories, Edvardsson, Tronvoll and Gruber (2011), theorize how resource integration and value creation are affected by social systems which through norms, values and standards guide market actors' activities in different sociocultural contexts. Therefore they call for more empirical research on how social structures inform value co-creation both at collective and individual levels.

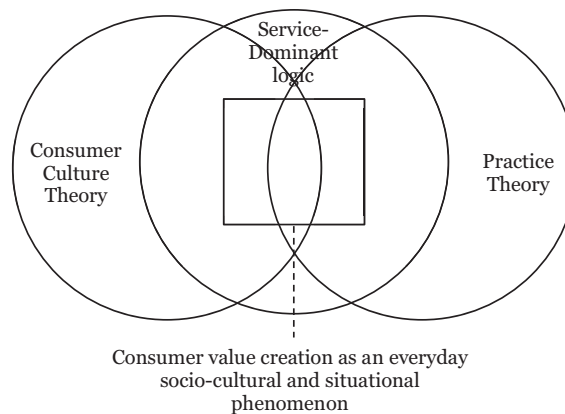
It is not only a sociocultural setting which influences value creation. Situational factors are known to affect consumption choices since Belk's (1975) seminal article. Yet, current S-D logic studies have not focused on examining theoretically or empirically how a particular sociocultural setting and situation informs consumer value creation in an everyday life context. In addressing this research gap, this thesis responds to the research call of a 2005 Association for Consumer Research (ACR) roundtable session on possession constellations, self, and identity for deepening the understanding of mundane consumption (Kleine 2007). Mundane consumption refers to consumer behavior which occurs in situations that consumers perceive neither extraordinary nor dramatic and which is often characterized more by routines than conscious activity compared to extraordinary consumption, such as a theater visit and a house purchase (Gronow and Warde 2001). At the same time, mundane consumption is known to be symbolic. Mundane consumption objects contribute to and reflect identity projects and become objects of attachment (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988; Kleine, Schultz-Kleine and Kernan 1993). Inconspicuous mundane consumption allows sub-cultures to protect their group identity from mainstream co-optation (Cronin, McCarthy and Collins 2012). In mundane situations such as weekday dinners cultural ideals are negotiated and enacted (or not enacted) many times a day, week in week out, year in year out. Yet, how consumers enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption has remained under-explored.

The second research gap within S-D logic relates to value propositions. Despite the fact that customers experience and evaluate value propositions in their everyday life contexts, a value proposition concept has remained de-contextualized to a great extent within S-D logic and marketing research in general. Since the introduction of the value proposition concept by Lanning and Michaels at McKinsey & Company in the 1980s (Ballantyne et al. 2011), marketing research has emphasized its resonance with customers and other beneficiaries. It has meant dividing the value proposition into generic benefit and sacrifice categories: economic, functional, emotional and symbolic benefits, and monetary and nonmonetary sacrifices (Aaker 1995; Keeney 1999; Kaplan and Norton 2004; Payne, Ballantyne and Christopher 2005; Day 2006; Flint and Mentzer 2006; Rintamäki, Kuusela and Mitronen 2007). In addition to this, S-D logic-informed researchers have conceptualized it as a process of designing reciprocal value (Ballantyne and Varey 2006; Flint and Mentzer 2006; Cova and Salle 2008; Ballantyne

et al. 2011). Even though scholars have acknowledged that the value propositions relate to specific users and use situations (Lanning 1998; Arnould et al. 2006; Flint and Mentzer 2006; Grönroos 2007, 2009; Lusch et al. 2007; Cova and Salle 2008; Johnson, Christensen and Kagermann 2008; Ballantyne et al. 2011), they have not examined the implications further – with the exception of Arnould, Price and Malshe (2006). These researchers argue for establishing meaningful links between the value propositions and consumers' goals and resources so that by using the value propositions the consumers can better perform their life projects and roles in different cultural environments.

In addressing the research gaps, the thesis draws on three research streams: S-D logic, CCT and Practice Theory (PT). Figure 1 summarizes the detailed positioning of this research. In Figure 1, a circle represents a research stream while a square represents the theoretical focus of the thesis.

**Figure 1 Research Positioning**



As earlier mentioned, this thesis addresses two research gaps within S-D logic which relate to the limited theoretical understanding on consumer value creation as an everyday sociocultural and situational phenomenon. The thesis draws on the above three research streams because by complementing one another they help to achieve the research objectives in the best possible way. S-D logic has theorized how value is co-created in use in value networks where consumers and other stakeholders integrate resources after accepting value propositions (e.g. Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008). However, S-D logic studies have not focused on investigating why consumers (or other stakeholders) are willing to start value co-creation in different sociocultural contexts and situations. Post-structuralist CCT studies have shown how cultural discourses, ideologies, and cultural ideals inform consumer narratives, identity projects, and consumption choices in idiosyncratic life contexts (e.g. Wallendorf and Arnould 1991; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Holt and Thompson 2004; Moisio, Arnould and Price 2004; Fischer, Otnes and Tuncay 2007; Kozinets 2008; Epp and Price 2011). Thereby they assist in understanding how sociocultural forces inform consumer value creation. However, the post-structuralist CCT studies have not focused on studying how an everyday situation together with the sociocultural forces informs consumer choices.

PT provides a context-laden arena for investigating consumer everyday value creation: a practice (Bourdieu 1984, 1990; Schatzki 1996; Warde 2005). Because PT has impulses from various disciplines, including philosophy and sociology, it is not a unified theory.

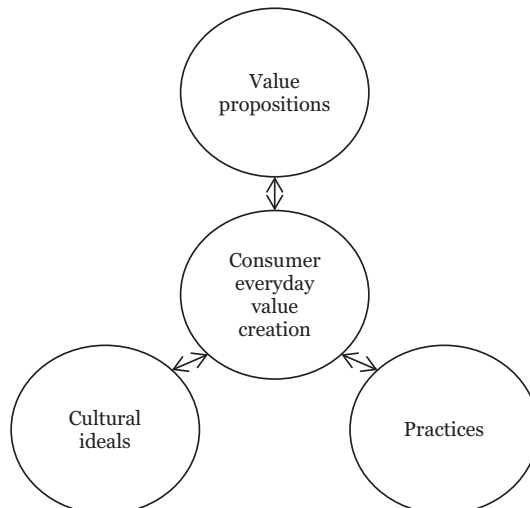
This thesis draws on the theorizing of Schatzki (1996, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2005) and Bourdieu (1984, 1990) because these scientists have thoroughly examined both the social construction of an individual and the interplay between social structures and individuals. As this thesis investigates consumer everyday value creation at a micro level, it does not draw on social scientists who have applied practice theory, in order to increase understanding of the nature and functioning of markets (e.g. Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007; Araujo, Kjellberg and Spencer 2008). With the exception of PT, the thesis does not draw on other institutional theories (Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury 2012). The aim in this regard is to ensure that the positioning of this thesis remains tightly focused and clear.

Most practice theorists agree that a practice is a meeting point for mind, activity and society (Schatzki 2001a). The practice ties value creation to a specific social, cultural and spatial and material setting at a certain time in history and in a consumer's life (Schatzki 2005). Thereby the practice captures the influence of different layers of social life on consumer thought and action: both the effect of macro and mezzo level concepts, such as cultural discourses and cultural ideals, and the influence of micro level concepts, such as consumer resources and specific social, material and spatial settings. Thus the practice makes it possible to examine the interplay between social structures; specific sociocultural, spatio-temporal and material circumstances in consumers' lives; and consumer action. In practices goods and services are not important for their own sake but for carrying out practices (Warde 2005; Schau, Muñiz and Arnould 2009; Korkman et al. 2010). Furthermore, a practice as an ontological unit that makes it possible to examine consumer behavior and the circumstances of life as a mosaic of practices. It is within one practice and across practices where consumers create value.

### 1.3. Research Objectives

Figure 2 summarizes the theoretical focus of the research, addressed by Essays 1-3. This thesis examines the interplay among cultural ideals, practices, and value propositions, and consumers everyday value creation. The concepts of Figure 2 will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2: Key concepts.

**Figure 2 Theoretical Focus of the Thesis**



The thesis has two research objectives. The first objective, addressed by Essays 1 and 2, is to understand and conceptualize how cultural ideals and practices inform consumer everyday value creation. A verb ‘inform’ in this thesis is understood as follows: “[with object] give an essential or formative principle or quality: *religion informs every aspect of their lives*” (Oxford Dictionaries). Drawing on S-D logic (e.g. Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008), PT (e.g. Bourdieu 1990; Schatzki 1996, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2005; Reckwitz 2002) and CCT (e.g. Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Belk 1988; Arnould et al. 2006; Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006), Essay 1 investigates conceptually how value is created in practices, what roles different practice elements have in value creation, and what implications can be drawn for marketing theory and practice. In this article a practice is defined as a context-laden arena for value creation, integrating different practice elements: a specific sociocultural, spatial and temporal context; mental states and bodily activities of consumers; a meaning structure (which refers to Schatzki’s (1996) teleoaffective structure); operant and operand resources and their use.

Essay 2 narrows the research scope compared to Essay 1. Drawing on PT (Bourdieu 1984, 1990; Schatzki 1996; 2001a, 2005, Warde 2005) and CCT (e.g. Arnould and Wallendorf 1991; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Holt and Thompson 2004; Moisio et al. 2004; Fischer et al. 2007; Epp and Price 2011), it examines how consumers enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption where a research unit is a practice. This study perceives a practice as a sociocultural, spatio-temporal and material arena for mundane consumption. The cultural ideals stand for cultural discourses which as tacit understandings frame what people desire, say, and do (Holt and Thompson 2004). The empirical practice context is a weekday dinner practice among Finnish households.

The second research objective, addressed by Essay 3, is to contextualize a value proposition concept in customers’ practices. The approach is to investigate theoretically how consumers experience and evaluate value propositions in their practices, based on the research contributions within S-D logic (e.g. Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008; Payne et al. 2005; Ballantyne and Varey 2006; Korkman et al. 2010; Ballantyne et al. 2011), PT (e.g. Schatzki 1996; Warde 2005), and CCT (e.g. Belk 1988; Holt and Thompson 2004; Kates 2004; Arnould et al. 2006; Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006; Venkatesh, Peñaloza and Firat 2006). In the examination, the value propositions are regarded as signs to which consumers as sociocultural interpreters ascribe intersubjective meanings while experiencing them in different sociocultural and spatio-temporal contexts and act upon them. This study looks for answers to three questions: (1) what is the essence of the value propositions as signs experienced and evaluated by the consumers in their practices; (2) on what basis do the consumers evaluate the value propositions as signs; and (3) what implications can be drawn to the concept of a value proposition.

## 2 KEY CONCEPTS

This chapter introduces and elaborates on the key concepts of this thesis. More specifically, the chapter presents the theoretical perspectives of PT, CCT, and S-D logic with respect to the key concepts. In order to ensure the thesis maintains a tight focus, it does not introduce a wider theoretical debate around these concepts. It is worth mentioning that a theoretical view on these concepts in this summary differs slightly from the conceptualizations of Essay 1 (Holttinen 2009a). The reason for the difference is natural: as I have learned and developed as researcher, my perspective to key concepts has evolved.

### 2.1. Cultural Ideals

Drawing on Holt and Thompson (2004), this thesis perceives cultural ideals as cultural discourses, which as tacit understandings and informal norms, inform consumer value creation within a practice and across practices, an example being a parent ideal. The cultural ideals inform and are represented in consumer identity projects, (such as being a good parent), which refer to the projects of constructing a sense of self (Arnould and Thompson 2005). The identity projects inform consumer life goals, consumer narratives, doings, and consumption choices (Thompson and Tambyah 1999).

CCT studies have shown the power of cultural discourses on consumers: they have evidenced how cultural ideals inform consumer thoughts, narratives, and actions in versatile life contexts (e.g. Wallendorf and Arnould 1991; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Holt and Thompson 2004; Moisio et al. 2004; Fischer et al. 2007). These studies have highlighted how consumers are faced by countervailing cultural discourses and ideologies and how they negotiate their tensions (e.g. Thompson and Haytko 1997; Thompson and Tambyah 1999). Consumers are portrayed as pragmatic and flexible. They compromise cultural ideals under situational demands, such as under time and financial pressures (Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Thompson and Troester 2002). Additionally, consumers interpret and enact the cultural ideals in ways that suit their life circumstances and resources (e.g. Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Holt and Thompson 2004; Kozinets 2008). Social class in particular has been shown to influence how consumers pursue cultural ideals (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991; Holt and Thompson 2004).

As earlier mentioned, cultural ideals are cultural discourses. A discourse deals with how individuals 'make' meaning in order to cope with social life (Van Dijk 1997). In this role, a discourse is representative: it is a set of meanings and statements via which consumers represent themselves and their social world (Bryman 2008). The discourse is also performative. In addition to informing what consumers think and feel, the discourse informs what they say and do (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). This influence remains mostly tacit (Fischer et al., 2007). Each discourse constructs a particular version of reality from many possible versions. Because the discourse makes consumers see the world in a particular way, it narrows their vision; the consumers do not perceive certain phenomena even existing. As the discourses are tied to local and situational contexts or to wider cultural and historical settings, they produce different material outcomes in terms of the sphere of their influence (Alvesson and Karreman 2000).

Discourses are determined by the social rules, norms and conventions of a specific sociocultural setting (Fairclough 2005; Wodak 2008). Therefore their existence is not arbitrary. Depending on circumstances, some discourses become privileged and taken for granted while others become marginalized (Bryman 2008). The discourses spread to different social practices, overlap, and refer to one another (Wodak 2008). They are produced in a social interaction via language and other symbolic systems and, therefore, a text is the manifestation of one or more discourses (Burr 2003; Wodak 2008). Text can refer to anything that can be read for a meaning according to social conventions (Wodak 2008).

## **2.2. Practice**

Practices range from dispersed practices, such as questioning and following rules, to more complex integrative practices, such as business practices and farming (Warde 2005). The integrative practices house particular contexts where people think and act, and they are informed by understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures consisting of goal-oriented reasons for doing, as well as feelings and emotions (Schatzki 1996). Consumers, having different histories, different knowledge and mental states, possess their own versions of teleoaffective structures (Schatzki 2003). Therefore, understandings, rules, and teleoaffective structures capture the influence of both individualistic conditions and collectivist social structures on consumer thought and behavior. The research unit of this thesis is an integrative practice, and henceforth the concept of a practice refers systematically to integrative practices.

Most practice theorists agree that a practice is a meeting point for the mind, activity, and society (Schatzki 2001a). The notion emphasizes the interplay between consumers and the sociocultural environment. Consumer behavior is informed by specific sociocultural and material settings, related to times, places, traditions, and events (Schatzki 2005), and at the same time consumer behavior shapes practices as consumers interpret, produce, and re-produce them (Warde 2005). Thus, PT opposes the individualist ontology where a phenomenon is viewed purely as a product of individual actions. It also opposes the societist ontology which presumes that no social phenomenon is decomposable into features of individuals. (Schatzki 2005.) Consumption is not a practice but a moment in most practices (Warde 2005). Offerings are not important for their own sake but for carrying out the practices (Warde 2005; Schau, Muñoz and Arnould 2009; Korkman et al. 2010).

PT emphasizes that most consumer behavior is spontaneous or routine without explicit consideration (Schatzki 1996). At the same time, it is symbolic. According to Bourdieu (1984), practices result from the interplay between habitus, that is, dispositions internalized via socialization, and the unique position and situation of the social agent in the social arena. In this interplay, habitus is a powerful structuring force; to a great extent social agents take informal and formal rules for granted and act on them (Bourdieu 1984). As a result of past experiences, socially shared and unquestioned beliefs produce and reproduce consumers' perceptions and practices. Having a "feel for the game" (Bourdieu 1990:66), consumers accomplish many daily activities on the basis of what feels right and natural in the given conditions. The behavior is not random though because habitus provides actions with meaning, direction, and an impending outcome (Bourdieu 1990).

Schatzki (1996) theorizes in detail the interplay among habitus and a consumer's unique situation in practices. According to him, directed by understandings, rules and

teleoaffective structures, consumers do what makes best sense for them to do in a specific moment in a practice. In addition to the engaged practice, other practices simultaneously inform consumer behavior (Schatzki 1996). For example, a mother following her good parent project does not want to provide an unhealthy-perceived ready-made food for her children for a weekday dinner. At the same time, she would like to prepare a quick and easy meal so that she can participate in an aerobics class that belongs to her 'keeping fit' project. Then it is her practical intelligibility that organizes her decisions and activities (Schatzki 1996). It reveals the hierarchy of her teleoaffective structure in that specific moment: whether to prioritize a good mother project over a keeping fit project or vice versa.

This thesis perceives a practice as a sociocultural, spatio-temporal and material arena for consumer value creation. In practices consumers (try to) enact cultural ideals and other desirable cultural discourses. Having a practice as a research unit makes it possible to examine consumer doings and the micro and macro circumstances of consumer life as a mosaic of practices where cultural ideals and other cultural discourses enacted, resources integrated, and value created and co-created.

### **2.3. Everyday Value Creation and Value Co-creation**

The starting point of this thesis is that consumers want and do create value for themselves in practices; value is created by customers for customers (Heinonen, Strandvik, Mickelsson, Edvardsson, Sundström and Andersson 2010). S-D logic perceives consumers as resource integrators who, in order to enhance their value creation in their daily lives, acquire, use, change, and integrate resources, including offerings where offerings refer to goods and services (e.g. Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008; Arnould, et al. 2006; Akaka, Vargo and Lusch 2012). Value creation takes place when consumers become better-off, according to their subjective criteria (Grönroos 2011). The consumers can create value with or without firms' offerings. However, thinking of modern societies, it is fair to say that in most times consumers need and use offerings as their value-creating resources. They are interested in using firms' offerings only if they anticipate in deriving value from them. According to S-D logic, as consumers use offerings, value becomes co-created (Vargo and Lusch 2008). A logical question appears: how should one deal with the concept of value co-creation in situations when the offerings are disappointments for consumers? How can value be co-created when consumers experience no value? S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2008) proposes that firms can only offer value propositions and thereby suggests that firms cannot unilaterally create value. Combining this assumption with the S-D logic interpretation of value co-creation, one can derive the following conclusion: S-D logic assumes that consumers and other potential beneficiaries are consistently capable of accepting only those value propositions that will generate value from them. Based on their subjective interpretation, consumers experience value in use as the value propositions promised. Consequently, value becomes systematically co-created. However, this is not what happens in real life where consumers tend to accept value propositions which disappoint them in use (e.g. Bougie, Pieters and Zeelenberg 2003).

Compared to Vargo and Lusch's (2008) conceptualization on value co-creation, this thesis takes a narrower perspective; value becomes co-created when consumers use offerings as their resources in their practices and experience value from their use. In other words, value is co-created when the consumers can enact cultural ideals in practice by using the firm's offerings and, as a result, experience value. Consumers can choose to follow firms' suggestion on how to integrate offerings with their other

resources, or they can choose to pursue their own plan. The consumers use and integrate offerings with their other resources flexibly and creatively, and mold them to fit with their own value-creation circumstances. “Consumers can then weave their own combination of products and services to satisfy their specific needs and desires - to get what they like, when and how they like it” (Pralhad and Ramaswamy 2004:13). Here the context informs resource integration; resources are more valuable in certain contexts and less valuable in others (Chandler and Vargo 2011). For example, the value of the chocolate bar as the only source of energy is very high for a hungry hiker on the mountain, however this is not the case at the party where the same hiker can choose among a wide selection of desirable food and drink offerings, including the same chocolate bar.

Drawing on Gronow and Warde (2001), consumer everyday value creation (value co-creation) in this thesis refers to consumer value creation which occurs in mundane situations that the consumers perceive as neither extraordinary nor dramatic and which are often characterized more by routines than conscious activity. Everyday value creation is also known to be symbolic. Mundane consumption objects contribute to and reflect identity projects and become objects of attachment (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988; Kleine, Schultz-Kleine and Kernan 1993). Inconspicuous mundane consumption allows subcultures to protect their group identity from mainstream co-optation (Cronin, McCarthy and Collins 2012). In mundane situations such as weekday dinners, cultural ideals are negotiated and enacted (or not enacted) many times a day, week in and week out, year in and year out.

#### **2.4. Customer Value**

Customer value has been examined and conceptualized from various perspectives. (See for a synthesis (e.g. Woodall 2003; Khalifa 2004; Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo 2007)). Because the concept means different things for different researchers and practitioners, it is necessary to clarify the perspective of this thesis on customer value. This thesis shares Holbrook’s (1996) view on customer value because it ties customer value to a unique beneficiary experience, and a particular sociocultural, temporal and material context. According to Holbrook (1996:138), customer value is “an interactive relativistic preference experience”. Being interactive refers that customer value prerequisites an involvement between an offering and a customer who values it. Being experience refers that value does not reside in the offering but instead customers derive value from its use. S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008) shares this view. Both interaction and value experience can take place prior, during and after the purchase of the offering (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006). Furthermore, value experiences can be either lived or imaginary (Helkkula, Kelleher and Pihlström 2012).

Value as a preference means that value experience is based on an evaluation steered by certain criteria (Holbrook 1996). According to Holbrook (1999), the criteria include more or less permanent themes, such as values and cultural ideals, as well as situational preferences. In this research, the evaluation of value is assumed to be steered by practices. In more specific, in practices it is cultural discourses, such as ideologies and cultural ideas, which inform consumer thoughts and behavior: what kind of projects, goals and doings they perceive as desirable for themselves and others. Thus they set a cultural criteria standard against which value propositions and offerings are evaluated. At the same time situational factors related to specific social, spatial, temporal and material contexts influence which cultural discourses consumers can and



want to enact in experience and how. Consequently, customer value becomes relativistic as it varies across offerings, people and situations (Holbrook 1996).

It is worth emphasizing that customer value is not always informed by the cultural criteria. Fulfilling basic needs, such as hunger, and experiencing hedonic value (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982) represent this type of customer value. Nevertheless value experience is idiosyncratic (Vargo and Lusch 2008); it is tied to a specific sociocultural context and situation, and experienced by a beneficiary with unique characteristics and prevailing resources. In this thesis, customer value is related to the meanings of offerings and their value propositions.

## **2.5. Value Proposition**

This concept is the focus of Essay 3. As Chapters 4 and 5 introduce the findings and contributions of Essay 3, the concept of the value proposition is not introduced in detail here. Drawing on S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008; Akaka et al. 2012) and PT (Schatzki 1996; Warde 2005), this research perceives consumers as resource integrators who, informed by cultural discourses and the opportunities and constraints of practices, choose to use or not to use offerings as their value-creating resources in their practices. The opportunities and constraints of practices are context-bound and situational factors which influence how well customers can enact desired cultural discourses in practices, some examples of which include consumer resources, material constraints, other practice participants, and other practices. Firms can only offer value propositions (Vargo and Lusch 2008) - it is always a customer or any other beneficiary who accepts them.

In this thesis the value propositions are invariably linked with more consumer resources than a specific offering(s) only because deriving value from the offerings in use always requires resource integration. Enhancing value creation is about providing customers with resources that fit with the other elements of customer practices: places, tools, images, physical spaces, and actors (Korkman et al. 2010). The value propositions include a specific offering (offerings) and an implicit or explicit suggestion of how to integrate this (these) offering (offerings) with other consumer resources. Customers may need new knowledge and skills to be able to integrate the new offering effectively with their resources (Hibbert, Winklhofer and Temerak 2012). Therefore, the role of firms is to support customer learning so that the customers can materialize the desired value (Arnould 2005; Payne, Storbacka and Frow 2008). Consequently, the value propositions enable the customers to customize their set of resources, in order to create value for themselves (Akaka et al. 2012). Finally, meanings are perceived as a primary source of value of the value propositions and related offerings. Consumers perceive that value propositions are valuable when the value propositions can help the customers to enact desirable cultural discourses in practices.

## **2.6. Meaning**

In this thesis consumers are perceived as sociocultural interpreters who assign intersubjective meanings to signs (such as offerings) and act upon them (such as buying or not buying offerings) (Mick 1986). The thesis shares Kleine's and Kernan's (1991) view on meanings. A meaning is a perception or an interpretation of any object. An object refers to anything textual which can be read for a meaning according to social conventions (Wodak 2008), such as a tangible object, behavior, phenomenon or a

social agent. The interpretation is not inherent to the object but it arises from the interaction among the object, interpreter (a consumer) and a context. As consumers respond to their interpretation of the object, the meaning is inherently subjective, symbolic and context-tied. Thus the meaning of the object varies across consumers and across situations for the same consumer. The interpretation of the meaning has two dimensions: what the object is and what it can perform. In this study, the context refers to a specific situation (Kleine and Kernan 1991) and to a particular sociocultural setting.

Meanings are perceived as a primary source of value in offerings and their value propositions. Sydney Levy (1959) introduced the idea that consumers are buying meanings in (or through) offerings. CCT research in particular has illuminated the symbolic role of possessions and brands in identity projects (e.g. Belk 1988; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Belk and Costa 1998; Holt and Thompson 2004; Schau, Gilly and Wolfenbarger 2009) and group identity projects (e.g. Kates 2004; Martin, Schouten and McAlexander 2006). For example, a Nike shoe as a value proposition is not a highly functional sports shoe but “a vehicle to “just do it”” (Arnould et al. 2006:95). Thus Nike shoes help the consumers to achieve their fitness goals in their keeping fit project by offering functional shoes and by enhancing their self-confidence and fitness identity.

The meanings of possessions are not linked to the identity projects only; offerings as symbols comprise multiple layers of meanings dependent on social groups and cultural contexts (Venkatesh et al. 2006). Consumer studies have evidenced how consumers, in addition to symbolic benefits, look for different types of value from offerings, such as hedonistic experiences, emotions, and functional and economic benefits (e.g. Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Woodruff 1997; Woodall 1999, 2003; Khalifa 2004; Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo 2007). Grönroos (2011:285) concludes: “consumers look for value in terms of becoming ‘better off’ in some way”.

Consumers are the co-creators of meanings, and they selectively interpret and use them for their own purposes (e.g. Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Peñaloza 2001; Arnould 2005). A value proposition is a source of many potential meanings related to the value that the consumers want derive from it. A chocolate bar, for example, can be a source of many potential meanings, such as ‘a vehicle for a fascinating taste sensations’ (providing hedonic value), ‘this dark chocolate provides us both healthiness and pleasure’ (helping consumers in their identity project of ‘having a healthy and fit body’ and providing hedonic value) and, ‘such a high-esteem chocolate brand – a perfect gift to my friend’ (helping consumers in the identity project of ‘being close friends’ and thus providing social value).

### **3 ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL TENETS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Ontological and Epistemological Tenets**

Each research has its ontological and epistemological commitments that are either explicitly reflected or implicitly assumed. Evaluating scientific value is tied to ontological and epistemological commitments. A fundamental question is: can a scientific study, having its ontological and epistemological commitments, provide warranted and justifiable scientific knowledge advances? An evaluation occurs in two levels: within a theory stream/paradigm, and within a discipline where different, competing theory streams/paradigms take different ontological and epistemological positions. Acknowledging this, it is important to be explicit about the ontological and epistemological commitments of this research and their implications.

Ontology is concerned about existence. In social sciences an ontological position is related to a question: are social entities objective constructions that have an independent reality external to social actors or are social entities social constructions (Bryman 2008). Epistemology examines what constitutes warranted, justifiable scientific knowledge and provides normative standards for an evaluation (Johnson and Duberley 2000; Fleetwood 2005; Bryman 2008). Epistemological claims on proper scientific knowledge are related to ontological assumptions. Thus ontological and epistemological commitments influence research processes and methods through which warranted knowledge claims are made (Johnson and Duberley 2000). In social sciences, a central epistemological debate is between a realist position and an interpretivist position: should the social world be studied according to the principles of natural sciences with the aim at developing law-like social theories (the realist position) or should social sciences aim at understanding and interpreting the meanings of social phenomena from the perspective of the social actors (the interpretivist position) (Bryman 2008). These two positions represent extreme viewpoints of social existence. Critical realism does not strictly adhere to either of these viewpoints.

##### ***3.1.1. Ontological Tenets in Critical Realism***

Critical realism is a specific version of realism associated particularly with Bhaskar's work (Bhaskar 1989a; Fairclough 2005; Bryman 2008). It acknowledges the existence both natural and social worlds and argues that they differ from one another. Unlike the natural world, the social world depends on human thought and action for its existence and meaning: it is socially constructed (Fairclough 2005). According to critical realism, a social world is pre-constructed for any human being (Fairclough 2005). A social or natural entity can exist independently without an individual observing, knowing and constructing it (Johnson and Duberley 2000; Fleetwood 2005).

Critical realism divides the social world into three different strata: the real, the actual and the empirical. The real is the sphere of the social structures, the actual the sphere of processes and events, and the empirical the domain where social actors experience the real and actual worlds. Social practices are more or less durable articulations of diverse social elements at a certain time and place, including discourse, and they mediate the relationship between the real and actual worlds. (Fairclough 2005.)

According to critical realism, social phenomena are socially constructed in discourse in social practices where people produce and reproduce discourses (Fairclough 2005). Human-beings are social agents who make sense of discourses, draw upon them and act on them (Fairclough 1992). As individuals have different experiences and resources, they interpret discourses and act on interpretations in different ways (Fairclough 1992). Social construction is constrained by extra-discursive elements, such as materiality and social structures (Nightingale and Comby 2002, Fairclough 2005, Sims-Schouten and Willig 2007). Social structures and conventions shape and constrain discourses, their production and interpretation (Fairclough 1992). Fairclough (2005:916) conceptualizes discourses as “the linguistic/semiotic elements of social events and the linguistic/semiotic facets of social structures and social practices”.

In regards to social construction, critical realism assumes that reality is “comprised of causal generative mechanisms” (Bhaskar 1989b:16) where real, non-observable social structures and mechanisms underlie, govern and produce actual events which are experienced by individuals. These mechanisms or structures either produce a specific phenomenon or are a condition for it. Human-beings act on those conditions but they also learn to manipulate them (Johnson and Duberley 2000.) Recognizing the complexity of the relations between social structures, processes and human-beings, critical realism does not assume that social structures have direct causal powers to human activities and processes or vice versa (Fairclough 2005).

Critical realism does not privilege between human agency and social structures (Fairclough 2005; Fleetwood 2005). They reciprocally presuppose each other (Johnson and Duberley 2000): “one is what it is, and can exist, only in the virtue of the other” (Fleetwood 2005:216). In other words, while social structures govern the everyday activities of human-beings, the human-beings reproduce and transform social structures in daily life. To summarize, critical realism wants “to explain social processes and events in terms of causal powers of both structure and human agency and the contingency in their effects” (Fairclough 2005:923). Hence the critical realist ontology is neither voluntarist nor determinist. According to voluntarism human-beings are completely autonomous and free-willed agents while according to determinism human actions are fully determined by the environment (Burrell and Morgan 1979).

### ***3.1.2. Epistemological Tenets in Critical Realism***

According to critical realism, it is possible to make scientific knowledge claims of reality (Burr 2003). Research has an access to the experiences and representations of individuals which are governed by the real world. However, these representations may not necessarily reflect the real world fully accurately or totally (Nightingale and Comby 2002; Burr 2003; Fairclough 2005). Therefore it is possible to explore unobservable generative mechanisms on the basis of their effects on the observable, and subjectively experienced social phenomena (Johnson and Duberley 2000; Bryman 2008).

According to critical realism, scientific knowledge is socially constructed (Johnson and Duberley 2000). Researchers have no unmediated access to reality in social sciences: there is no theory-neutral observation, description, interpretation, theorization or explanation (Sayer 1992; Johnson and Duberley 2000; Kwan and Tsang 2001; Fleetwood 2005). Rather, research objects are always conceptually mediated (Fleetwood 2005). There is always a distinction between the objects of research and the conceptual terms that researchers apply in defining them (Bryman 2008). However, this is not perceived as an epistemological handicap. A conceptually mediated theory is

a still measure of an external reality (Kwan and Tsang 2001) because external structures can be theoretically inferred by examining their relational effects on human agencies (Johnson and Duberley 2000).

While critical realists acknowledge that social theories do not represent the complete, true accounts of the social reality pre-existing for human-beings (Bryman 2008), they believe that scientific progress is possible and call for critical testing of theories (Kwan and Tsang 2001). “The world can only be understood in terms of the available conceptual resources, but the latter do not determine the structure of the world itself. And despite our entrapment within our conceptual schemas, it is still possible to differentiate between more and less practically-adequate beliefs about the material world” (Sayer 1992:83). An empirical reality provides a feedback mechanism for evaluating the scientific value of theories: the success or failure of real-life interventions shows the value (Johnson and Duberley 2000).

### ***3.1.3. Reflection of the Ontological and Epistemological Choices***

Critical realism was a logical choice as an ontological and epistemological underpinning of this research because it offers a suitable framework for examining consumer value creation as a sociocultural and situational phenomenon: as an interplay among (1) social agents (consumers and their talking and doings in practices), (2) social structures (formal and informal norms produced and re-produced in practices, such as cultural ideals), and (3) the non-discursive elements of practices (situational and context-related constraints and opportunities, such as material resources). Discourses are the textual facets of social structures and non-discursive practice elements which inform consumer value creation and which consumers produce and re-produce in practices. Additionally, critical realism shares my subjective world view as a researcher on how a social world is socially produced and re-produced. Informed by social structures and the non-discursive elements of the reality, such as materiality, consumers are not free-willed agents who lead their lives with fully unpredictable consequences.

Ontological and epistemological commitments have influenced this research. First, critical realism has affected the research focus. This thesis examines how practices and cultural ideals (social structures and the non-discursive elements of the reality) inform consumer everyday value creation. Second, critical realism has informed the choice of suitable theory streams: PT, CCT, and SD-logic. PT's and critical realism's perspectives of social phenomena resonate with each other. Like critical realism, PT opposes the individualist ontology where a phenomenon is viewed purely as a product of individual actions. PT also opposes the societist ontology which presumes that no social phenomenon is decomposable into the features of individuals. (Schatzki 2005.) Thus, PT is able to offer a context-laden research unit for examining the interplay among social agents, social structures and situational, non-discursive practice elements. CCT and S-D logic acknowledge the sociocultural and idiosyncratic nature of consumer behavior and value creation. Post-structuralist CCT studies have evidenced how cultural discourses, ideologies and cultural ideals govern consumer behavior. Third, the ontological and epistemological commitments have guided the choice of empirical research approach and methods. Consequently, the ontological and epistemological commitments inform the findings and contributions of the thesis.

### **3.2. Empirical Research Approach and Methods**

This section introduces the empirical research approach and methods of the thesis. As earlier mentioned, the empirical study of Essay 2 investigates how consumers enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption where the empirical research context is a weekday dinner practice among Finnish households. The weekday dinner practice was chosen to a research context for three reasons. First, it ties consumer behavior to a specific sociocultural, spatial and material setting at a certain time in history and in a consumer's life (Schatzki 2005). Therefore, the practice is a suitable research unit for examining the interplay among cultural ideals - specific sociocultural, spatio-temporal, and material circumstances (both individualistic and collectivist) in the consumers' life - and mundane consumption. Second, a practice as an ontological unit makes it possible to examine consumer behavior and the circumstances of life as a mosaic of practices. It is within one practice and across practices where consumers enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption. Third, the Fazer Group, of Finnish origin, an international confectionary and bakery products and food services firm, wanted to understand how it could create more value for consumers in their everyday meals.

#### ***3.2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)-informed Approach***

Because a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emphasizes the constitutive role of a discourse and focuses on examining the relations between discourses, social structures, and social phenomena (Fairclough 2005; Van Dijk 1997), it was a logical choice for the research approach. In this study, cultural ideals (materialized as cultural discourses) and the specific sociocultural, spatio-temporal and material setting (materialized as local discourses) inform what consumers perceive as desirable, acceptable, and realistic to do in practices. The cultural and local discourses produce and re-produce practices, and are represented in the practices as the consumers enact them in their speech and doings. As my focus was examining consumer value creation at a micro-level, I did not purposefully examine discourses as sociocultural phenomena, which permeate societies and consumer lives from a macro to a micro level.

What do I mean by a CDA-informed approach? In addition to a scientific goal, critical discourse analysts have a change goal. By applying a CDA, they want to reveal or challenge hidden power abuse and inequality reproduced by discourse. Acknowledging that there is no value-free discourse analysis, these researchers want to participate in the moral and political critique of the status quo. Thus, in addition to showing linkages between discourses and social structures, they want to be change agents (Van Dijk 1997.). The word "informed" is a relevant addition to the title of my research approach. While I applied a CDA to achieve the research aim, I had no moral or political change agenda. Rather, my managerial aim has been to provide firms with valid conceptual lenses for understanding and participating in consumer everyday value creation.

Critical realism does not favor any specific scientific method. Different methods are evaluated according to their practical adequacy in terms of helping to achieve research objectives (Johnson and Duberley 2000). In the CDA-informed approach I concentrated on understanding the interplay among cultural ideals, practices and consumer action.

### **3.2.2. Data Sources**

The research objective of Essay 2 guided the selection of data sources. I needed rich contextual data of the weekday dinner practice in order to understand this complex, sociocultural and situational phenomenon. From this perspective, I evaluated qualitative data as superior to quantitative data. Furthermore, I needed an access to people's experiences and doings which, together with my theoretical underpinnings, would enable me to examine the interplay among cultural ideals, practices and consumer doings (Johnson and Duberley 2000; Fairclough 2005). Therefore, I needed both verbal and behavioral qualitative data.

Based on my data requirements, I chose participant observation, focused unstructured interviews, field notes, and photos to be my data sources. Participant observation has many advantages. First, it allows a researcher to better understand the context where people interact (Patton 2002) and thus contextualize the textual material (Oberhuber and Krzyzanowski 2008). Second, participant observation enables a researcher to capture routines which informants may take for granted and thus do not report them (Patton 2002; Arnould and Price 2006). Third, observation enables the researcher to learn and capture things which people are not willing to discuss in interviews: stories of interviewees are selections rather than complete reflections of reality (Patton 2002). Thus observation can reveal discrepancies between what people tell (or want to tell) about their doings and what they are actually doing (Oberhuber and Krzyzanowski 2008). Fourth, observation enables the researcher to be open and discovery oriented (Patton 2002).

Participant observation meant that I participated in the weekday dinner at the homes of my case families from the start of cooking until the end of dinner after which or during which we had an informal discussion. I did not cook, and I had dinner with the family only when it appeared to be the most appropriate solution: for example, when a family without asking set a place at the table for me. I used observations as an input to the interviews and for understanding the dynamism between talkings and doings: how the 'talk', that is, different discourses, materialized into activities. In order to enhance memorizing and interpreting meaningful observations, I used photos and field notes as a supporting resource.

It was by means of unstructured focused interviews, carried out in an informal manner, that I gained textual material for the CDA-informed analysis, in addition to observations and photos. The interviews gave informants an opportunity to give their account of the weekday dinner. In discourse-oriented interviews, an open format is crucial because it allows informants to discuss matters which are meaningful for them rather than important for the researcher (Oberhuber and Krzyzanowski 2008). During the interviews, I brought up my observations if informants did not discuss them. Informants may not always disclose all the potentially important details of the story (Ochs 1997). Interviews were tape-recorded with the approval of the interviewees and transcribed verbatim.

### **3.2.3. Case Selection**

My empirical study was based on twenty weekday dinner cases where one case corresponded to a 1.5 - 4 hour home visit to a Finnish household at one weekday evening between October 2009 and January 2010. The cases represented households in the Greater Helsinki Area where at least one adult was working full-time. The summary

of cases is presented in Table 1. As cases represent different types of households and their weekday dinner practices, in the study 'a case' and 'a household' as concepts are used interchangeably.

**Table 1 Description of Weekday Dinner Cases**

<b>Case number</b>	<b>Household type</b>	<b>Age of adult(s),</b> (R) = responsible for dinner	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Dinner participants</b>
C1	DINK	37 year old female (R) 33 year old male	Entrepreneur Dancer	Master's degree Secondary education	Responsible for dinner
C2	Single parent - 3 year old son	30 year old female	Civil servant	Master's degree	All
C3	Family with children - 17 year old daughter - 13 year old son	46 year old female (R) 47 year old male	Children's nurse Logistics worker	Vocational school Vocational school	All
C4	DINK	56 year old female (R) 63 year old male (R)	Clerical employee Clerical employee	Vocational school Vocational school	All
C5	Single	24 year old male (R)	Office worker	Secondary education	All
C6	Single	46 year old female (R)	Superior clerical employee	Bachelor degree	All
C7	Single	27 year old female (R)	Entrepreneur and artist	Bachelor degree	All
C8	Single	58 year old female (R)	Worker	Vocational school	All
C9	Family with children - 13, 12 year old sons - 12 year old daughter	48 year old male (R) 49 year old female	Superior clerical employee Superior clerical employee	Master's degree Bachelor degree	All but the older son
C10	DINK	21 year old female (R) 21 year old male	Worker Worker	Secondary education Primary education	All
C11	Single	35 year old male	Superior clerical employee	Master's degree	All
C12	DINK	50 year old male (R) 53 year old female	Superior clerical employee Housewife	Master's degree Master's degree	Responsible for dinner
C13	DINK	29 year old male (R) 28 year old female	Clerical employee Clerical employee	Bachelor degree Bachelor degree	Responsible for dinner
C14	Single	49 year old male	Clerical employee	Bachelor degree	All
C15	Family with children - 9 year old daughter	40 year old female (R) 39 year old male	Worker Worker	Vocational school Primary education	All but father
C16	Family with children - 6 year old daughter	46 year old female (R) 45 year old male	Teacher Entrepreneur	Master's degree Master's degree	All but father
C17	Family with children - 4 and 5 year old sons	29 year old female (R) 34 year old male (R)	Civil servant Clerical employee	Bachelor degree Vocational school	All
C18	Family with children, - 7, 8 year old sons - 1 year old daughter	35 year old female (R) 41 year old male	Clerical employee, on maternity leave Director	Bachelor degree Master's degree	All
C19	DINK	55 year old male (R) 56 year old female (R)	Entrepreneur Clerical employee	Secondary education Vocational school	All
C20	Family with children - 5 year old son - 3 year old daughter	35 year old female (R) 36 year old male	Clerical employee Superior clerical employee	Vocational school Bachelor degree	All but father



In selecting suitable cases, I applied theoretical sampling, the purpose of which is to look for a sample which is representative in terms of concepts (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The cases were chosen so that they would represent heterogeneity in terms of weekday dinner practices. As Table 1 shows, the examined cases capture variance between the social settings. Four different types of households were represented in the cases: single, double income no kids (DINK), families with children under seven years old, and families with children over seven years old living at home. Furthermore, the age of the household member responsible for the weekday dinner practice caught the variance in consumers' intangible and tangible resources, which often change as people age. Finally, education levels and professions captured the variance in social, cultural, and financial resources.

### **3.2.4. Analysis**

I kept complete records of the research throughout the research process: a research plan, sample selection, field notes, photos, interviews, in order to keep the analysis as transparent as possible (Pollak 2008). I used nVivo8 as a centralized data repository, which enabled me to gain a holistic but detailed view on rich empirical data. My theoretical underpinnings of cultural ideals, practices, mundane consumption, and discourses offered me lenses through which I viewed the data, while the empirical findings guided my analysis. Following Eisenhardt (1989), I analyzed within-case data in order to examine interplay among cultural ideals, practices, and consumer thoughts and doings. It meant analyzing (1) which cultural ideals and other discourses (both cultural and local) were present; (2) why they were present, referring to what was meaningful for the households in the weekday dinner practice; (3) which cultural ideals materialized into consumer action, and which did not; (4) why; and (5) how the cultural ideals materialized in the consumer action. In addition to within-case data analysis, I searched for cross-case patterns for different concepts and their interdependencies (Eisenhardt 1989). I analyzed similarities across cases. I wanted to understand which cultural ideals and other discourses were present across cases and whether they were able to produce similar outcomes. Additionally, I analyzed differences across cases and why those differences were present.

I conducted the within-case and cross-case data analyses in two dimensions: as the text analysis of interviews and by comparing the observation findings to the text analysis findings. In the text analysis, my analytical process followed Fairclough's (2003) approach. I examined semantic and vocabulary relationships between words and longer expressions in order to identify discourses in place. In addition to cultural discourses, I focused on identifying local discourses, which would illuminate themes relating to a specific case. Moreover, I analyzed interdiscursive relations, that is, how the discourses were linked, in order to examine the interaction among cultural discourses, and a specific sociocultural, temporal and material setting, and consumer doings. Finally, by comparing the text analysis findings with the observation findings I could identify how the cultural ideals materialized into consumer action.

### **3.2.5. Trustworthiness of Findings**

During the research process I addressed its trustworthiness via Lincoln's and Guba's (1985) criteria for qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility is concerned with a level of congruence between concepts and observations. It is an evaluation of whether or not research findings represent a

credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the informants' original data. Transferability (external validity) questions to which extent the findings can be generalized across social settings. Dependability (reliability) looks at to which extent theoretical inferences can be justified. It looks at whether findings are consistent and could be repeated. Conformability (objectivity) is concerned to which extent interpretations minimize research biases. It draws attention to a degree of neutrality: the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not by researcher bias, motivation, or interest. (Bryman 2008.)

As to credibility, it is worth emphasizing that a research situation is never equivalent to a normal weekday dinner situation at examined households. Consequently, the research circumstances may foster the reproduction of discourses which otherwise would not be as strongly present (Abell and Myers 2008). I addressed this credibility challenge via a household recruitment process and method choices. Equipped with my written instructions, an external market research company recruited households with whom I had no earlier acquaintance. The households were informed that I was a researcher who investigated Finnish weekday dinner practices. It was emphasized to the households that I was interested in their ordinary, everyday weekday dinner practices and therefore I hoped they would carry them out as if I were not present. In addition, they were informed what would happen during my stay at their home: observing, taking photos and notes as well as having an interview. In general, the aim was to provide enough facts about the evening and to minimize their presuppositions or speculations as to what I was examining. After the recruiting phone call from the external market research company, I phoned each household to confirm my visit and to make the first personal acquaintance. In addition to the recruitment process, I used triangulation to increase credibility; I used observations and interviews in order to examine weekday dinner happenings in detail and at the same time holistically. I was able to identify similarities and discrepancies between my observations and interviewees' sayings and raise them up during discussion. However, it is important to emphasize once again that there is no detached, theory-neutral interview or observation (Moisander, Valtonen and Hirsto 2009). My participation in the weekday dinner meal, the interview questions, the respondents' answers, and our dialogue reproduced discourses specific to this particular sociocultural context and situation.

What about transferability? Essay 2 investigates the interplay among cultural ideals, practices and mundane consumption. As this study was able to illuminate the relationships among these concepts, the research findings are generalizable in terms of theory. Essay 2 is also an empirical study in a particular sociocultural and spatio-temporal context. Therefore, its specific empirical findings cannot be transferred to other sociocultural contexts and other practices because findings are tied to a specific practice and to a specific sociocultural context. For example, based on the research findings, one cannot make a conclusion that a food ideal consists of the same components in Finland and Sweden. Finally, it is important to mention that each household received a 100 euro gift voucher from a well-known Finnish department store as a reward for their participation. This may have attracted certain types of households to participate in the study.

I addressed dependability in two ways. Firstly, I kept complete records of the research throughout the research process: a research plan, sample selection, field notes, photos, interviews, in order to keep the analysis as transparent as possible (Pollak 2008). Secondly, I used nVivo8 as a centralized data repository which enabled me to gain a holistic but detailed view on rich empirical data. According Baker, Gabrielatos, Khosravini, Krzyzanowski, McEnery and Wodak (2008), in CDA, conformability may

be a challenge as researchers can unintentionally choose texts in order to prove their point. I tried to avoid this phenomenon in three ways. Firstly, I recruited only households that I had no earlier acquaintance, in order to minimize my pre-understandings of the cases. Secondly, I coded all potentially meaningful data to nVivo8. The coded references were my key data sources. Thirdly, Fazer Group and I made an agreement which gave me fully free hands to conduct this study according to the criteria of trustworthy qualitative research.

What actions could have improved the trustworthiness of the findings? I identify improvement opportunities especially in the area of creditability. I could have extended my observations from one weekday dinner to multiple weekday dinners and weekend dinners within the same household. The households could have perceived me as a more ordinary participant of the weekday dinner, which may have made the situation to resemble even more their ordinary evening dinner. Additionally, I could have investigated households in their other practices that they brought up in their stories, such as in weekend dinners, in order to illuminate more thoroughly the interplay among cultural ideals and practices and consumer doings across practices. Moreover, I could have increased credibility by extending research methods. For example, I could have applied meal dairies as a qualitative method to gain more evidence on the materialization of a food ideal into meals. Finally, I could have examined cultural ideals and their materialization quantitatively, for example, through a consumer survey. All these credibility improvement techniques can also be seen as areas for further research.

## 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

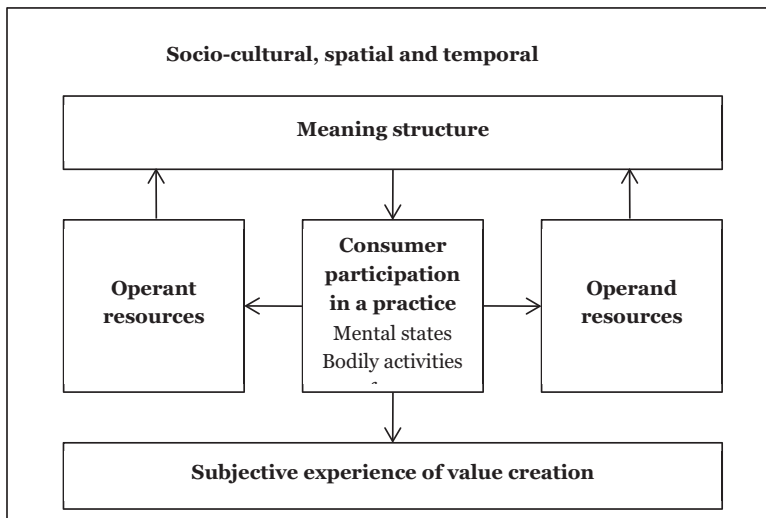
In this chapter, I present the research findings of each essay. It is worth mentioning that the findings below have been replicated purposefully in detail from the essays so that the readers can easily follow their contributions in Chapter 5.

### 4.1. Findings of Essay 1

Drawing on S-D logic, PT and CCT, Essay 1 conceptualizes how consumers create value in practices. A practice is defined as a context-laden arena for value creation, integrating a specific sociocultural, spatial and temporal context; mental states and bodily activities of consumers; a meaning structure; operant and operand resources and their use. Figure 2 illustrates the value creation phenomenon. In this figure, practice elements are presented as boxes and their interdependencies as arrows. The direction of the arrows tells the direction of the influence between different elements; arrows explain how different practice elements relate to and influence one another but they intend to present no direct causal relationship.

It is worth mentioning that Essay 1 was my first theoretical investigation on consumer value creation and practices as a doctoral candidate. Therefore, it is an ambitious but naïve attempt to compress this complex phenomenon into one figure where one-way relationships between consumer behavior and the other practice elements are very clear. The other two essays represent consumer everyday value creation as a complex phenomenon – too complex to be condensed into a figure.

**Figure 3 Consumers' Value Creation in a Practice**



**Sociocultural, spatial and temporal context.** Context-ladenness means that a practice is tied to a specific sociocultural setting, time and place, populated by a particular group of individuals (Schatzki 2005). It offers an arena where consumers

carry practices. Furthermore, it imposes formal and informal rules and norms for consumers on how to participate in the practice. For example, national nutritional recommendations are informal cultural norms for eating properly. The influence of the (sociocultural, spatial and temporal) context on the consumers' participation in the practice is assumed to be embedded in operant resources (e.g. knowledge on and preferences for different meal options based on one's upbringing), operand resources (e.g. available time and space for cooking at home) and in a meaning structure (e.g. a weight-losing project as an informal norm to eating light).

**Operant and operand resources.** Consumers are resource integrators. Drawing on Vargo and Lusch (2004), Arnould et al. (2006) split consumer resources into these two groups. Operand resources are those over which consumers have an allocative power, including financial resources, property, offerings and other similar resources. Operant resources are regarded as consumers' core competences that can be applied in various contexts or extended to new ones. They include cultural resources, social resources, and mental and physical capabilities (Arnould et al. 2006), entailing language competence, cultural knowledge, skills, experiences and modes of thought that a consumer acquires via socialization in one's cultural context, such as in a family, social class, neighborhood or sub-culture (Allen and Anderson 1994). Empirical research has evidenced the influence of cultural resources on consumer choice (e.g. Holt 1998; Allen 2002). In addition to cultural resources, consumers use social resources which refer to social networks and relationships affecting a brand choice and arousing new consumption (e.g. Schouten and MacAlexander 1995; Cova and Cova 2002; Warde 2005; Arnould et al. 2006). Finally, physical and mental capabilities affect which offerings consumers prefer to use.

Which operant and operand resources are valuable and used depends on the engaged practice. For example, adventure sports require more physical and mental endurance than having a weekday dinner. Equally, consumers use different operand resources within the same practice. For example, the weekday dinner practice requires different cooking skills, depending on whether consumers warm up ready-made food or prepare everything themselves. It is important to identify the type, quantity and quality of both operant and operand resources because they influence which practices (including other interrelated practices beyond the practice under examination) consumers participate in, how they take part in them, and what types of value they seek and experience in them. For example, a high-income family can afford to eat out in restaurants more often compared to a low-income family. Being resource integrators, consumers are willing to change the constellation of resources if it is valuable and possible for them. Operant and operand resources are assumed to influence consumers' participation in practices through a meaning structure.

**Meaning structure.** Practice-specific meaning structures explain why consumers participate in certain practices and why they behave in practices in a specific way. A practice-specific meaning structure refers to Schatzki's (1996) rules and teleoaffective structures that guide behavior in practice. Rules refer to explicit formulations of what to do, such as acts of law, precepts and instructions (Schatzki 2001b). Teleoaffective structures are also normative for participants in a practice: what is correct and acceptable behavior in a practice (Schatzki 1996). The teleological dimension relates to the goal-oriented reasons for doing (project, task, purpose) given beliefs, hopes, expectations and emotions, whereas the affective dimension refers to moods, emotions, feelings and passions: how things matter (Schatzki 1996, 2001b). Directed by rules and teleoaffective structures, consumers do what makes best sense for them to do in the specific practice (Schatzki 1996, 2001b). The teleoaffective structure is not a property of

a consumer but it is a property of a practice which consumers carry (Schatzki 2003). Individual consumers, having different histories, different knowledge of the circumstances and different mental states, possess their own versions that organize their activities in a practice (Schatzki 2003). In other words, operant and operand resources produce a subjective version of teleoaffective structures. These versions can be partly the same but also divergent and conflicting (Schatzki 2003).

In addition to the meaning structure of the engaged practice, the teleoaffective structures of other practices in which consumers participate guide behavior in the practice (Schatzki 1996). For example, in the case of weekday dinner practice, a mother having her identity project of being a good mother does not want to provide ready-made food for her children. On the other hand, she would like to prepare something very quick and easy, in order to have time for an aerobics class which is a part of her fitness practice. Then it is her practical intelligibility (also referred as action intelligibility) which organizes her decisions and activities (Schatzki 1996), revealing the hierarchy of meaning structure of the engaged practice. It is important to emphasize that the practical intelligibility, that is, consumers who do what makes the best sense to do, does not mean that consumers necessarily act rationally (Schatzki 1996). For example, dieting consumers may stuff themselves with five chocolate bars at once for an instant pleasure experience even though this action does not support their dieting goals.

The existence of a practical intelligibility does not mean that all consumer activities result from a conscious reflection of what to do. On the contrary, the lion's share of consumer activities are spontaneous or routine behavior without any explicit consideration (Schatzki 1996). To some extent, consumers take meaning structures for granted and act on them, defined by Bourdieu (1990:66) as *doxa* - "commitment to the presuppositions". Having a "feel for the game" (Bourdieu 1990:66), consumers accomplish many daily activities on the basis what feels right and natural in the given specific conditions. However, even though a large portion of consumer activities are routine behavior without conscious reflection, it is not random because it is guided by meaning rules and teleoaffective structures (Schatzki 1996). They provide consumer activities with meaning, direction and an impending outcome (Bourdieu 1990).

**Consumer participation in a practice.** A consumer's voluntary participation in the practice is an explicit sign of its value creation. The participation includes mental states and bodily activities (such as sayings, doings, facial expressions and interaction between consumers) as well as the use of operant and operand resources. Bodily activities and the use of resources manifest and signify the consumer's mental states (Schatzki 2001b). Behavior makes mental states visible: how things stand in a persons' life (Schatzki 1996). Mental states are not assumed to be causal determinants of behavior but instead they provide reasons why certain activities are performed (Schatzki 1996). Offerings are not important for their own sake but for carrying out the practice (Warde 2005). Offerings are inputs to a value co-creation process (Normann 2001) in which consumers participate by using them on their own at a minimum (Vargo and Lusch 2008, Gummesson 2008). Value co-creation can cover consumption from pre-purchase to post-purchase activities (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006). For example, dinner practice may include a search for a suitable recipe before the purchase of ingredients and it continues after having the dinner by cleaning and doing the dishes. Notice that value creation in the practice can occur without using any offerings at all or by using multiple offerings. As consumers use their practical intelligibility and as practice constellations change, they are prone to changes in their participation in practices.

**Subjective experience of value creation.** Consumers experience value creation as functional benefits (e.g. Sandström, Edvardsson, Kristensson and Magnusson 2008), emotional benefits (e.g. Hirschman and Holbrook 1982) and meanings (e.g. Levy 1959), all tied to practices. Experience is defined as follows: “Experience is the arena in which reality shows itself as what in itself it is” (Schatzki 1996:28). It is about what is going on and how things are in the consumer’s life (Schatzki 1996). When experiencing value creation, consumers are capable of making an evaluative interpretation of value creation where one is preferred to another on some relevant criteria (Holbrook 1996). In addition, consumers can assess the material and immaterial benefits and sacrifices of an offering (e.g. Zeithaml 1988; Grönroos 1997). Value creation varies across contexts and individuals (Schatzki 2002). As consumers are steered by meaning structures (including their subjective versions), the ends that consumers pursue, the value creation which they expect and the costs that they tolerate, all depend on the specific practice.

Practices are prone to change. By directing and channeling consumer activities in practices, shared meaning structures provide stability and social order (Schatzki 1996, 2002). However, practices are still prone to change. Practices may change, for example, by the introduction of new practice elements, such as new offerings, by changes in the way practice elements fit together (Shove and Pantzar 2005) or the newly-engaged practice. Firms, as resource integrators, can and do change practices by providing new value propositions that enable consumers to improve their value creation. However, consumers are central agents for the change (Schatzki 2002); their learning leads to reinvention of their participation in the practice (Cetina 2001).

## **4.2. Findings of Essay 2**

The findings of Essay 2 show that practices informed how the examined households enacted a food ideal in mundane consumption. Before elaborating on this theme in detail, I introduce the food ideal and how it was materialized in the weekday dinner.

### **4.2.1. Food Ideal and its Materialization in Weekday Dinners**

For the Finnish households a weekday dinner was an arena for enacting family and individual identity projects (a good family, a good parent, a food enthusiast, and a fit and healthy body), and having hedonistic pleasures. All these dimensions were embedded in the food ideal, which set an informal norm of what and with whom to eat, and how to prepare the food. In the ideal case, a weekday dinner is homemade, unprocessed, fresh and pure, and provides both healthiness and taste sensations, and it is enjoyed together as a family. Most households did not describe the essence of the food ideal in terms of ingredients and consumption outcomes explicitly or directly. Rather they revealed it indirectly via a discourse of ‘an inferior ready-made food’. This discourse represents the ready-made food as almost the opposite to the food ideal: not as tasty as homemade food, processed, unrefreshing, impure, and unhealthy. Parents even felt guilty for preparing inferior ready-made food for their children for the weekday dinner meal, one of them being the mother (C17) of four and five year old sons:

“I make something for the boys, like now that we’ve made a big portion of food, I’ll heat up some for them or then I boil a potato, cut it up and add some milk. Something simple like that. I’ve tried, you know, to follow a New Year’s resolution and not use so much things like (ready-made) spinach pancakes or sausages, because they have quite a lot of additives and salt; I thought I’d try to go for basic food more, the healthy kind. I try to feed them vegetables and fruits but food is

sometimes Saarioinen (= *A Finnish ready-made food brand*) or something like that. I'm pretty tired after work, and being on my own making food for them, I don't have the strength to make nice food."

Aligned with the findings of Moisio, Arnould and Price (2004), in this study cooking homemade food is about care-giving and showing love. Using ready-made food symbolically threatens the parents' expressions of care (Warde 1999). Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard and Brogard-Kristensen (2011) have shown how Scandinavian middle-class consumers perceive manual work and simple craftsmanship as a more ethical and legitimate form of consumption than only consuming brands. The food ideal of this study links the ethical self-production of food with the valuable identity project of being a good parent.

Providing healthiness in the food ideal relates to the identity projects that aim at cultivating one's "bodily regimes" (Giddens 1991:105). It refers to the ability of food to provide both short and long term physical health impacts, such as preventing flu, helping alleviate immediate stomach problems, achieving dieting goals, and preventing cardiovascular diseases. It is informed by the norm of eating in a healthy way to which the Finns have been educated for decades by the national healthcare system, the schooling system, the national institute of health and welfare, the parents, and the media (Kjaernes, Ekström, Gronow, Holm, and Mäkelä 2001). Additionally, an individual's physical resources influence how willingly and seriously households and individuals follow this norm. A male in his twenties (C5) started eating in a healthier way after realizing his stomach had 'grown' for the first time in his life. For him, eating in a healthier manner meant preparing more homemade food while avoiding fattening fast food such as pizza and hamburgers. Similarly, parents in their thirties (C20) followed a low carbohydrate diet in order to lose weight. A cardiovascular seizure of a sixty-three-year old husband (C4) guided the household to consistently and carefully locate, choose and use low-salt and low-fat options in order to lead a long and healthy life.

For all households pleasure was a self-evident property of the ideal food: it offers hedonistic taste sensations (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). In the ideal case the food combines pleasure with healthiness. This became evident in the households' negotiations between pleasure and healthiness. Households simultaneously used both healthy-perceived and pleasure-bringing food ingredients during the weekday dinner. For example, the mother (C20) put whipped cream (pleasure) on her children's fruit (healthiness) as a dessert after the weekday dinner in order to get her children to eat fruit. How the weekday meal accommodated both healthiness projects and hedonistic pleasures in this study contrasts with Warde's (1997) health-indulgence antinomy. Households' narratives also illuminated how the households balanced between healthy and pleasure moments and foods during the day and during the week. A weekday dinner and weekdays in general were regarded as healthier moments whereas weekends were the moments of pleasure where unhealthy choices were more acceptable and allowed. Like American men's masculinity projects (Thompson and Holt 2004), the healthiness-pleasure negotiations between weekdays and weekends were informed by the Protestant ethics that value self-discipline, self-denial, and deferred gratification.

As earlier evidenced (e.g. DeVault 1994; Lupton 1996; Kemmer, Anderson and Marshall 1998; Bove, Sobal and Rauschenbach 2003), a shared meal was a symbol for an ideal family life also for the examined households. A shared weekday dinner had a social and symbolic role in constructing family identities: spending time together as a family and thereby strengthening family bonds. If the households did not share the



weekday dinner, they justified it with legitimate reasons related to other valuable practices: work (C1, C15, C16, C18, C20), and hobbies (C9, C12, C13). In general, the households perceived a weekday dinner meal as symbolic material through which they enacted and contested cultural ideals while leading their identity projects. The finding is in line with Miller's theory of materiality according to which consumers use objects to formulate ideals and resolve conflicts (Miller 1994).

How did the food ideal materialize in mundane consumption in a weekday dinner practice among Finnish households? As table 2 shows, the weekday dinner materialized into preparing quick, ordinary-perceived meals from scratch, such as spaghetti bolognese or sausage soup, warming up their earlier made food, or using ready-made food as ingredients or as a whole meal. In thirteen of the twenty households, a weekday dinner meal is shared by the whole family.

**Table 2 Weekday Dinner Meals among Finnish Households**

Case number	Weekday dinner meal (food, drink)	Home-made / prepared from the scratch	Home-made / heated	Ready-made meal	Big portion for more than one dinner	Dinner participants
C1	Goat cheese and spaghetti in a tomato sauce, fresh vegetables, tap water	x				Responsible for dinner
C2	Macaroni - minced meat casserole, milk, tap water		x		x	All
C3	Minced meat soup and dark bread, tap water	x			x	All
C4	Goat cheese salad and bread, tap water	x				All
C5	Tuna fish and macaronis in a tomato sauce, no drink	x			x	All
C6	Schnitzel in a mushroom sauce, ham salad, tap water			x		All
C7	Salmon-oat bran-vegetable casserole, no drink	x			x	All
C8	Karelian pies (salty pies), tea			x		All
C9	Pork ribs, roasted vegetables, milk	x				All but the older son
C10	Meatballs and wedge potatoes, milk	x				All
C11	Anchovy casserole, no drink		x		x	All
C12	Rye bread sandwiches with cheese and salmon, frozen strawberries, sour milk	x				Responsible for dinner
C13	Male: Indian chicken (frozen vegetables, rice and chicken), protein drink, Female: dark bread, fruit and yogurt			x		Responsible for dinner
C14	Minced meat, chanterelles and ready-made mashed potatoes, no drink	x		x	x	All
C15	Tortillas with minced meat and green salad filling, tap water	x				All but father
C16	Pasta bolognese, rye bread, green salad, tap water	x			x	All but father
C17	Pasta bolognese, rye and white bread, green salad, milk and bottled water	x			x	All
C18	Sausage soup, milk	x				All
C19	Moroccan chicken tagine, wine	x				All
C20	Sausage soup, milk, fruits with whipped cream, milk	x			x	All but father

The food ideal was fully materialized in only four households in this study (C4, C10, C18, C19). These households shared together a fresh, homemade dinner that provided them with both pleasure and healthiness. In addition, they did not prepare extra portions for the following nights. In households 1, 9, 12 and 15, dinner food is aligned with the food ideal but family members were missing from the dinner table. In the rest of the cases the food ideal was compromised. The households heated a ready-made

meal or used ready-made ingredients. In addition, they warmed up earlier prepared home-made food or prepared a big portion for this dinner occasion and the following days. Finally, family members ate at different times. Why did the food ideal materialize only in four cases?

#### **4.2.2. *Enacting a Good Parent Project across Practices and Compromising a Food Ideal in the Weekday Dinner***

A good parent project is “a life-project framing discourse” (Fischer et al. 2007:427) which suggests parents to prioritize their children and their wellbeing. A food ideal informed the good parent project in food-related practices: the parents aimed at enacting the food ideal into their children’s eating. Table 2 shows how households with children followed the food ideal more conscientiously than other households. None of the households with children (C3, C9, C15, C16, C17, C18, and C20) prepared inferior-perceived ready-made food; they either prepared food from scratch or heated up homemade food. Three households with children (C15, C16, and C20) compromised the social dimension of the food ideal as the father was not present.

The narratives of household 18 and household 2 illuminate how a good parent project is enacted in a weekday dinner practice but also in other (both food and non-food related) practices that influence children’s wellbeing. When parents lead their good parent projects, they look at and assess their doings and success across all the practices that influence their children’s wellbeing. Therefore, they allow and make compromises with the good parent project and the food ideal at a weekday dinner. However, they do not compromise the good parent project across the practices influencing their children’s wellbeing. Even though the whole family of household 18 shared a weekday dinner during the researcher’s visit, the father was often at work during the weekday dinner. This household represents an upper middle class family with three children. The father leads a demanding career as a partner of an international auditing company, while at the time of the study the wife was at home in their spacious detached house with a one-year old daughter. In addition to playing golf, the father was active in organizational activities: a sport team coach, the chairman of the board in his son’s school, and a member of the delegation of the Olympic Committee. Neither of the parents expected the father to share a weekday dinner night after night. They acknowledged and accepted the demands of his work as well as appreciated its financial rewards. Enacting a breadwinner masculine ideal (Holt and Thompson 2004) was a legitimate part of being a good parent for the husband. Additionally, the mother recognized and appreciated her husband’s input in other practices where the good parent project was enacted, such as driving their sons to their hobbies or chairing the school board. Like Norwegian suburban mothers (Bahr Bugge and Ålmas 2006), being responsible for the weekday dinner was the mother’s way of taking care of the family and children.

In household 2, a single working parent lived with her three-year-old son. Weekdays were busy and tiring for the mother in the midst of work and home-related duties. As a result, she occasionally compromised the food ideal in the weekday dinner by preparing ready-made food while compensating it with other practices where the good parent project was enacted.

Mother (C2): “It depends on the situation (on a week night), sometimes you just think to yourself that you’ll make it easy on yourself and get the spinach casserole or spinach pancakes from the local shop. I don’t see any harm in it, no reason why one couldn’t do that.. I mean I do like to cook but there’s your own energy and all that to consider, I won’t start doing everything from scratch just for the boy, you’d have to go the whole way then.”

Researcher: "You say you see no harm in it?"

Mother (C2): "Well yes, sometimes it feels like you're judged for using ready-made food.. it is said of course that there's more additives in ready-made food. It might just be an assumption, that you're a better mother if you do everything yourself from scratch; it's part of some kind of maternal ideal that's behind it, that you're not as good if you feed your children with ready-made food."

Researcher: "So, you have made your own choices, then?"

Mother (C2): "Yea. And I don't really think... I mean the boy has grown okay, even if he does eat something not entirely home made occasionally... It makes things a bit easier, and the main thing for me is that daily life runs fairly smoothly. I think the main thing is that I'm happy and therefore my child is – that's more important than being totally stressed out making food from scratch, and being half dead, not able to give any time for your child. You might save half an hour if you buy the spinach pancakes, and you can then spend that time playing with your child instead of cooking; I feel that's more valuable...And he gets home cooking in daycare every day, they follow the official kindergarten list, and that's varied. So I don't have to worry about variety and whether he's had fish this week, since I know he has varied meals in daycare."

The mother in household 2 felt a strong need to justify the use of ready-made food with the weekday dinner context-related arguments: the choice is acceptable (even though not desirable) acknowledging her limited energy levels and a need for feeding a very hungry child as fast as possible. As the food ideal informed the mother's choices, one can also assume that using ready-made spinach pancakes as healthy ready-made food was more acceptable for her compared to unhealthier ready-made food options. Additionally, and importantly, the choice has no severe negative impact on her children's wellbeing when taking into consideration all practices influencing it. According to the mother, the ready-made food made it possible to have more enjoyable, wellbeing-increasing playtime with her son during weekday evenings. Because the lunch practices of the kindergarten followed the food ideal, during weekday nights it was acceptable for her to prioritize wellbeing-increasing play practices over the food ideal at the weekday dinner. Her good parent project was not compromised across the practices.

Aligned with Miller's (1987, 1995), and Chitakunye's and Maclaran's (2012) findings regarding the role of objects in subject formation, the narrative of household 2 shows how weekday dinner meals act as symbolic and material objects guiding the good parent project and consumption choices. However, this narrative also illuminates how specific practices (that influenced the wellbeing of the son) informed how the mother led her good mother project. Finally, this narrative demonstrates the specificity of individual consumers who use both objects and practices to enact cultural ideals and identity projects in their unique ways. When the mother enacted her good parent project across practices, she was being pragmatic and flexible in relation to specific practice circumstances.

#### **4.2.3. *Enacting a Food Ideal Consistently in the most Frequent and Resourceful Food-related Practice: a Weekday Dinner***

According to Warde (2005), practices have differential perceived value. It results from their varying internal psychic rewards, such as self-esteem and satisfaction, and extrinsic rewards, such as economic, social and cultural capital. The perceived value of a practice influences how committed consumers carry it. In this study, one household (C19) had a true food enthusiast. For this DINK couple in their late 50s, cooking was a hobby and a passion. It was a vehicle of self-representation (Bahr Bugge and Almås

2006). The first comment of the husband right after the researcher's arrival at their home manifests this well:

“We are not like the others. We do everything from scratch each night.”

A weekday dinner practice was very valuable for the couple as it represents an arena for self-actualization, gaining hedonistic pleasures, and also carrying a good family project through a shared hobby:

“Yes, well, cooking together is... how should I put it - it's sort of like a hobby of ours: it's like the time for us to be together, to do things together, to talk with each other. On other levels, too, it's our together time, so it's about more than just the cooking.” (Wife)

Consumer resources influence how consumers enact their projects and achieve their life goals (e.g. Arnould et al. 2006; Epp and Price 2011). Material objects are known to both restrict and offer opportunities for identity creation (Miller 1987). In regards to meals, meal participants (e.g. Herman, Roth and Polivy 2003) and time constraints (e.g. Bell and Pliner 2003; Pliner, Hirsch and Kinchla 2006) are known to inform food choices. Additionally, material resources such as television inform mealtime rituals (Chitakunye and Maclaran 2012). Unlike the other households, the DINK food enthusiast couple could easily follow their passion throughout the weeknights because they had the required time and financial resources to invest in the weekday dinner and no good parent project to follow. The wife had a regular eight-hour job while her husband worked even less after his profitable career as an entrepreneur. Their well-equipped large kitchen as a material resource did not hinder their cooking experiments. Finally and importantly, weekday dinners offered the couple the most frequent food-related practice to enact their valuable identity projects and the relating food ideal. Weekday lunches were impossible for shared cooking and eating because the wife worked full-time, and weekend meals were less frequent compared to weekday night meals. Consequently, for this food enthusiast couple, a weekday dinner offered the most frequent and resourceful practice for enacting the food enthusiast and good family projects. Therefore they consistently enacted the food ideal in this valuable practice.

As a result, the weekday dinner practice transformed it almost into a celebration dinner experience. The couple looked for cooking inspirations from various sources (such as the cookbooks of world class chefs) and tried new exotic recipes. They used fresh high-quality fresh ingredients such as scallops and entrecôte, which bring both healthiness and pleasure for them. They prepared food longer than an hour with professional-level cooking equipment while enjoying wine. Finally, the couple often enjoyed dinner and each other's company in a ceremonial way at the living room dinner table. Watching or listening television during cooking and eating was allowed only during the most important sports events. To summarize, enacting a food ideal consistently in the weekday dinner was a reflected choice for the food enthusiast couple. As weekday evenings passed in loved food-related routines, it was easy for the wife to skip gym classes even though she paid a monthly gym fee; food enthusiast and good family projects were prioritized over a keeping fit project during weekday nights.

#### ***4.2.4. Compromising a Food Ideal in the Weekday Dinner more often than in the Weekend Dinner***

Two dimensions characterize the temporal setting of a weekday dinner. Firstly, the weekday dinner is tightly linked to other regular and valuable practices: work and hobbies. Secondly, the weekday dinner occurs during ordinary weekdays instead of

leisure and pleasure weekends. They both influenced how a food ideal was enacted in the weekday dinner. The former dimension materialized the demands of work and hobbies into the weekday dinner practice: households had limited energy level and time available for the weekday dinner and cooking. The finding is aligned with the current research which has shown how time constraints influence food choices (e.g. Bell and Pliner 2003; Pliner, Hirsch and Kinchla 2006; Sellaeg and Chapman 2008). Additionally, because it was acceptable to prioritize hobbies and work over the shared weekday dinner, family members (C1, C9, C12, C15, C16, C20) were missing from the dinner table.

In addition to individual energy and time constraints, the ordinary temporal setting, that is, a weekday night, made the examined households compromise the food ideal more easily compared to weekend dinners. Because it was an ordinary weekday night, the households looked for more basic and easier meals while they saved larger efforts for more enjoyable weekend dinners. The influence of the Protestant ethics about hard-working, disciplined weekdays and weekends with postponed gratification (Thompson and Holt 2004) was visible in the household's dinner choices. Except for the food enthusiast household (C19), all the examined households took the distinction between an ordinary weekday dinner and an experiential weekend dinner for granted; none of the households questioned the status quo.

The discourse of 'a better weekend dinner' manifested the distinction. According to the discourse, compared to a weekday dinner, during weekends households make food that they truly value. They spend more money on food and choose food items that bring them true pleasure. The households are more experimental and less routine-oriented in their meal choices than during weekdays. Parents can be even more selfish in their meal selections compared to the weekday dinners, which they carry on their children's terms. Their good parent project allows it because their children's wellbeing is not compromised across practices. Compared to the weekdays, at weekends the households spend more time and effort on preparing the dinner from scratch; the food ideal is not compromised. In general, compared to the weekday dinner, the weekend dinner resembles more a banquet. The households prepare more than one course, drink wine, use better cutlery, and spend more time enjoying the dinner and each other's company. The whole family gets together at a dinner table, and the good parent and family projects are materialized.

Because pleasures are left more for weekends, households invest limited time, energy, and thought on weekday dinners. Therefore, as evidenced in table 2, the weekday dinner materialized into preparing quick, ordinary-perceived meals from scratch, such as spaghetti bolognese or sausage soup, warming up their earlier made food, or using ready-made food as ingredients or as a whole meal. The only exception is the food-enthusiast couple (C19). The finding is aligned with Marshall's (2005) speculative temporal, structural, and social typology of British eating occasions on what people eat, how and with whom in celebratory/festive meals, main meals (weekend-Sunday), main meals (weekday), light meals, and when having a snack. The finding also provides insight into how the temporal setting of the weekday dinner practice contributes to the distinction between weekend and weekday meals.

As regards the examined households' interest in food and cooking, the food enthusiast couple (C19) was passionate about cooking. For one household (C9) cooking was one hobby among others. Fourteen households liked cooking, and four households (C5, C6, C12, C16) did not like it particularly much. All households had at least basic skills for cooking as a result of the mandatory home economics classes at the Finnish secondary

school. Table 2 reveals how the weekday dinner meal choices of nineteen out of twenty households resembled one another, irrespective of differences in the households' cooking interests and skills, and in their cultural and material resources - except for the food-enthusiast couple (C19). Their weekday dinners were more similar than their different habitus would suggest. Consequently, this study suggests that the social class differences in food consumption in Finland are prone to diminish in a weekday dinner practice - particularly among non-food enthusiast households.

One may ask whether social class differences exist in the welfare state of Finland, and whether they are capable of influencing consumers' everyday lives. The evidence from Eurostat and the Finnish National Institute for Health and Wellbeing (Rotko, Aho, Mustonen and Linnanmäki 2011) shows how social class differences exist and how they inform consumer practices. Based on Eurostat, in 2010 the highest income quintile of the Finnish population earned 3.6 times more than the lowest income quintile. According to the Finnish National Institute for Health and Wellbeing (Rotko et al. 2011), in 2007 the difference in the life expectancy between males (females) in the highest income quintile and males (females) in the lowest income quintile was 12.7 (6.5) years. The same research institute (Rotko et al. 2011) discusses how health and health differences are partly socially determined: socio-economic differences directly affect people's living conditions, habits, and the use of health services, and indirectly health and life expectancy.

### **4.3. Findings of Essay 3**

Drawing on S-D logic, CCT and PT, Essay 3 examines how consumers experience value propositions as signs in their practices from two perspectives: what is the essence of value propositions as signs for consumers and on what basis do consumers experience and evaluate value propositions. Based on the findings, the essay contextualizes this concept.

#### ***4.3.1. Value Propositions as Firms' Proposals for Consumers' Resource Integration in Practices***

Value propositions are perceived as firms' proposals for consumers' resource integration. This view integrates S-D's, PT's and CCT's theorizing about value propositions and consumers' resource integration as follows. S-D logic perceives consumers as resource integrators who, in order to enhance their value creation in their daily lives, acquire, use, change, and integrate resources, including offerings where offerings refer to goods, services and solutions (e.g. Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008; Arnould et al. 2006). At the same time, Lusch, Vargo and O'Brien (2007:13) relate value propositions, at least implicitly, with offerings: "A value proposition can be thought of as a promise the seller makes that value-in-exchange will be linked to value-in-use. When a customer exchanges money with a seller s/he is implicitly assuming the value-in-exchange will at least result in value-in-use that meets or exceeds the value-in-exchange". The value-in-use concept means that value is created in use rather than being embedded in offerings (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008). In addition to the financial sacrifices, non-financial sacrifices, such as time costs and search costs, have been shown to influence the perceived value of offering (e.g. Zeithaml 1988).

According to Korkman, Storbacka and Harald (2010), enhancing value creation is about providing customers with resources that fit with the other elements of customer

practices: places, tools, images, physical spaces, and actors. Consequently, they conceptualize the value propositions as resource integration promises. The promised value is derived from resource integration rather than using offerings in isolation. Additionally, they locate resource integration within practices, the examples of which are cooking and working. Finally, Arnould, Price and Malshe (2006) stress that consumers may derive value from offerings creatively in ways which vary from firms' intents. The above theorizing invites one to draw the following conclusion: value propositions are firms' proposals on how consumers can derive value from integrating offerings with their other resources. What does the conclusion imply?

Firstly, consumers have the power to accept value propositions or not (Vargo and Lusch 2008). Acquiring an offering is an explicit sign of the acceptance of the value proposition. It signals that the anticipated use value at least meets financial and non-financial sacrifices from the consumers' perspective. Secondly, because deriving value from the offerings always requires resource integration from consumers, a value proposition is invariably linked with more consumer resources than a specific offering only. Therefore, the value proposition includes a specific offering and an explicit or implicit suggestion of how to integrate this offering with other consumer resources in their practices. For example, the shape and the wrapping of a food item implicitly inform consumers how to eat it: manually or using cutlery. Furthermore, the value proposition includes hints about in which practice(s) the consumers could use it. For example, in a workplace restaurant, priced food and drink products, layout and furniture, and the lack of electricity plugs and wireless Internet connection guide employees to use the restaurant for eating practices only. Finally, the value proposition can invite using the offering before its purchase. Co-developing design drawings of kitchen fitments illustrates this case.

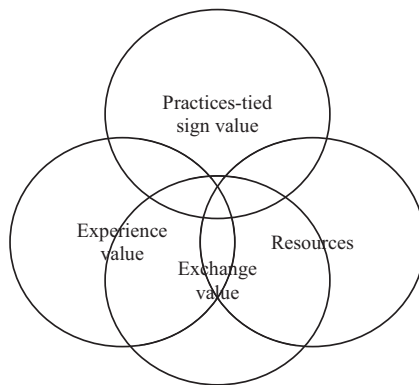
Thirdly, consumers can choose to follow the firms' suggestion on how to integrate the offerings with their other resources, or they can choose to pursue their own plan. As with experiencing value (Vargo and Lusch 2008), consumers experience and evaluate the value propositions idiosyncratically: subjectively in each specific resource-integration context. Here the context informs resource integration: resources are more valuable in certain contexts and less valuable in others (Chandler and Vargo 2011). When evaluating the value propositions, the consumers judge how they can fit the value proposition-related offerings with their other resources in order to derive value from their use. Because consumer goals and resources vary by consumer or by consumer network (Arnould et al. 2006, Epp and Price 2011) and by context in the case of the same consumer (Holtinen 2010a), the consumers might imagine different uses and resource integrations for the same value propositions.

Consequently, the scope of value propositions varies according to the resource integration needed to derive the desired value from integrating the offering with other consumer resources in a specific context. The scope is unique to each value proposition and to each resource integration context. Finally, firms can and do control the scope of the consumers' resource integration. For example, the limited selection of locally-produced and organic food offerings at the nearby groceries narrows the weekday dinner meal choices of households (Holtinen 2010b).

#### 4.3.2. Value Propositions Integrating Sign Value, Experience Value, Exchange Value and Resources

Based on the theoretical examination within S-D logic, CCT and PT, from customers' perspective value propositions are conceptualized as firms' resource integration proposals which integrate sign value, experience value, exchange value, and resources. Figure 4 illustrates this conceptualization. In Figure 4, a Venn diagram stands for a value proposition, and the circles of the diagram depict the overlapping elements that the value proposition integrates: its sign value, experience value, exchange value and resources. Representing the sign value circle above the other value proposition elements illustrates its superiority over the others. Similarly, positioning the exchange value lower compared the other elements shows that it is a subordinate to the others.

**Figure 4 Value Propositions as Experienced by Customers**



**Practice.** According to PT-informed marketing researchers (e.g. Warde 2005; Schau, Muñiz and Arnould 2009), practices guide the use of offerings and not vice versa. Thus a practice contextualizes customers' resource integration and value propositions; the customers experience and evaluate value propositions relative to their practices. It makes the value propositions signs that are experienced and evaluated by customers with their prevailing resources in a specific sociocultural context and situation.

Integrating CCT studies (e.g. Holt and Thompson 2004; Fischer et al. 2007; Peñaloza and Mish 2011) on cultural discourses, ideologies and ideals, and Schatzki's (1996) theorizing on understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures, this theoretical investigation suggests that it is cultural discourses, such as ideologies and cultural ideals, and the opportunities and constraints of practices which guide how consumers experience and evaluate value propositions in their activities and practices: they inform the customers which meanings of the value propositions are desirable and acceptable, and thereby guide the acceptance of value propositions and how the offerings are used and integrated with other customers' resources. The opportunities and constraints of practices refer to context-bound and situational factors which influence how well customers can enact desired cultural discourses in practices, examples being consumer resources, material constraints, other practice participants, and other practices. The cultural discourses, and practice-related opportunities and constraints are able capture the influence of macro, mezzo and micro of contexts on the evaluation of the value



propositions as they relate to specific sociocultural, spatiotemporal and material contexts where the value propositions are experienced and evaluated. I illustrate their impact on the consumers' value-creating activities and the evaluation of value propositions with an example.

In the examination of a weekday dinner practice, Holttinen (2010b) showed how dinner choices were guided by a food ideal according to which the ideal food was home-made, authentic (unprocessed), fresh and pure, and provides both taste sensations and health. At the same time, this temporal context in the midst of hobbies and work made families have insufficient energy and time for cooking. Consequently, they were willing to accept value propositions which would materialize the food ideal easily and conveniently. At the same time, the families experienced a ready-made food (convenience food) value proposition as almost the opposite to the food ideal: not as tasty as home-made food, processed, not fresh, impure and unhealthy. The families negotiated the tension between the food ideal and their energy and time constraints by preparing large portions of home-made food for the sequential days. Even though this solution did not materialize fully their food ideal, it was more desirable than accepting the ready-made food value proposition more often. This example shows how the value propositions, in order to help consumers in their value creation as well as possible, need to address both desirable cultural discourses, and the constraints and opportunities of practices which influence the materialization of the cultural discourses.

**Sign value.** Drawing on cultural consumer studies (e.g. Levy 1959, Belk 1988; Arnould et al. 2006; Venkatesh et al. 2006) meanings are viewed as the primary source of value of a proposed resource integration. From their own subjective viewpoint consumers experience and evaluate the value propositions in terms of their meanings which they may use (or may not use) for their own value-creation purposes in different contexts. CCT research has shown the symbolic role of possessions and brands in identity projects (e.g. Belk 1988; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Belk and Costa 1998; Holt and Thompson 2004; Schau, Gilly and Wolfenbarger 2009) and group identity projects (e.g. Kates 2004; Martin et al. 2006). Consumer studies have shown how consumers, in addition to symbolic benefits, look for different types of value from offerings, such as hedonistic experiences, emotions, and functional and economic benefits (Hirschman and Holbrook 1984; Woodruff 1997; Woodall 2003; 1999; Khalifa 2004; Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo 2007). Based on the findings of CCT and customer value research I suggest sign value to mean the ability of the value proposition to address desirable cultural discourses (such as ideologies and cultural ideals) which customers either consciously or unconsciously (try to) enact in practices.

Irrespective of the type of value that the consumers are seeking, evaluating value propositions always involves signification: each value proposition as a sign conveys meanings which the consumers interpret idiosyncratically from their personal and situational circumstances, either consciously or unconsciously. The potential array of meanings makes value propositions dynamic; consumers choose which meanings they use in their value creation. Consumers are not loyal to the value propositions but to the meanings that the consumers co-produce with firms while integrating offerings with their other resources (according to the firms' proposal or their own plan). "It is not to brands that consumers will be loyal, but to images and symbols, especially to images and symbols that they produce while they consume" (Firat and Venkatesh 1995: 251). Customers often find new sources of the sign value compared to firms' intentions in two ways: by inventing different meanings and uses for the value propositions in the practice or by integrating the offerings in practices which did not belong to the firms'

initial idea of the scope of the value propositions. The co-creation of meanings starts before the purchase of the offering, for example, through advertising (e.g. Mick and Buhl 1992) or learning from others' experiences.

Accepted value propositions can include meanings that customers perceive as undesirable. For example, impurity and lack of freshness are not valuable meanings in the ready-made food value propositions for the Finnish households (Holttinen 2010b). However, when feeling tired or busy, households can purchase the ready-made food for another valuable meaning: convenience. If the customers evaluate that the value propositions cannot provide improved sign value for them compared to their current state, they do not accept the value propositions. In the worst case, the value propositions are unable to raise their attention in the first place.

**Experience value.** According to S-D logic, offerings possess no value per se but instead they 'derive their value through use' (Vargo and Lusch 2008:7). Venkatesh, Peñaloza and Firat (2006) perceive use value and exchange value as derivations of sign value. Drawing on S-D logic and Venkatesh, Peñaloza and Firat (2006), I argue the experience value is subordinate to the sign value; it relates to the ability of the value propositions to materialize sign value into customer experience; with the help of the value proposition in a practice the customers can enact desired cultural discourses. The customers can anticipate whether or not sign value is likely to materialize into experience before purchase via cues, such as via advertising and recommendations. If the customers have prior knowledge or experience of the skills and knowledge of the suppliers, they use this knowledge as an indication for the experience value. Finally, the customers can actively search for information in order to become convinced that the proposed sign value will materialize into an experience. This is well evidenced by countless online forums where peers share their use experiences. When the customers, based on their subjective interpretation, experience value in their practices as the value propositions promised, value becomes co-created. However, this is not what happens in real life where consumers tend to accept value propositions which later disappoint them in use (e.g. Bougie, Pieters and Zeelenberg 2003).

**Resources.** According to Vargo and Lusch (2008) applied operant resources, that is, specialized knowledge and skills, are the fundamental bases for exchange where offerings are the distributors of firms' operant resources for customers' use. As the primary source of value of the value propositions is their sign value and ability to materialize it into a customer experience, it is logical to argue as follows: it is the meanings of the value propositions which inform the customers whether or not to benefit from the firms' skills and knowledge, and how they want to benefit from them. At the same time, the customers are dependent on the firms' operant resources which make the value propositions available for them. In most cases, the customers are not skilled enough or lack other relevant resources such as time so that they could materialize their desired sign value into an experience by themselves. Therefore, the customers are willing to accept the value propositions proposed by firms (Arnould 2005). The resources include more than those of the beneficiary and the supplier only; the value proposition is materialized by various stakeholders in a larger value network (Frow and Payne 2011).

**Exchange value.** Exchange value refers to the financial and non-financial sacrifices of a value proposition that are required to integrate an offering with other customers' resources, in order to materialize a desired sign value. The purchase of an offering indicates that the customers accept the value proposition. The exchange value is always subordinate to the sign value and experience value; it is not worth the customers

accepting the value proposition when the exchange value is not likely to exceed them. Notice that customers can represent more than one stakeholder group. In this case, the financial sacrifice can be shared by all stakeholder groups or covered by one customer only. For example, an employer can sponsor its employees' fitness practices which benefit them both. Furthermore, the accepted exchange value manifests how much the sign value and its anticipated materialization into an experience are worth for the customers. Finally, the exchange value manifests and signifies the value of applied skills and knowledge used for materializing the sign value into the customers' experience. For example, a high price signifies and manifests the prestigious image and excellent cooking skills of a luxury restaurant.

Like experiencing value (Holbrook 1999) experiencing a value proposition is a relativistic experience. Customers compare value propositions against one another. If the sign and experience value of different value propositions are evaluated as equal, the customers can bargain. As a result, the exchange value can be significantly lower than the sign and experience value. In this specific case, the exchange value does not manifest to the importance of the value proposition in the customers' value creation. Finally, as earlier discussed, the value propositions are evaluated idiosyncratically. As a result, the desired sign value of the same value proposition varies from context to context. Therefore, the accepted exchange value for the customers also varies by context.

#### ***4.3.3. Value Propositions as Design Architecture for Reciprocal Sign Value, Experience Value, Exchange Value and Resource Integration***

Certain S-D logic informed researchers (e.g. Payne et al. 2005; Cova and Salle 2008; Ballantyne et al. 2011) emphasize that value propositions need to contribute to reciprocal value creation. Therefore, the value propositions have been conceptualized as an interactive process and dialog of crafting reciprocal value promises (Payne et al. 2005; Ballantyne et al. 2011). Emphasizing the sociocultural nature of value networks, Vargo and Lusch (2011a, 2011b) place value propositions and value co-creation in dynamic service-ecosystems where interdependent stakeholders, informed by institutions and norms, exchange and integrate resources. The value propositions thus facilitate value co-creation among different stakeholders in the value network (Payne et al. 2005) or in service ecosystems (Akaka et al. 2012). Co-crafting reciprocal value propositions contributes to the achieving of mutual benefits from the resource integration.

I argue that customer value is still a prerequisite for value co-creation in most cases in modern markets where monopolies are seldom and cartels forbidden. Unless the anticipated sign value and its expected materialization into customer experience exceed the exchange value for the customers, they will not accept the value proposition and thus there will be no value co-creation in the first place. However, at the same time, value propositions need to address and materialize the desirable cultural discourses and the goals of the other stakeholders, such as marketers and their suppliers. Otherwise these stakeholders are not willing or able to invest their knowledge and skills in co-designing the value propositions with/for their customers in the long run. Consequently, from the value co-creation design perspective, this study introduces the value propositions as design architecture for reciprocal sign value, experience value, exchange value, and resource integration.

The findings of this study suggest that designing reciprocal value propositions can take at least three paths. The first path focuses on understanding how existing value propositions could better materialize desirable cultural discourses, such as cultural ideals, into customer experiences in those practices where the value propositions are currently used. For example, a food marketer could aim at creating a ready-made value proposition which addresses and materializes all dimensions of the food ideal. The second path takes a cultural ideal and a relating identity project as a starting point for designing value propositions. For example, a food marketer could aim at helping parents to enact their good parent project better than with the help of current value propositions. This would mean investigating how the parents enact their good parent projects across practices which influence their children's wellbeing. As an outcome, the food marketer could propose to parents non-food related value propositions in non-food related practices. The third path starts by taking current offering as a starting point for enhancing value co-creation and envisioning in which new customer practices it could be integrated. A marketer perceives markets as customer practices. For example, a contract catering firm could perceive a workplace restaurant as firms' spatial resource for carrying work-related practices, such as a meeting.

Irrespective of the chosen design path, the marketer needs to understand how it can help its customers to better materialize sign value into a customer experience in practices. This means understanding what type of sign value customers want to experience in their practices and what obstacles they then face. Thus the design of experience value translates to planning which kind of resources need to be integrated, and how, so that the customers can materialize the sign value into customer experience. The planning acknowledges that the exchange value cannot exceed the other two value elements. McCracken (2005:175) suggests perceiving marketing as "meaning management". Effective marketing and branding is about addressing valuable cultural meanings or cultural contradictions. This study adds a practical resource management dimension to the abstract meaning management; the marketers need to facilitate resource integration so that desired cultural discourses, such as cultural ideals, can be materialized into customers' lived experiences in different practices.

Resource integration planning includes the practices of the marketer and a larger value network. It is about identifying stakeholders who are needed to design and materialize the value proposition so that the customers can experience the desired sign value. At this stage at the latest, the value proposition design includes other participants beyond customers. At the very least they usually look for financial benefits, which has implications for the design of the exchange value. The exchange value needs to be high enough so that it makes sense for a firm and other stakeholders to participate in value co-creation. At the same time, the exchange value must not exceed the sign and experience value because is not worth making non-financial sacrifices and paying more than what the sign and experience value are worth for the customers. It is worth noticing that stakeholders can and do enter value co-creation for other benefits than financial benefits only. In the ideal case, the involved stakeholders experience improved value through co-creation according to their subjective standards informed by cultural discourses and practices.

## 5 CONTRIBUTIONS, DELIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

### 5.1. Theoretical Contributions

This thesis “knitted together” relevant research findings from three overlapping and complementary research streams: S-D logic, CCT and PT. New theoretical lenses made it possible to extend current understanding on consumer value creation as an everyday sociocultural and situational phenomenon. The findings highlight the primacy of cultural ideals (and other cultural discourses) and practices in consumer everyday value creation, value co-creation and service exchange. They inform the consumers which value propositions are desirable and thereby guide resource integration and thus purchasing decisions.

Aligned with the theorizing of Heinonen et al. (2010), the thesis puts consumer (customer) value creation – which consumers (customers) orchestrate and in which firms are nearly always involved – at the very center of its research attention. Current CCT research has shown how consumers interpret and enact cultural ideals in ways that suit their life circumstances and resources (e.g. Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Holt and Thompson 2004; Kozinets 2008). This thesis reinforces this consumer portrait of a pragmatic, flexible and fragmented value-creating agent. It demonstrates how the consumers enact and compromise cultural ideals and identity projects in relation to different practices. They compromise the identity projects and the cultural ideals in some practice(s) but not across practices. As the practices serve different ends for the consumers at different times, the meaning of the practices is constantly re-created by the consumers. As resource integrators the consumers accept and use value propositions in their own ways irrespective of firms’ plans, in order to enact desirable cultural discourses, such as cultural ideals. Compared to Vargo and Lusch (2008) according to whom value becomes co-created when customers use offerings, this thesis suggests a narrower perspective: value becomes co-created only when the customers can enact desirable cultural discourses in practices by integrating firms’ offerings with their other resources - and as a result experience value.

Aligned with Miller (1987, 1994), the thesis presents food consumption as a process of materializing values and meanings and resolving cultural conflicts. It also shows how meals as symbolic and material objects guide and restrict consumers’ daily activities and identity creation (Miller 1987). Consequently, while the thesis illuminates the interplay among cultural ideals (and other cultural discourses), practices, value propositions, and consumer actions, it offers a cultural and practice-theoretical conceptualization of how consumers, material objects, and a sociocultural environment interact and co-create each other at a certain time in history and in the consumers’ lives. In line with Karababa and Kjeldgaard (2013), the thesis perceives the value of an offering as a dynamic, context-dependent, intersubjective, and subjective notion that is constantly co-created and re-created by customers.

More detailed theoretical contributions go under two themes: 1) identifying four points how practices inform the materialization of cultural ideals in mundane consumption, and 2) contextualizing value propositions in consumers’ practices. I will introduce these theoretical contributions in greater detail in the following section.

### **5.1.1. Identification of Four Points on how Practices Inform the Materialization of Cultural Ideals in Mundane Consumption**

The study highlights four different points on how practices inform the materialization of cultural ideals in mundane consumption. First, when consumers can enact identity projects and relating cultural ideals in more than one practice, they may compromise these identity projects and cultural ideals in some practice. It was acceptable for the Finnish parents to occasionally compromise a good parent project and a food ideal in the weekday dinner practice whereas they did not compromise the good parent project across all practices that influence their children's wellbeing.

Consequently, this study deepens knowledge on fragmented consumption. According to a postmodern perspective (Firat 1997; Firat and Schulz 1997; Firat and Venkatesh 1995, Firat 1991), consumers are not committed to one meta-narrative when communicating their preferences and identities via consumption. As a result, they show multiple preferences towards the same product category, meaning that their consumption is fragmented. A practice-theoretical perspective (Warde 2005) suggests that fragmented consumption results from the diversity of practices; it is the different understandings and norms of the individual practices which guide consumer behavior. This study portrays consumers as flexible and pragmatic with respect to enacting identity projects and cultural ideals across practices. As the consumers compromise identity projects and cultural ideals in some practice(s) but not across practices, their consumption becomes fragmented. The dichotomy between ordinary weekday dinners and pleasure weekend dinners contributes to the fragmentation of food consumption. The findings show how consumers informed by the Protestant ethics compromise the food ideal in the weekday dinner in the midst of the valuable but time and energy consuming practices: work and hobbies. They postpone gratification to a weekend dinner where the food ideal is materialized. As this study identifies fragmented food consumption, this study supports the use of food-related lifestyle segmentation criteria (Brunso and Grunert 1998; Brunso and Grunert 1995), which recognizes that values and use situations inform the desired consequences of food consumption.

Second, this study tells about practice circumstances when mundane consumption is likely to become less fragmented and thus more predictable. Three themes contribute to this phenomenon: a strong commitment to a specific identity project, enough relevant resources for enacting the identity project across practices, and no competing, more valuable identity projects to be enacted in the same practices as this identity project. Because weekday and weekend dinners fulfilled these practice circumstances, they offered the food enthusiast couple a continual arena for systematically enacting the food enthusiast project and the food ideal. The narrative of the food enthusiast couple shows that in these particular practice circumstances following a cultural ideal is a reflected choice and that following the cultural ideal becomes a routine part of mundane consumption.

Third, this study links the perceived value of mundane consumption with materializing cultural ideals in a practice. According to Warde (2005), the perceived value of practices relates to internal psychic rewards and extrinsic rewards. The findings propose that the perceived value of a practice and mundane consumption is related to how well and how frequently consumers can enact their identity projects and cultural ideals in the practice. The food enthusiast couple perceived the weekday dinner as very valuable because they could frequently enact their valuable identity project and the food ideal in this practice. Consequently, even though mundane consumption is characterized more by everyday routines than extraordinary consumption (Gronow and

Warde 2001), consumers can, and do, perceive it very valuable. Additionally, when the perceived value of practices and mundane consumption is tied to enacting identity projects and cultural ideals in the practice, it becomes dynamic. When constraints on enacting the identity projects and the cultural ideals disappear in the practice, perceived value increases. As evidenced in the narratives, the families could enact the food ideal particularly well in weekend dinners because work and hobbies did not put time or energy constraints on them. Thus the weekend dinners became more valuable for the families compared the ordinary weekday dinners where the food ideal was compromised.

Fourth, the findings introduce practice circumstances when the mundane food consumption of consumers from different backgrounds becomes more similar than what their habitus would suggest. Many researchers argue that social class differences are diminishing in food consumption (Warde and Martens 2000). According to a survey of the Nordic eating patterns (Kjaernes et al. 2001; Mäkelä 2001), the effect of social status on weekday night meals is limited in Finland. Middle-class white-collar employees were less likely to eat 'proper meals' compared to both workers and higher white-collar employees where a proper meals refers to a meal containing a center, staple food or/and bread, and vegetables, with trimmings as an additional alternative. Bahr Bugge and Ålmas (2006) show subtle differences in the use of seemingly insignificant ingredients, such as tomato and pesto sauces, among Norwegian women from different social classes. According to the findings, the weekday dinner choices of nineteen out of twenty Finnish households become more similar than their different habitus would suggest because it is acceptable for them to compromise the food ideal in this specific temporal setting: the ordinary weekday evening in the midst of other valuable but demanding practices such as hobbies and work. Thus this study offers a practice-theoretical and cultural explanation of why the social class differences are prone to diminish in mundane food consumption.

The finding of the convergence of the Finnish households' weekday dinner practices is different from the findings of current consumer culture studies. They show how social class guides how cultural ideals are materialized in consumer behavior (e.g. Holt and Thompson 2004; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) identified differences in the Thanksgiving Day consumption rituals across social classes. The upper and upper-middle class families enacted the Thanksgiving Day meal in a more formal manner than the lower class families. This was visible in multiple ways, such as, preferring table service over a buffet, using matching tableware and place cards, and avoiding branded food packages at the dinner table. At the same time, the highlight of the Thanksgiving Day meal was the traditional turkey for all families irrespective of the social class. The difference in the perceived value of these two meal occasions offers one explanation for somewhat different research findings. Thanksgiving Day is a national celebration and a sacred ritual that is linked to long cultural, religious and historical traditions and values. Therefore a Thanksgiving Day meal is more valuable for American families than an ordinary weekday dinner for Finnish families. Furthermore, a Thanksgiving meal as a ritual follows stricter rules than an ordinary weekday dinner (Ilmonen 2001). As a result, the American families strive more for enacting the cultural ideals in the Thanksgiving Day meal compared to the Finnish families in the weekday dinner.

Holt and Thompson (2004) evidenced how American males from different social classes enacted an American masculinity ideal in different ways aligned with their habitus. The reasons for the difference in the research findings between this study and that of Holt and Thompson (2004) are not clear. Differences in the research set-up may

partly explain this. This study examined how and when consumers enact or not enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption. Thus compared to Holt and Thompson (2004), this study may have focused more on understanding about circumstances where consumers can compromise identity projects and cultural ideals. The difference could also indicate that for the American men it is more important to enact the American masculinity ideal throughout their everyday practices than for the Finnish parents to consistently enact a good parent ideal and thus a food ideal in the weekday dinner practice. This warrants further research.

### ***5.1.2. Contextualizing Value Propositions in Consumers' Practices***

According to this thesis, practices contextualize consumer value creation, resource integration, and value propositions; the consumers experience and evaluate value propositions and related offerings as their potential symbolic and practical value-creating resources in practices. In practices, cultural discourses, such as ideologies and cultural ideals, and the opportunities and constraints of the practices, such as consumer resources and practice participants, inform consumer resource integration and value creation and thus the acceptance of value propositions. Thus this study links the generic benefits and sacrifices of the value propositions to the consumers' practices where the consumers try to enact desirable cultural discourses, such as cultural ideals, by integrating their available resources with offerings. Consequently, this thesis pinpoints what the essence of the value propositions is in the customers' real-life contexts: the ability of offerings to help the customers to enact desirable cultural discourses into experience in practices. Hence, from the customers' perspective, the study constructs the value propositions as firms' proposals which integrate sign value, experience value, exchange value, and resources.

Informed by Venkatesh et al. (2006) and S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2008), this study integrates three different value concepts: sign value, experience value and exchange value as customers' decision-making criteria for accepting value propositions. By introducing the experience value and the exchange value as the derivatives of the sign value, this study conceptually captures the customers' value emphasis. As a result, this study directs the theoretical debate from the exchange value (of goods-dominant logic) versus the value-in-context or use value (of the service-dominant logic) to the primacy of sign value. Thereby this study extends current theorizing (Kowalkowski 2011) on how circumstances both on the seller and buyer side influence the value emphasis of exchange: exchange value versus use value.

Finally, this conceptual investigation highlights the primacy of cultural discourses and practices in resource integration and exchange. They inform customers which meanings of value propositions, and thus which value propositions, are desirable and thereby guide the customers' purchasing and resource integration decisions. In addition, they guide resource integration in the firms' sphere. They inform firms which skills and knowledge are needed for designing and materializing value propositions which their customers will value and accept and which will eventually benefit firms themselves. Hence, the study suggests that cultural discourses and practices inform firms where to specialize in terms of skills and knowledge. Furthermore, they guide how different actors as potential beneficiaries are willing to co-operate with each other.



## 5.2. Managerial Contributions

Pragmatist critical realism emphasizes the transformative role of social science: its role is not only to interpret or explain social reality but to offer socially constructed, theory-laden guidance for transformative human action. Scientific knowledge is evaluated in a real-life context: how successfully an intervention achieves expected outcomes. (Johnson and Duberley 2000.) My transformational real-life context is the world of firms and their customers.

Nowadays most firms are customer-oriented in new offering development. They invest significant financial resources to understanding customer needs and values so that their new products and services will match with them. However, far too often new offering launches disappoint both firms and their customers. Why? I can identify at least two reasons. First, market research findings often lack contextualized knowledge of customers, and customer values and needs: what the values and needs are concretely about in the customers' everyday life contexts. As a result, value proposition design as a part of a concept design process translates to listing and describing generic customer benefits. As a result, the proposed value of the offering remains de-contextualized. In other words, it does not address nor materialize effectively customer needs and values that relate to a particular use context. Yet, the customers experience and evaluate each new product or service in respect with their specific sociocultural settings and use situations. The second challenge of new offering development relates to a narrow interpretation of value propositions. Many marketing professionals follow a marketing communication 'rule' which advises to choose and communicate one unique selling point per offering. Therefore marketing professionals tend to compress a value proposition into a customer promise of one customer value. While this method may work well in marketing communication campaigns, it does not serve well enough new offering development, which requires a more holistic approach for designing value propositions.

An increasing number of marketing researchers regard markets as social constructions; firms define their markets and enact them (Storbacka and Nenonen 2011, Kjellberg et al. 2012). Markets are not, they become (Kjellberg et al. 2012). In the realm of business this means that different firms and fields have their own market perceptions according to which they perform business activities. As they are social constructions, the market perceptions are constantly challenged, which causes them to evolve. This thesis provides firms with a sociocultural and practice-theoretical market view of markets and value creation. It suggests that firms should perceive and investigate their customers' lives and value-creating activities as a mosaic of practices where the customers try to enact cultural ideals.

In the practices customers, governed by sociocultural and situational forces, create value. In value-creation the customers use and integrate different types of resources, including offerings. Investigating customer behavior with respect to practices widens firms' perspective on the scope of customer value creation beyond the scope of firms' current offerings. For example, a contract catering firm could examine in which practices employees use and would like to use its employee restaurant. As a result, it identifies a mismatch between the employee restaurant and employee needs. While the employee restaurant offers food and drink items, an increasingly number of employees would like to use the restaurant for working and relaxing. However, the current material resources of the restaurant do not support carrying other than food-related practices in the restaurant space. This example shows how 'practice lenses' can open eyes for new value co-creation opportunities for firms and their customers.

In addition, this thesis provides firms conceptual and methodological tools which help them to improve the effectiveness of new offering development. Effectiveness refers to the ability of the firms to create offerings that are both culturally and practically desirable for customers. These effective offerings address both desirable cultural discourses, such as cultural ideals, and the practical realities of everyday life, and thus make it possible for customers to enact desirable cultural discourses in their everyday lives. The four dimensions of a value proposition, that is, sign value, experience value, exchange value, and resources, make it easier for firms to investigate what their offerings mean and do (and can potentially mean and do) for their customers in customers' different practices. The design questions are as follows:

- In which practices do our customers use our offerings? Which cultural discourses and cultural ideals inform customer value creation in the practices? Which cultural discourses and ideals do our offerings address or are against? Which constraints, such as material or financial constraints, or competing cultural discourses, prohibit our customers from enacting their most desired cultural ideals in the practices? How should we develop our current offerings and what kind of new offerings should we design so that it is possible for our customers to enact the desired discourses? What are the implications for the value proposition design?
- Could we help our customers to create value in some other practices beyond the current practices where our customers currently use our offerings? Could we take a certain cultural ideal that our customers follow as a starting point for new offering design? In which practices do our customers follow this cultural ideal? What kind of obstacles do they face in trying to enact it? How could we help them better compared to their current resources? What would the new value proposition be about in terms of sign value, experience value, exchange value, and resources? In which practices would our customers derive value from the related new offering?
- What kind of resources do we need to integrate, in order to make the change happen so that our customers will experience improved value and the other participants (such as our suppliers) will benefit from value co-creation?

This thesis shows how everyday consumer behavior is fragmented and thereby questions the validity of consumer market segmentation based on demographics (Wedel and Kamakura 2000) or static cultural values (e.g. Rokeach 1973; Schwartz 1992). Rather than relying on these types of consumer market segmentations, this thesis encourages firms to pay more attention to end-use situations: the interplay between valued themes of consumers, such as cultural ideals, identity projects and goals, context-tied factors hindering or fostering their enactment, and the firms' offerings. Finally, this thesis portrays consumers as creative and practical agents who use firms' offerings and their meanings as they want, irrespective of the firms' intents or desires. Therefore it is wise for firms to be humble consumer behavior learners and value co-designers.

The methodology of this thesis has been applied in designing and implementing a new café concept for the Fazer Group. The empirical evidence from the first new cafés in Helsinki makes it possible to evaluate the scientific and practical value of this thesis; that is to say, to determine whether enough value is co-created from the perspectives of café customers, the Fazer group, and other stakeholders.

### 5.3. Limitations and Areas for Further Research

This thesis has various limitations which offer scope for future research. In this study S-D logic, CCT and PT offered insightful conceptual lenses to widen understanding of consumer value creation as an everyday sociocultural and situational phenomenon. The empirical study of Essay 2 focused on examining the interplay among cultural ideals, practices and mundane consumption. It did not focus on examining the routinized and reflexive aspects of mundane consumption. Yet the findings hint how mundane food consumption varies across consumers and practices in terms of reflexivity. Additionally, they show how consumers can perceive mundane consumption as very valuable. Acknowledging these two points, one can raise a question for further research: how much and in which theoretical aspects do mundane and extraordinary consumption differ from one another. Another valuable theme for future research would be a differential value of practices and how it informs consumer behavior. Based on the food enthusiast couple narrative, one can assume that the more valuable consumers perceive a practice, the more diverse the actions of the consumers with different habitus become. In order to get heterogeneity in terms of weekday dinner practices, this research sample consisted of the weekday dinners of twenty households with different backgrounds. Due to limited research resources, the researcher shared only one weekday dinner per examined household. A logical continuation could be to examine the food-related practices of households for a longer period of time. The aim would be to understand better how much variation occurs in respect with materializing the food ideal within a household and across households and why in the weekday dinner practice and across food related practices. Finally, while Essay 2 focused on examining the interplay among practices, cultural ideals, and mundane consumption in a weekday dinner context, future research could focus on examining more holistically how the households engaged in the weekday dinner practice context enact, negotiate, and resist the cultural ideals socially (social dynamics between children and parents, and between children); corporeally (corporeal acts and gestures during the weekday dinner); emotionally (moods and their textual expressions); and materially (material circumstances that frame the weekday dinner practice).

Value propositions deserve further examination. Even though Essay 3 uses the empirical evidence of prior research, it is a conceptual examination. Therefore, a logical continuation would be to examine empirically how consumers experience and evaluate value propositions in their practices. This could include operationalizing the value proposition concept to a construct. Second, it would be valuable to extend the empirical examination from consumers as customers to all the beneficiaries in a specific value network, in order to learn more from the contextualized value proposition. Third, this study does not investigate post-consumption experiences. Nor does this study focus on examining value propositions as service interactions in practices even though S-D logic emphasizes the relational nature of value co-creation (Vargo and Lusch 2008). These themes represent relevant future research areas. Finally, this study acknowledges the existence of brands and value propositions as concepts but does not investigate their relationship. Studying theoretically and empirically how these concepts are related to one another would contribute to marketing theory.

## REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. A., 1995. *Building Strong Brands*. New York: The Free Press.
- Abell, J. and Myers, G., 2008. Analyzing Research Interviews. In: Wodak R. and M. Krzyzanowski, eds. *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 145-162.
- Akaka, M.A., Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F., 2012. An Exploration of Networks in Value Cocreation: A Service-ecosystems View. *Review of Marketing Research*, 9, 13-50.
- Allen, D.E., 2002. Toward a Theory of Consumer Choice as Sociohistorically Shaped Practical Experience: The Fits-Like-a-Glove (FLAG) Framework. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(4), 515-532.
- Allen, D.E. and Anderson, P.F., 1994. Consumption and Social Stratification: Bourdieu's Distinction. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 21(1), 70-74.
- Alvesson, M. and Kärreman, D., 2000. Varieties of discourse: On the study of organizations through discourse analysis. *Human Relations*, 53(9), 1125-1149.
- Araujo, L., Kjellberg, H. and Spencer, R., 2008. Market Practices and Forms. *Marketing Theory*, 8(1), 5-14.
- Arnould E.J., 2005. Animating the big middle. *Journal of Retailing*, 81(2), 89-96.
- Arnould, E.J. and Price, L.L., 2006. Market-Oriented Ethnography Revisited. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 46(3), 251-262.
- Arnould, E.J., Price, L.L. and Malshe, A., 2006. Toward a Cultural Resource -Based Theory of the Customer. In: Lusch, R.F. and S. L. Vargo, eds. *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, debate, and directions*. New York: M.S. Sharpe, 91-104.
- Arnould, E.J. and Thompson, C.J., 2005. Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), 868-882.
- Bahr Bugge, A. and Almås, R., 2006. Domestic Dinner: Representations and practices of a proper meal among young suburban mothers. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 6(2), 203-228.
- Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., Khosravini, M., Krzyzanowski, M., McEnery, T. and Wodak, R., 2008. A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press. *Discourse and Society*, 19(3), 273-306.

- Ballantyne, D., Frow, P., Varey, R.J. and Payne, A., 2011. Value propositions as communication practice: Taking a wider view. *Industrial Marketing Management* 40(2), 202-210.
- Ballantyne, D. and Varey, R.J., 2006. Creating value-in-use through marketing interaction: The exchange logic of relating, communicating and knowing. *Marketing Theory* 6(3), 335-348.
- Belk, R.W., 1975. Situational variables and consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research* 2(3), 157-164.
- Belk, R.W., 1988. Possessions and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139-168.
- Belk, R.W. and Costa, J., 1998. The Mountain Man Myth: A Contemporary Consuming Fantasy. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25(December), 218-240.
- Bell, R. and Pliner, P.L., 2003. Time to eat. The relationship between the number of people eating and meal duration in three lunch settings. *Appetite* 41(2), 215-218.
- Bhaskar, R., 1989a. *Reclaiming Reality: A Critical Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy*. London: Verso..
- Bhaskar, R., 1989b. *The possibility of naturalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Brighton: Harvester.
- Bolton, R.N., 2006. Toward a cultural resource – based theory of consumer. In: Lusch, R.F. and S. L. Vargo, S.L., eds. *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, debate, and directions*. New York; M.S. Sharpe, ix-xi.
- Bougie, R., Pieters, R and Zeelenberg, M., 2003. Angry Customers Don't Come Back, They Get Back: The Experience and Behavioral Implications of Anger and Dissatisfaction in Services. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 3(4), 377-393.
- Bourdieu, P., 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Oxon: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P., 1990. *The logic of practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bove, C.F., Sobal, J. and Rauschenbach, B.S., 2003. Food choices among newly married couples: convergence, conflict, individualism, and projects. *Appetite* 40, 25-41.
- Brunso, K. and Grunert, K., 1995. Development and Testing of a Cross-Culturally Valid Instrument: Food-Related Life Style. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 22, 475-479.

- Brunso, K. and Grunert, K., 1998. Cross-Cultural Similarities and Differences in Shopping for Food. *Journal of Business Research*, 42, 145-150.
- Bryman, A., 2008. *Social Research Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burr, V., 2006. *Introduction to Social Constructionism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Burrell, G. and Morgan, G., 1979. *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis*. London: Ashgate.
- Cetina, K.K., 2001. Objectual practice. In: Schatzki, T.R., K.K. Cetina and E. von Seivigny, eds. *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 175-188.
- Chandler, J.D. and Vargo, S.L. 2011. Contextualization and value-in-context: How context frames exchange. *Marketing Theory*, 11(1), 35-49.
- Chitakunye, P. and Maclaran, P., 2012. Materiality and family consumption: the role of the television in changing mealtime rituals. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, doi:10.1080/10253866.2012.695679.
- Cova, B. and Cova, V., 2002. Tribal marketing: Tribalization of society and its impact on the conduct of marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(5/6), 595-620.
- Cova, B. and Salle, R., 2008. Marketing solutions in accordance with the S-D logic: Co-creating value with customer network actors. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 37, 270-277.
- Cronin, J.M., McCarthy, M.B. and Collins, A.M., 2012. Covert distinction: how hipsters practice food-based resistance strategies in the production of identity. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, doi:10.1080/10253866.2012.678785.
- Day, G., 2006. Achieving Advantage with a Service-dominant Logic. In: Lusch, R.F., and S.L. Vargo, eds. *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate and Directions*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 68-85.
- DeVault, M., 1994. *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work*. Chicago: The University Chicago Press.
- Edvardsson, B., Tronvoll B., and Gruber, T., 2011. Expanding understanding on service exchange and value co-creation: a social construction approach. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39, 327-339.
- Eisenhardt, K.M., 1989. Building Theories from Case Study Research. *The Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532-550.

- Epp, A.M. and Price, L.L., 2011. Designing Solutions Around Customer Network Identity Goals. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(March), 36-54.
- Eurostat. <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/setupModifyTableLayout.do> [Accessed March 13, 2012]
- Fairclough, N., 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N., 2003. *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London; Routledge.
- Fairclough, N., 2005. Discourse analysis in organization studies: The case for critical realism. *Organization Studies* 26(6), 915-939.
- Firat, A.F., 1997. Educator Insights: Globalization of Fragmentation - A Framework for Understanding Contemporary Global Markets. *Journal of International Marketing*, 5(2), 77-86.
- Firat, A.F. and Shultz II, C.J., 1997. From segmentation to fragmentation. *European Journal of Marketing*, 31(3), 183-207.
- Firat, A.F. and Venkatesh, A., 1995. Liberatory Postmodernism and the Reenchantment of Consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(3), 239-267.
- Fischer, E., Otnes C.C. and Tuncay, L., 2007. Pursuing Parenthood: Integrating Cultural and Cognitive Perspectives on Persistent Goal Striving. *Journal of Consumer Research* 34(December), 425-440.
- Fleetwood, S., 2005. Ontology in Organization and Management Studies: A Critical Realist Perspective. *Organization*, 12(2), 197-222.
- Flint, D.J. and Mentzer, J.T., 2006. Striving for integrated value chain management. In: Lusch, R.F. and S.L. Vargo, eds. *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate and Directions*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 139-149.
- Frow, P. and Payne, A., 2011. A stakeholder perspective of the value proposition concept. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(1/2), 223-240.
- Giddens, A., 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Gronow, J. and Warde, A., 2001. Introduction. In: Gronow, J. and A. Warde, eds. *Ordinary Consumption*. London and New York: Routledge, 1-8.
- Grönroos, C., 1997. Value-driven Relational Marketing: from Products to Resources and Competencies. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 13(5), 407-419.

- Grönroos, C., 2007. *In Search of a New Logic for Marketing. Foundations of Contemporary Theory*. London: John Wiley & Sons.
- Grönroos, C., 2008. Service logic revisited: who creates value? And who co-creates?. *European Business Review*, 20(4), 298-314.
- Grönroos, C., 2009. Marketing as promise management: regaining customer management for marketing. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* 24(5/6), 351-359.
- Grönroos, C., 2011. Value co-creation in service logic: A critical analysis. *Marketing Theory*, 11(3), 279-301.
- Gummesson, E., 2004. In: Invited Commentaries on Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing, *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 18-27.
- Gummesson, E., 2008. Quality, service-dominant logic and many-to-many marketing. *The TQM Journal*, 20(2), 143-153.
- Gummesson, E. and Polese, F., 2009. B2B is not an island!. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 24(5/6), 337-350.
- Heinonen, K., Strandvik, T., Mickelsson, K.J., Edvardsson, B., Sundström, E. and Andersson, P., 2010. A customer-dominant logic of service. *Journal of Service Management*, 21(4), 531-548.
- Helkkula, A., Kelleher, C. and Pihlström, M., 2012. Characterizing Value as an Experience: Implications for Service Researchers and Managers. *Journal of Service Research*, 15(1), 59-75.
- Hibbert, S., Winklhofer, H. and Temerak, M.S., 2012. Customers as Resource Integrators: Toward a Model of Customer Learning. *Journal of Service Research* 15(3), 247-261.
- Hirschman, E.C. and Holbrook, M.B., 1982. Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concepts, Methods and Propositions. *Journal of Marketing*, 46(3), 92-101.
- Holbrook, M., 1996. Customer Value - A Framework For Analysis and Research. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 23, 138-142.
- Holbrook, M., 1999. Introduction to Consumer Value. In: Holbrook, M., ed. *Consumer Value: A framework for analysis and research*. London: Routledge, 1-28.
- Holt, D.B., 1995. How Consumers Consume: A Typology of Consumption Practices. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1), 1-16.



- Holt, D.B., 1998. Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption? *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25(1), 1-25.
- Holt, D.B. and Thompson, C.J., 2004. Man-of-Action Heroes: The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(September), 425-440.
- Holttinen, H., 2010a. Social Practices as Units of Value Creation: Theoretical Underpinnings and Implications. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences* 2(1), 95-112.
- Holttinen, H., 2010b. Meanings guiding value co-creation in practices: A critical discourse analysis informed approach to a weekday dinner practice. In: Forum on Markets and Marketing, September 2010, University of Cambridge, England.
- Johnson, M.W., Christensen, C.M. and Kagermann, H., 2008. Reinventing Your Business Model. *Harvard Business Review*, December, 51-59.
- Johnson, P. and Duberley, J., 2000. *Understanding Management Research*. London: Sage.
- Kaplan, R.S. and Norton, D.P., 2004. Measuring the Strategic Readiness of Intangible Assets. *Harvard Business Review*, February, 52-63.
- Karababa, E. and Kjeldgaard, D., 2013. Value in marketing: Toward sociocultural perspectives. *Marketing Theory*, DOI: 10.1177/1470593113500385.
- Kates, S.M., 2004. The Dynamics of Brand Legitimacy: An Interpretive Study in the Gay Men's Community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(September), 455-464.
- Keeney, R.L., 1999. The Value of Internet Commerce to the Customer. *Management Science*, 45(4), 533-542.
- Kemmer, D., Anderson, A.S. and Marshall, D.W., 1998. Living together and eating together: changes in food choice and eating habits during the transition from single to married/cohabiting. *The Sociological Review*, 46, 48-72.
- Khalifa, A.S., 2004. Customer value: a review of recent literature and an integrative configuration. *Management Decision*, 43(5), 645-666.
- Kjaernes, U., Ekström, M.P., Gronow, J., Holm, L. and Mäkelä, J., 2001. Introduction. In: Kjaernes, U., ed. *Eating Patterns: A Day in the Lives of Nordic Peoples*. Oslo: The National Institute for Consumer Research, 25-64.
- Kjellberg, H. and Helgesson, C-F., 2007. On the Nature of Markets and their Practices. *Marketing Theory*, 7(2), 137-62.

- Kjellberg, H., Storbacka, K., Akaka, M., Chandler, J., Finch, J., Lindeman, S., Löbler, H., Mason, K., McColl-Kennedy, J. and Nenonen, S., 2012. Market futures/future markets: Research directions in the study of markets. *Marketing Theory*, 12(2), 219-223.
- Kleine, R.E. III, 2007. Roundtable summary: Exploring the Co-Evolution of Possession Constellations, Self, and Identity: Part Two – Mundane Consumption. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 34, 588-589.
- Kleine, R.E. III and Kernan, J.B., 1991. Contextual Influences on the Meanings Ascribed to Ordinary Consumption Object. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18(December), 311-324.
- Kleine, R.E. III, Schultz-Kleine, S. and Kernan, J.B., 1993. Mundane Consumption and the Self: A Social-Identity Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 2(3), 209-235.
- Kleine-Schultz, S., Kleine, R.E. III and Allen, C.T., 1995. How Is a Possession “Me” or “Not Me”? Characterizing Types and an Antecedent of Material Possession Attachment. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(December), 327-343.
- Korkman, O., 2006. *Customer value formation in practice: a practice theoretical approach*. PhD thesis. Hanken School of Economics. Helsinki: Publications of the Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration, No. 155.
- Korkman, O, Storbacka, K. and Harald, B., 2010. Practices as markets: value co-creation in e-invoicing. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 18(4), 236-247.
- Kozinets, R.V., 2008. Technology/Ideology: How Ideological Fields Influence Consumers’ Technology Narratives. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(April), 865-881.
- Kwan, K.M. and Tsang, E.W.K., 2001. Realism and Constructivism in Strategy Research: A Critical Realist Response to Mir and Watson. *Strategic Management Journal*, 2, 1163–1168.
- Lanning, M.J.,1998. *Delivering Profitable Value: A Revolutionary Framework to Accelerate Growth, Generate Wealth and Rediscover the Heart of Business*. New York: Perseus.
- Levy, S.J.,1959. Symbols for Sale. *Harvard Business Review*, 37(July-August), 117-124.
- Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E.G., 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lupton, D., 1996. *Food, the Body and the Self*. London: Sage.
- Lusch, R.F., Vargo, S.L. and O’Brien, M., 2007. Competing through service: Insights from service-dominant logic. *Journal of Retailing*, 83(1), 5-18.

- Marshall, D., 2005. Food as Ritual, Routine or Convention. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 8(1), 69-85.
- Martin, D.M., Schouten, J.W. and McAlexander, J.H., 2006. Claiming the Throttle: Multiple Femininities in a Hyper-Masculine Subculture. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 9(3), 171-205.
- McCracken, G., 2005. *Culture and Consumption: Markets, Meaning and Brand Management*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Merz, M.A, He, Y. and Vargo, S.L., 2009. The evolving brand logic: a service-dominant logic perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 37(3), 328-344.
- Mick, D.G., 1986. Consumer Research and Semiotics: Exploring the Morphology of Signs, Symbols, and Significance. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 2(September), 196-213.
- Mick, D.G. and Buhl, C., 1992. A Meaning-based Model of Advertising Experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(December), 317-338.
- Miller, Daniel., 1987. *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Miller, Daniel., 1994. *Modernity: An Ethnographic Approach: Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad*. Oxford: Berg.
- Miller, Daniel., 1995. *Acknowledging Consumption*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Moisander, J., Valtonen, A. and Hirsto, H., 2009. Personal Interviews in Cultural Consumer Research—poststructuralist challenges. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 12(4), 329-348.
- Moisio, R.E., Arnould, E.J. and Price, L.L., 2004. Between Mothers and Markets: Constructing family identity through homemade food. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 4(3), 361-384
- Mäkelä, J. 2001. The meal format. In: Kjaernes, U., ed. *Eating Patterns: A Day in the Lives of Nordic Peoples*. Oslo: The National Institute for Consumer Research, 125-158.
- Nightingale, D.J. and Comby, J., 2002. Social Constructionism as Ontology. *Theory and Psychology*, 12(5), 701-713.
- Normann, R., 2001. *Reframing Business: When the Map Changes the Landscape*. Chichester: Wiley.

- Oberhuber, F. and Krzyzanowski, M., 2008. Discourse Analysis and Ethnography. In: Wodak, R. and M. Krzyzanowski, eds. *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 182-203.
- Ochs, E., 1997. Narrative. In: T.A. Van Dijk, ed., *Discourse as Structure and Process*. London: Sage, 185-207.
- Oxford Dictionaries.  
<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/inform?q=inform> [Accessed March 31, 2013]
- Patton, M.Q., 2002. *Qualitative research and evaluation of method*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Sage.
- Payne, A., Ballantyne, D. and Christopher, M., 2005. A stakeholder approach to relationship marketing strategy: The development and use of the 'six markets model'. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(7/8), 855-871.
- Payne, A., Storbacka, K. and Frow, P., 2008. Managing the Co-Creation of Value. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science* 36(1), 83-96.
- Pliner, P., Bell, R., Hirsch, E. and Kinchla, M., 2006. Meal duration mediates the effect of "social facilitation" on eating humans. *Appetite*, 46(2), 189-198.
- Pollak, A., 2008. Analyzing TV Documentaries. In: Wodak, R. and M. Krzyzanowski, eds. *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 77-94.
- Peñaloza, L., 2001. Consuming the American West: Animating Cultural Meaning and Memory at a Stock Show and Rodeo. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(December), 369-398.
- Peñaloza, L. and Mish, J., 2011. The Nature and Processes of Market Co-Creation in Triple Bottom Line Firms: Levering Insights from Consumer Culture Theory and Service -Dominant Logic. *Marketing Theory*, 11(1), 9-34.
- Peñaloza, L. and Venkatesh, A., 2006. Further evolving the new dominant logic of marketing: from services to the social construction of markets. *Marketing Theory*, 6(3), 299-316.
- Prahalad, C.K. and Ramaswamy, V., 2004. Co-creating unique value with customers. *Strategy & Leadership*, 32(3), 4-9.
- Reckwitz, A., 2002. Toward A Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Cultural Theorizing. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(2), 243-263.
- Rintamäki, T., Kuusela, H. and Mitronen, L., 2007. Identifying competitive customer value propositions in retailing. *Managing Service Quality*, 17(6), 621-634.

- Rokeach, M., 1973. *The nature of human values*. New York: Free Press.
- Rotko, T., T. Aho, Mustonen, N. and Linnanmäki, E., 2011. *Kapeneeko kuilu? Tilannekatsaus terveyserojen kaventamiseen Suomessa 2007-2010. [Is the gap getting narrower? A report about reducing health inequalities in Finland 2007-2010]*. Helsinki: National Institute for Health and Wellbeing.
- Sandström, S., Edvardsson, B., Kristensson, P. and Magnusson, P., 2008. Value in use through service experience. *Managing Service Quality*, 18(2), 112-126.
- Sánchez-Fernández, R. and Iniesta-Bonillo, M. Á., 2007. The concept of perceived value: a systematic review of the research. *Marketing Theory*, 7(4), 427-451.
- Sayer, A., 1992. *Method in Social Science: A realist Approach*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge.
- Schatzki, T.R., 1996. *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schatzki, T.R., 2000a. The Social Bearing of Nature. *Inquiry*, 43, 21-38.
- Schatzki, T.R., 2000b. Wittgenstein and the social context and an individual life. *History of the Human Sciences*, 12(1), 93-107.
- Schatzki, T.R., 2001a. Introduction: PT. In: Schatzki, T.R., K.K. Cetina, K.K. and E. von Seigny, eds. *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 1-14.
- Schatzki, T.R., 2001b. Practice minded orders. In: Schatzki, T.R., K.K. Cetina, K.K. and E. von Seigny, eds. *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 42-55.
- Schatzki, T.R., 2002. *The site of the social: a philosophical account of the constitution of social life and change*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University.
- Schatzki, T.R., 2003. A New Societist Social Ontology. *Philosophy of Social Sciences*, 33(2), 174-202.
- Schatzki, T.R., 2005. Peripheral Vision: The Sites of Organizations. *Organization Studies*, 26(3), 465-484.
- Schau, H.J., Muñoz Jr., A.M. and Arnould, E.J., 2009. How Brand Community Practices Create Value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 31-51.
- Schau, H.J., Gilly, M.C. and Wolfinbarger, M.F., 2009. Consumer Identity Renaissance: The Resurgence of Identity-Inspired Consumption in Retirement. *Journal of Consumer Research* 36(August), 255-276.

- Schouten, J.W. and McAlexander, J.H., 1995. Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1), 43-61.
- Schwartz S.H., 1992. Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. In: Zanna. M., ed. *Advances in experimental social psychology* (25). New York: Academic Press: 1-65.
- Sellaeg, K. and Chapman, G.E., 2008. Masculinity and food ideals of men who live alone. *Appetite*, 51, 120-128.
- Sims-Schouten, W. and Willig, C., 2007. Critical Realism in Discourse Analysis: A presentation of a Systematic Method of Analysis Using Women's Talk of Motherhood, Childcare and Female Employment as an Example. *Theory and Psychology*, 1(1), 101-124.
- Shove, E. and Pantzar, M., 2005. Consumers, Producers and Practices: Understanding the invention and reinvention of Nordic walking. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(1), 43-64.
- Storbacka, K. and Nenonen, S., 2010. Scripting markets: From value propositions to market propositions. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40, 255-266.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J., 1998. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage.
- Thornton, P.H., Ocasio, W. and Lounsbury, M., 2012. *The Institutional Logics Perspective: A New Approach to Culture, Structure and Process*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Thompson, C.J. and Haytko, D.L., 1997. Speaking of Fashion: Consumers' Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (September), 139-153.
- Thompson, C.J. and Holt, D.B., 2004. How Do Men Grap the Phallus? *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 4(3), 313-338.
- Thompson, C.J. and Tambyah, S.K., 1999. Trying to Be Cosmopolitan. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26(December), 214-241.
- Thompson, C. J. and Troester, M., 2002. Consumer Value Systems in the Age of Postmodern Fragmentation: The Case of the Natural Health Microculture. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(March), 550-571.
- Ulver-Sneistrup, S., Askegaard, S., and Brogard-Kristensen, D., 2011. The new work ethics of consumption and the paradox of mundane brand resistance. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 1(2), 215-238.

- Van Dijk, T. A., 1997. The Study of Discourse. In: Van Dijk, T.A., ed. In *Discourse as Structure and Process*. London: Sage, 1-34.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F., 2004. Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 1-17.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F., 2008. Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 1-10.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F., 2011a. It's all B2B and beyond...: Toward a systems perspective of the market, *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(2), 181-187.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F., 2011b. From goods-dominant logic to service-dominant logic. Invited presentation at Workshop on service-dominant logic: An evolution or revolution in marketing theory and practice? Concordia University, Montreal.
- Venkatesh, A., Peñaloza, L. and Firat, F.A., 2006. The Market as a Sign System and the Logic of the Market. In: Lusch, R.F. and S.L. Vargo, eds. *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate and Directions*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 251-265.
- Wallendorf, M. and Arnould, E.J., 1988. My Favorite Things": A Cross-Cultural Inquiry into Object Attachment, Possessiveness, and Social Linkage. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(4), 531-547.
- Wallendorf, M. and Arnould, E.J., 1991. "We Gather Together": Consumption Rituals of Thanksgiving Day. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18(June), 13-31.
- Warde, A., 1997. *Consumption, Food and Taste: culinary antinomies and commodity culture*. London: Sage.
- Warde, A., 1999. Convenience Food: Space and Timing. *British Food Journal*, 101(7), 518-527.
- Warde, A., 2005. Consumption and Theories of Practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(2), 131-153.
- Warde, A. and Martens, L., 2000. *Eating Out: Social Differentiation, Consumption and Pleasure*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wedel, M. and Kamakura, W.A., 2000. *Market segmentation: Conceptual and Methodological Foundations*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Norwell and AH Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publicers.
- Willig, C., 1999. Beyond appearances: A critical realist approach to social constructionist work. In: Nightingale, D.J. and J. Cromby, eds. *Social Constructionist Psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 37-51.

- Wodak, R., 2008. Introduction: Discourse Studies – Important Concepts and Terms. In: Wodak, R. and M. Krzyzanowski, eds. *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1-29.
- Woodall, T., 2003. Conceptualizing ‘Value for the Customer’: An Attributional, Structural and Dispositional Analysis. *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 12: 1-42.
- Woodruff, R.B., 1997. Customer Value: The Next Source for Competitive Advantage. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(2), 139-153.
- Zeithaml, V.A., 1988. Consumer Perceptions of Price, Quality, and Value: A Means-End Model and Synthesis of Evidence. *Journal of Marketing*, 52(3), 2-22.



**APPENDIX 1 ESSAYS****Essay 1:**

Holtinen, H., 2010. Social Practices as Units of Value Creation: Theoretical Underpinnings and Implications. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, 2(1), 95-112.

**Essay 2:**

Holtinen, H., How Practices inform the Materialization of Cultural Ideals in Mundane Consumption. Conditionally accepted for publication in *Consumption Markets & Culture*.

**Essay 3:**

Holtinen, H., (forthcoming). Contextualizing Value Propositions: Examining how Consumers Experience Value Propositions in their Practices. *Australasian Marketing Journal*.

SOCIAL PRACTICES AS UNITS OF VALUE CREATION: THEORETICAL  
UNDERPINNINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

HELI HOLTTINEN

**ESSAY 1**

This essay has been published in *International Journal of Quality and Service  
Sciences*, 2010, 2(1), 95-112.





# Social practices as units of value creation: theoretical underpinnings and implications

Social practices  
as units of value  
creation

Heli Holttinen

*Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland*

95

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to conceptually examine how value is created in (social) practices in which consumers use offerings as operand resources.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Drawing on service-dominant logic, practice and consumer culture theories, this paper conceptualizes the operational logic of value creation in practices and draws implications to marketing theory and practice. The approach to markets is “markets as practices” in value networks.

**Findings** – Value is tied to practices, not to offerings. Therefore, a key research unit for examining value creation is a practice. Value creation is socially constructed because a practice-specific meaning structure, influenced by the context and consumer resources, configures consumers’ activities. Guided by it, consumers do what makes best sense to do in the practice in the specific moment. As the context and consumer resources are unfixed, fragmented consumers emerge. Therefore, segmentation of value-creating practices offers a valid description of value creation.

**Originality/value** – The paper extends the examination of value creation from use to practices. Drawing on marketing and other social sciences, it conceptualizes the operational logic of value creation in a practice: it defines practice elements, their roles and interdependencies in the value-creation process. The operational logic introduces meaning structures as value-creation mediators: influenced by the context and consumer resources, they steer consumer participation in the practice (including the use of offerings) and experienced value. Understanding meaning structures helps firms to identify value improvement opportunities which can be transferred to improved or new value propositions. Finally, the paper proposes segmentation of practices in the presence of fragmented consumers.

**Keywords** Consumer behaviour, Market segmentation, Value analysis, Service systems, Networking

**Paper type** Conceptual paper

## Introduction

I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own.

In 1945, Wittgenstein stated these wise words in the preface to his *Philosophical Investigations*. At present, service-dominant logic (S-D logic) seems to share Wittgenstein’s ideology as it inspires, invites and synthesizes ideas from fragmented research streams of marketing in order to provide market and marketing insights (and eventually a theory) that fit with the present and the future (Gummesson, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Bolton, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2007).

Do Wittgenstein and S-D logic have more in common? I dare to propose so. One of the fundamental ideas of S-D logic is that value is not embedded in offerings, but value is created in use (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2007). Equally importantly, S-D logic ties value creation to a specific context in which consumers and firms integrate resources



through interaction in value networks (Vargo and Lusch, 2007; Korkman *et al.*, 2008; Vargo, 2008; Gummesson and Polese, 2009; Merz *et al.*, 2009). However, even though S-D logic research recognizes that value is not created in a vacuum, it has not so far focused on examining thoroughly the value-creation context and its influence on value creation among consumers. Now Wittgenstein, one of the key influencers of concurrent practice theory (PT), offers his helping hand (Schatzki, 1996). PT provides a context-laden arena for investigating value creation: a (social) practice (Holt, 1995; Allen, 2002; Korkman, 2006, p. 47; Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Warde, 2005; Ingram *et al.*, 2007; Araujo *et al.*, 2008; Korkman *et al.*, 2008). Guided by meaning structures (Schatzki, 1996, p. 100), socially constructed consumers create value, by integrating and using resources according to what makes most sense in the specific practice and the moment. Finally, the examination of value creation in practices benefits from the findings from consumer culture theory (CCT), an interpretive consumer behavior research stream, since it addresses socio-cultural, experiential, emotional, and symbolic aspects of consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Holt, 1998; Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

Drawing from S-D logic, PT, and CCT, this paper investigates how value is created in practices, what roles different practice elements have in value creation, and what implications can be drawn for marketing theory and practice. The aim is to contribute to the S-D logic paradigm, especially to the development of a general theory of the market, by conceptualizing an operational logic of value creation in practices where consumers, as participants in value networks (Gummesson and Polese, 2009; Lusch *et al.*, 2009), integrate resources and co-create value. Hence, the standpoint of this paper to markets is “markets as value-creating practices” in value networks. For firms, this paper attempts to provide a valid description of value creation among consumers participating in different practices. The ultimate aim is to help firms to better sense value-creation opportunities which they can transfer to improved or new value propositions.

The paper progresses as follows: first, the standpoint of S-D logic, PT, and CCT to value creation is synthesized in six assumptions which illuminate value creation in practices. Second, based on these assumptions, the operational logic of value creation in a practice is conceptualized by presenting different practice elements, their roles and interdependencies in value creation. Third, the implications of value-creating practices for marketing practice and theory are introduced. Heterogeneous practices produce fragmented consumers, which logically leads to the idea of the segmentation of value-creating practices. In the discussion section, the key findings are summarized; showing how practices, firms and consumers are interlinked; and elaborating on the concept of value from the practice standpoint. The paper ends with a discussion on limitations and suggestions for further research.

*Assumption 1: value is co-created in use*

I adapt the assumption that value is created in use rather than being embedded in offerings *per se*: “there is no value until an offering is used” (Vargo and Lusch, 2006, p. 44). Rather, offerings “derive their value through use” (Vargo and Lusch, 2007, p. 7), where offerings refer to goods and services. Hence, firms can only offer value propositions (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2007). Deriving from this, offerings can be defined as materialized value propositions (in the form of goods and services) which

---

are proposed by firms for use. The value potential of the offerings remains untapped until they are used by consumers. Equally value propositions, that is, value promises carried by offerings, are redeemed in use. Consequently, the concepts of an offering and a value proposition refer to this same object having a value-creating aim and potential. Therefore, in this paper, they are used interchangeably.

Offerings are regarded as inputs to a value co-creation process (Normann, 2001, p. 99) in which consumers participate by using them on their own at a minimum (Vargo and Lusch, 2007; Gummesson, 2008). For example, an unused Roquefort in the fridge entails a value proposition of splendid taste sensations but provides no value (unless a consumer experiences the value of just keeping it in the fridge). When the Roquefort is enjoyed by the consumer, value is co-created by the consumer, the supplier of the Roquefort and other potential value network participants, such as the groceries.

In value co-creation, customer participation can extend to co-operation where a supplier and a customer develop customized and co-produced offerings (Payne *et al.*, 2008). Consumers, being dissatisfied with available choices, are increasingly seeking to exercise a stronger influence on what they consume and hence they want to interact with firms to co-create value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004.) Allowing customers to co-construct the offering to suit their needs has proved to be a successful approach, eBay and Expedia being good examples (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

Value co-creation can cover consumption from pre- to post-purchase activities (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006). For example, dinner practice may include a search for a suitable recipe before the purchase of ingredients and it continues after having the dinner by cleaning and doing the dishes. Payne *et al.* (2008) conceptualize value co-creation as a relational process, including customer, supplier, and encounter processes.

Irrespective of the level, length, or type of value co-creation, participation is an explicit result of customer preferences (Etgar, 2008). Consumers engage in co-creating value when their personal needs are better served and satisfaction enhanced (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000). The value-in-use assumption views both parties as active participants in value co-creation. The assumption of resource integration reinforces this view.

*Assumption 2: consumers and firms are resource integrators*

This assumption is aligned with S-D logic's premise, "all social and economic actors are resource integrators" (Vargo and Lusch, 2007, p. 7), meaning that in value creation both firms and consumers acquire and integrate resources through interaction in value networks (Gummesson and Polese, 2009; Lusch *et al.*, 2009). S-D logic divides resources into operant and operand resources where the operant resources are knowledge and skills whereas the operand resources are the appliances in the value-creation process (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2007).

In the same manner, Arnould *et al.* (2006) split consumer resources into these two groups. Operand resources are those over which consumers have an allocative power, including financial resources, property, offerings, and other similar resources. Operant resources are regarded as consumers' core competences that can be applied in various contexts or extended to new ones. They include cultural resources, social resources, and mental and physical capabilities (Arnould *et al.*, 2006), entailing language competence, cultural knowledge, skills, experiences, and modes of thought that a

---

consumer acquires via socialization in one's cultural context, such as in a family, social class, neighborhood or sub-culture (Allen and Anderson, 1994). Empirical research has evidenced the influence of cultural resources on consumer choice (Holt, 1998; Allen, 2002). Think of your weekday dinner practices, for example. Globalization has most likely increased the selection of non-native cuisines in the local grocers' since your childhood, which has probably contributed to your weekday dinners becoming more international. In addition to cultural resources, consumers use social resources which refer to social networks and relationships affecting a brand choice and arousing new consumption (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Cova and Cova, 2002; Warde, 2005; Arnould *et al.*, 2006). Again, tips and recipes from friends influence what we eat for dinner and where. Finally, physical and mental capabilities affect which offerings consumers prefer to use. For example, fewer people with physical constraints take part in mountain-conquering trips compared to physically fit consumers.

In general, the type, quantity, and quality of the consumer resources influence the value which consumers seek. The assumption of resource integration introduces firms and consumers as active, dynamic, and co-operative. If the value, creation improvement requires, resources are combined in a new way with other market participants. Consumers are willing to use new offerings as long as they are able to improve value creation. Similarly, firms can expand their scope of offerings beyond their current business by acquiring new resources from outside of their organizations through interaction in their value network. Finally, social and cultural resources tie value creation to a specific context.

*Assumption 3: value creation is tied to a practice*

S-D logic, CCT, and PT agree on the contextual nature of value creation. S-D logic's phenomenologically created value (Vargo and Lusch, 2007, p. 7) links value to consumption contexts whereas CCT research illuminates how consumption varies with sociocultural settings and time (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Holt, 1998; Coulter *et al.*, 2003; Warde, 2005; Arnould and Price, 2006). Finally, PT offers a context-laden research unit for analyzing value creation: a social practice, also generally referred to as a practice (Schatzki, 1996; Reckwitz, 2002). Both concepts are used interchangeably in this paper. The practice ties value creation to a specific social, cultural, and spatial setting at a certain time in history and in the consumer's life. Since PT has impulses from various disciplines, such as philosophy and sociology, it is not a unified theory (Schatzki, 2001a, p. 1). Most practice theorists, however, agree that practice is a meeting point for mind, activity and society (Schatzki, 2001a, p. 3). This notion emphasizes the dependence of human thinking and acting on their cultural, social and historical contexts, related to times, places, traditions, and events: they are constituted in practices (Schatzki, 2005). This view opposes the individualist ontology where a phenomenon is purely viewed as a product of individual actions, and also the societist ontology which presumes that no social phenomenon is decomposable into features of individuals (Schatzki, 2005).

Practices differ from intimate and personal to collective, public or institutional (Thévenot, 2001, p. 56), from dispersed practices (customs), such as questioning, following rules, imagining (Schatzki, 1996, p. 91), to complex integrative practices, such as cooking and research (Schatzki, 1996, p. 98). Dispersed practices, also referred to as

---

basic actions, occur as a part of integrative practices across different sectors of social life (Schatzki, 1996, p. 91, 2000b). The key differences between dispersed and integrative practices is that unlike the former practices, the latter practices house contexts and situations where consumers act (Schatzki, 1996, p. 117) and, in addition, they are directed by rules and norms, and by teleoaffective structures, consisting of ends, purposes, beliefs and emotions (Schatzki, 1996, p. 91). Since the focus of this paper is to examine value-creating practices, the interest lies only in those integrative practices in which consumers voluntarily participate. A voluntary participation is assumed to be an explicit sign of value creation in the practice. Henceforth, the concept of a practice refers systematically to integrative, voluntary practices.

Reckwitz (2002, p. 249) defines a practice as:

[...] a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, “things” and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.

Mental activities refer to mental states, such as feelings, desiring, believing, hoping, seeing and being in pain, and it is expressed in behavior which manifests and signifies mental states (Schatzki, 2001b, p. 49). For example, joy is manifested in crying, and vegetarianism is signified by following a non-meat diet. Behavior makes mental states visible: how things stand in a persons’ life (Schatzki, 1996, p. 42). Mental states are not assumed to be causal determinants of behavior but instead they provide reasons why certain activities are performed (Schatzki, 1996, p. 119). Behavior is seen as a process, consisting of chains of actions and interaction between consumers (Schatzki, 2000a). Things refer to tangible or intangible entities that individuals use. Things are not important for their own sake but for carrying out the practice (Ingram *et al.*, 2007). Things correspond to earlier introduced operand resources, including offerings. Understanding and know-how refer to meanings and shared cultural and social understandings that individuals use when they engage in practices (Schatzki, 1996, p. 18), being analogous to earlier discussed cultural resources. Emotions and motivational knowledge refer to teleoaffective structures which prefigure behavior in the practice (Schatzki, 1996, p. 100, 2001b, p. 53).

Assuming that value creation is tied to a context-laden practice instead of being embedded in an offering re-emphasizes the first assumption “value is co-created in use” and extends it to a specific value-creation context. Furthermore, it implies that the consumer can create value without using any offerings. Similarly, in creating value, the consumer may use multiple offerings in the practice. The number and scope of offerings used in the practice depends on the practice boundaries. Drawing these boundaries is always a managerial decision: what is reasonable for the firm in the current business situation. For example, should the firm examine weekday dinner practices or rather weekday cooking practices only?

*Assumption 4: a practice-specific meaning structure directs consumers’ participation in a practice*

In practices, consumers are directed by rules and teleoaffective structures (Schatzki, 1996, p. 100). I refer to them as meaning structures, following Schatzki’s (1996, p. 123) spirit: “teleoaffectivity governs action by shaping what is signified to an actor to do” where teleoaffectivity refers to both rules and teleoaffective structures (Schatzki, 1996, p. 124).



Directed by them, consumers do what makes best sense for them to do in the specific practice (Schatzki, 1996, p. 100, 2001b, p. 50). Rules refer to explicit formulations of what to do, such as acts of law, precepts, and instructions (Schatzki, 2001b, p. 51). Teleoaffective structures are also normative for participants in a practice: what is correct and acceptable behavior in a practice (Schatzki, 1996, p. 101). The teleological dimension relates to the goal-oriented reasons for doing (project, task, and purpose) given beliefs, hopes, expectations, and emotions, whereas the affective dimension refers to moods, emotions, feelings and passions: how things matter (Schatzki, 1996, p. 123, 2001b, p. 52). Notice that the teleoaffective structure is not a property of a consumer but it is a property of a practice which consumers carry (Schatzki, 2003). Individual consumers, having different histories, different knowledge of the circumstances and different mental states, possess their own versions that organize their activities in a practice (Schatzki, 2003). In other words, operant and operand resources produce a subjective version of teleoaffective structures. These versions can be partly the same but also divergent and conflicting (Schatzki, 2003). Depending on the practice, either dimension of the teleoaffective structure can dominate (Schatzki, 1996, p. 101).

In addition to the meaning structure of the engaged practice, the teleoaffective structures of other practices in which consumers participate guide behavior in the practice (Schatzki, 1996, p. 113). For example, in the case of weekday dinner practice, a mother having her identity project of being a good mother does not want to provide ready-made food for her children. On the other hand, she would like to prepare something very quick and easy, in order to have time for an aerobics class which is a part of her fitness practice. Then, it is her practical intelligibility (also referred as action intelligibility) which organizes her decisions and activities (Schatzki, 1996, p. 124), revealing the hierarchy of meaning structure of the engaged practice. It is important to emphasize that the practical intelligibility, that is, consumers who do what makes the best sense to do, does not mean that consumers necessarily act rationally (Schatzki, 1996, p. 118). For example, dieting consumers may stuff themselves with five chocolate bars at once for an instant pleasure experience even though this action does not support their dieting goals.

The existence of a practical intelligibility does not mean that all consumer activities result from a conscious reflection of what to do. On the contrary, the lion's share of consumer activities is spontaneous or routine behavior without any explicit consideration (Schatzki, 1996, p. 58). To some extent, consumers take meaning structures for granted and act on them, defined by Bourdieu (1990, p. 66) as *doxa* – “commitment to the presuppositions”. Accumulated by past experiences, socially shared and unquestioned beliefs produce and reproduce consumers' perceptions and practices (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66) and thus sustain stability (Deer, 2008, p. 121). Having a “feel for the game” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66), consumers accomplish many daily activities on the basis what feels right and natural in the given specific conditions. However, even though a large portion of consumer activities is routine behavior without conscious reflection, it is not random because it is guided by meaning rules and teleoaffective structures (Schatzki, 1996, p. 58). They provide consumer activities with meaning, direction and an impending outcome (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66). One can conclude that a meaning structure, which includes rules and a teleoaffective structure, prefigures consumer activities in a practice (Schatzki, 2002, p. 226).

---

Finally, it is important to highlight that consumers cannot express their subjective meaning structures entirely in words. According to Giddens (1984, p. 3), without being fully consciously reflexive, people constantly monitor social life and their own daily activities and are knowledgeable of them. If asked, they can usually explain most of their actions, referred to as discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984, p. 6). However, at the same time, they cannot transfer all their reflection and resulting tacit knowledge to lingual expressions, referred to as practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984, p. xxiii). The line between discursive and practical consciousness is not clear (Giddens, 1984, p. 4) and it varies between individuals and changes during socialization and learning (Giddens, 1984, p. 4). Finally, drawing from Sigmund Freud, Giddens (1984, p. 6) recognizes the third layer, unconscious motives/cognition, which people cannot necessarily report discursively.

*Assumption 5: consumers experience value creation as functional benefits, emotional benefits, and meanings, all tied to practices*

Consumers are assumed to experience value creation, where experience is defined as follows: "Experience is the arena in which reality shows itself as what in itself it is" (Schatzki, 1996, p. 28). It is about what is going on and how things are in the consumer's life (Schatzki, 1996, p. 40). When experiencing value creation, consumers are capable of making an evaluative interpretation of value creation where one is preferred to another on some relevant criteria (Holbrook, 1996). In addition, consumers can assess the material and immaterial benefits and sacrifices of an offering (Grönroos, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988). However, it does not mean that consumers always consciously reflect value creation, as I discussed earlier. Finally, drawing from Schatzki (1996, p. 41), I assume that consumers express value creation in bodily doings and sayings but I acknowledge that consumers cannot necessary express all dimensions of value creation in words as Giddens (1984, p. xxiii) proposes.

As to different types of value creation, Vargo and Lusch (2007) and Schatzki (1996, p. 40) recognize the functional benefits as well as the symbolic and emotional value of the use of offerings. Functional benefits relate to how offerings are working for the benefit of the user and may include physical and technical enablers that even serve as a prerequisite for other types of value creation (Sandström *et al.*, 2008). For example, the enjoyment of chatting with one's grandmother living 500 kilometers away requires a functioning phone. As examined by CCT, the offering usage experience can create hedonistic multisensory and emotional benefits, referred to in this paper as emotional benefits. The multisensory benefits include both physical sensory experiences, such as tastes, scents and visual impressions, and internal images relating to the past episode or fantasy (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Finally, Levy (1959, p. 118) first noted the importance of meanings in consumption: "people buy products not only for what they can do, but also what they mean". CCT addresses this symbolic value of offerings: consumers choose to use offerings which are most meaningful to them and their lives (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006). From this point of view, offerings are personal manifestos of one's identity or identity goals (Belk, 1988; Holt, 1995) and also of other projects, goals and ideals in life.

It is important to emphasize that value creation is a matter that varies across contexts and individuals (Schatzki, 2002, p. 228). As consumers are steered by meaning structures (including their subjective versions), the ends that consumers pursue,

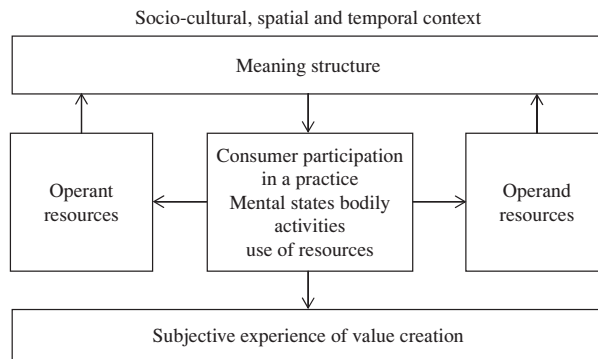
the value creation which they expect and the costs that they tolerate, all depend on the specific practice. Therefore, there is no universal value creation formula, including benefits sought and resources used. This does not imply relativism though; shared meaning structures “show the road” for value creation in a practice.

*Assumption 6: practices and consumers are prone to change*

By directing and channeling consumer activities in practices, shared meaning structures provide stability and social order (Schatzki, 1996, p. 16, 2002, p. 226). However, practices are still prone to change. Practices may change, for example, by the introduction of new practice elements, such as new offerings, by changes in the way practice elements fit together (Shove and Pantzar, 2005) or the newly engaged practice. Firms, as resource integrators, can and do change practices by providing new value propositions that enable consumers to improve their value creation. However, consumers are central agents for the change (Schatzki, 2002, p. xvi); their learning leads to reinvention of their participation in the practice (Cetina, 2001, p. 175). The assumption of consumers who are guided by meaning structures and are prone to change is aligned with the poststructuralist view of individuals whose subjectivity is not fixed nor unified (Burr, 2006, p. 21). Change is not fully inevitable though. Firms can constitute stability in value creation by developing value propositions the use of which provides consumers with unique and superior – thus lasting – value. These value propositions can extend beyond a firm’s current business scope since firms are resource integrators in value networks.

**The constellation and operational logic of a value-creating practice**

I define a value-creating practice as a context-laden arena for value creation, integrating a specific socio-cultural, spatial, and temporal context; mental states and bodily activities of consumers; a meaning structure; operant and operand resources and their use. Figure 1 shows the constellation of a practice and its operational logic, presenting practice elements as boxes and their interdependencies as arrows. The direction of the arrows tells the direction of the influence among different elements; arrows explain how different practice elements relate to and influence one another but they intend to present no direct causal relationship.



**Figure 1.**  
The constellation and operational logic of a value-creating practice

*Socio-cultural, spatial, and temporal context*

Context-ladenness means that a practice is tied to a specific socio-cultural setting, time and place, populated by a particular group of individuals. It offers an arena where consumers carry practices. Furthermore, it imposes formal and informal rules and norms for consumers on how to participate in the practice. For example, national nutritional recommendations are informal cultural norms for eating properly. The influence of the (socio-cultural, spatial, and temporal) context on the consumers' participation in the practice is assumed to be embedded in operant resources (e.g. knowledge on and preferences for different meal options based on one's upbringing), operand resources (e.g. available time and space for cooking at home) and in a meaning structure (e.g. a weight-losing project as an informal norm to eating light).

*Operant and operand resources*

Operant resources refer to cultural and social resources, and mental and physical capabilities. Which operant resources are valuable and used depends on the engaged practice. For example, adventure sports require more physical and mental endurance than having a weekday dinner. Equally, consumers use different operand resources within the same practice. For example, the weekday dinner practice requires different cooking skills, depending on whether consumers warm up a ready-made food or prepares everything themselves. Operand resources are those over which consumers exercise an allocative power and which they use in practices, including time, financial resources, property, offerings, and other similar resources. Again, which particular operand resources consumers use and integrate as resources depends on the practice.

It is important to identify the type, quantity, and quality of both operant and operand resources because they influence which practices (including other interrelated practices beyond the practice under examination) consumers participate in, how they take part in them, and what types of value they seek and experience in them. For example, a high-income family can afford to eat out in restaurants more often compared to a low-income family. Being resource integrators, consumers are willing to change the constellation of resources if it is valuable and possible for them. Operant and operand resources are assumed to influence consumers' participation in practices through a meaning structure.

*Meaning structure*

Practice-specific meaning structures explain why consumers participate in certain practices and why they behave in practices in the specific way. They reflect what consumers perceive as desirable, correct, acceptable, and realistic behavior in practices. They include rules, which are explicit formulations of what to do such as acts or law and instructions, and teleoaffective structures. The teleological dimension in teleoaffective structures relates to the goal-oriented reasons for doing: what kind of value, functional benefits, meanings, and/or emotional rewards, consumers are seeking after with given beliefs, hopes, expectations and emotions. The affective dimension refers to how different things matter at the emotional level. Owing to differences in operand and operant resources, consumers have their subjective version of the meaning structure which directs their participation in the practice: what makes best sense to do. It is important to emphasize that consumers, guided by meaning structures, do not necessarily act rationally. For example, imagine a situation where

---

a single woman buys an expensive pair of jeans in addition to her 20 older pairs even though she is short of money and knows that her salary will not come for three weeks. She does not behave rationally but she acts according to what makes best sense for her, having her “looking good” and “following the latest trends” projects. Nevertheless, and importantly, her actions reveal the hierarchy among different components in her subjective meaning structure.

---

*Consumer participation in a practice*

A consumer’s voluntary participation in the practice is an explicit sign of its value creation. The participation includes mental states and bodily activities (such as sayings, doings, facial expressions, and interaction between consumers) as well as the use of operant and operand resources. Bodily activities and the use of resources manifest and signify the consumer’s mental states. This is the reason I have tied them together to one practice element which needs to be examined. Consumer participation forms a chain of bodily (co-)activities and use of resources which involve at least one consumer. Since value is tied to a practice, a consumer and a firm can co-create value before the purchase of the offering as well as during and after the consumption. For example, the consumer may choose a recipe from a firm’s web site before purchasing the ingredients for the weekday dinner. Value co-creation between the consumer and the firm requires, at a minimum, that the consumer uses the offering but it can extend to deeper forms of value co-creation activities. Notice that value creation in the practice can occur without using any offerings at all or by using multiple offerings. Practice boundaries steer the number of offerings used in the practice. As consumers use their practical intelligibility and as practice constellations change, they are prone to changes in their participation in practices.

*Subjective experience of value creation*

Consumers look for functional benefits, meanings, and emotional rewards from their participation in the practice. The value of an offering is linked to its ability to enhance value creation in the practice, steered by the meaning structure. Consumers experience value creation and express it in bodily activities, such as in doings, sayings, and facial expressions during the practice. They are capable of making an evaluative interpretation of value creation. However, it does not mean that they always consciously reflect experienced value. As practice-specific meaning structures steer consumer participation in the practice, they also prefigure the dimensions of experienced value. Therefore, there are no universal value-experience and thus no universal value-creation formula for an offering.

**Implications of value-creating practices**

*Fragmented consumers as a result of heterogeneous practices*

The socio-cultural, spatial, and temporal context and available consumer resources are unfixed within one practice. Each of these varying constellations produces its own, unique meaning structure which steers consumer participation and value creation in its unique way. Guided by the meaning structure and using their practical intelligibility, consumers act according to what makes most sense for them in the specific moment. Thus, fragmented consumers emerge. They do not commit to one way of participating in the practice: seeking to feel good, fragmented consumers act

---

according to what is most desirable or what makes best sense in each situation and moment. Look back to your weekday dinner practice during the past two weeks. It may have varied, for example, by participants, time available for dinner, the cooking skills of the participants or other relevant practices connected with the weekday dinner practice, such as hobbies and working. You have engaged differently in the weekday dinner practice because it has just made sense for you in the specific weekday dinner situation and moment. Therefore, your use of dinner-related goods and services has not been consistent.

I want to emphasize that fragmented consumers, derived in this paper, are socially constructed: they are carriers and molders of practices but at the same time they are steered by complex meaning structures of myriad practices. This view is aligned with post structuralism according to which many narratives, instead of one meta-narrative, constitute individuals and social life (Burr, 2006, p. 21). Consumers are not perceived as objects ruled only by rules and social structures. Nor are they regarded as independent postmodern subjects who actively communicate the social reality which they prefer to live and create through consumption (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat, 1997; Firat and Shultz, 1997).

*Proposal: segmentation of value-creating practices*

In the presence of fragmented consumers, consumer market segmentation does not provide us with a valid description of value creation because it assumes that consumers are consistent in consumption behavior and thus proposes that they belong to one consumer market segment only (Firat and Shultz, 1997; Day and Montgomery, 1999; Wedel and Kamakura, 2000, p. 6). However, segmentation is still a relevant concept, due to the heterogeneity of the consumer market. In this paper, the heterogeneity emerges as different consumers, having their own versions of the meaning structure and different resources, participate in the same practice in their own ways. The rationale behind market segmentation is that customers “are looking for more precise satisfaction of their varying wants”, according to Smith (1956, p. 6), the introducer of the concept of market segmentation. Therefore, customizing the marketing mix for targeted consumer segments leads to a better use of marketing resources and greater profitability (Wedel and Kamakura, 2002). What type of segmentation approach would help firms to develop superior value propositions for heterogeneous and fragmented consumers?

I suggest segmentation of value-creating practices in which heterogeneous and fragmented consumers act, use resources and create value. In the segmentation of value-creating practices, different practice elements, shown in Figure 1, form segmentation bases, that is, variables which are used to assign heterogeneous practices into homogeneous practice segments (Wedel and Kamakura, 2000, p. 7). Segmentation of value-creating practices provides a valid description of value-creation among heterogeneous and fragmented consumers. By identifying different practice segments and describing how value is created in them, it guides firms in developing superior value propositions for consumers participating in different practice segments.

## **Discussion**

Drawing from S-D logic, PT, and CCT, this paper investigates conceptually value creation in practices, and identifies implications for marketing science and practice.

A key research unit of value creation is a value-creating practice in which consumers voluntarily participate, use offerings and create value. Value is tied to practices, not to offerings. Thus, the paper perceives “markets as practices” in value networks.

Having this standpoint, I conceptualize the constellation and operational logic of value creation in a practice, shown in Figure 1. The operational logic reveals the power of the socio-cultural, spatial, and temporal context as well as consumers’ operant and operand resources on configuring value creation. It realizes via meaning structures which are complex, practice-specific networks and hierarchies of rules, aims, beliefs, hopes, and emotions that configure what consumers perceive as desirable, acceptable, and realistic behavior and value in the practice. Notice that only the dominant components of the meaning structures transform to consumer activities; consumers perceive them as most desirable and realistic. The meaning structures also include latent meaning components which are not yet desirable enough and/or realistic for consumers with the given context and consumer resources, and thus they have not yet transformed into consumer activities. Naturally, due to the change in the context and/or in the consumer resources, latent components can become dominant. For example, consumers have a goal to eat locally produced food but they cannot buy it conveniently in the local groceries and therefore the goal remains latent until a grocery chain recognizes this value-increasing opportunity and launches a new local food product line. As a new consumer resource, the local food product line turns the goal to material as consumers start using the products.

Meaning structures can be regarded as mediators between the practice context and consumer resources, and consumer activities and created value. Thus, they are central agents in value creation. Therefore, their identification helps firms to build value propositions which are aligned with the current meaning structures, either with dominant or latent components. In addition, firms can recognize which potentially value-increasing components are missing in the current meaning structures. Remember that new offerings as consumer resources can change meaning structures and thus consumer activities as long as they improve experienced value. The Sony Walkman is probably the most classic example of the successful introduction of the novel meaning component of enjoying music to “on the go” practices, such as walking, running and travelling.

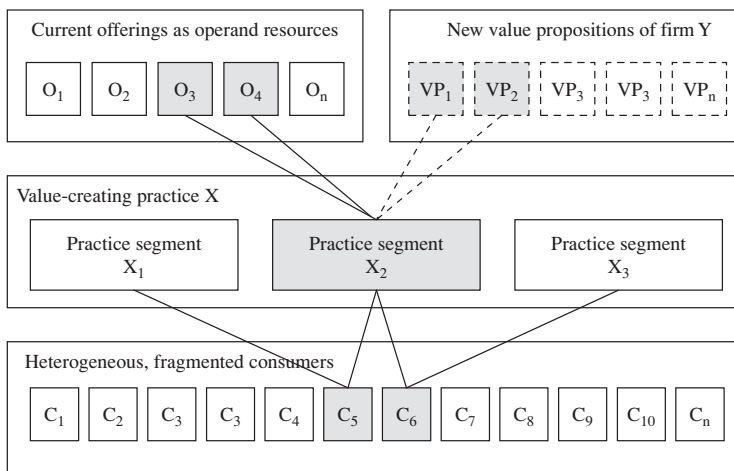
The paper introduces fragmented consumers, constituted by heterogeneous practices. In the practice, unfixed operant and operand resources produce their different meaning structures, each of which configure their own versions of consumer participation and value creation. As a result, fragmented consumers emerge. They are not consistent in their use of offerings in the practice. Rather, using their practical intelligibility they use different offerings according to what makes best sense for them in each moment. For example, if you are busy at work, you may have a quick take-away lunch sandwich at your PC. If you have more time, you may enjoy lunch at the university restaurant with your workmates.

Recognizing fragmented consumers and the contextual nature of value creation, I suggest segmentation of value-creating practices. The fragmented consumers do not belong to one practice segment only, but they switch between practice segments, according to what is desirable and feasible for them. Segmentation of value-creating practices attempts to provide firms with a valid description of value creation among consumers and helps firms to identify value-creation improvement opportunities

which firms can transfer to improved offerings or new value propositions. In addition, it provides firms with a conceptual tool for taking a wider perspective on value creation beyond their current business scope since value creation is examined in the context of practices, including both their current offering(s) but also other resources. Thereby, it helps firms to identify new business opportunities which they can capture as resource integrators.

Even though a key unit for research for this paper is a practice, consumers are still perceived as vital for practices and for firms and other network stakeholders who still need to please and co-operate with them in value creation, in order to achieve their targets. After all, consumers are carriers of practices through doings, sayings and use of resources. Hence, without consumers there are no practices, no resource integration and no use of offerings. Second, consumers experience and interpret value which is created in practices and during the use of offerings. Therefore, it is essential for firms to identify consumers who use their offerings, in order to initiate value co-creation with them. But since consumers use and integrate offerings as they participate in value-creating practices, it is crucial for firms to understand in which particular practices and practice segments their offerings are (or could be) used, why they are used and how.

The connection between consumers, a value-creating practice and suppliers is shown in Figure 2. An unbroken line shows how consumers and currently used offerings are integrated into different practice segments whereas broken lines show how new value propositions could be integrated into them in the future. The gray boxes highlight the case under examination: practice segment X2 and its connected consumers C5 and C6, offerings O3 and O4, and value propositions VP1 and VP2. I want to emphasize that this figure does not illustrate a fragmented consumer on purpose since it aims to draw a connection between consumers, a value-creating practice, and firms in as simple a manner as possible. In addition, even though Figure 2 does not include other practice elements beyond offerings, I refer to them as I explain Figure 2 in writing.



**Figure 2.**  
The connection between  
consumers, a practice and  
firms



Practice X takes place in a specific socio-cultural, spatial and temporal context. An example of practice X could be a weekday dinner practice among Finnish households in 2009. Practice X includes three homogeneous practice segments, X1, X2, and X3, in which heterogeneous and fragmented consumers participate. In Figure 2, Consumers 5 and 6 participate in practice segment X2. (Note that only for the sake of simplicity, do I assume practice segment X2 to include only two consumers.) Since Consumers 5 and 6 have different resources and their own versions of meaning structures, and operate in different practice contexts, their participation in different practice segments is heterogeneous; Consumer 5 participates in practice segment X1 whereas Consumer 6 takes part in practice segment X3. In the different practice segments, consumers use different operant and operand resources, including offerings, according to how well they can contribute to value creation in the practice. In Figure 2, Consumers 5 and 6 use offerings O3 and O4 as operand resources as they participate in practice segment X2, experiencing practice-segment tied functional and emotional benefits, and/or meanings. (Note that an offering can also be used in more than one practice segment but, for the sake of simplicity, Figure 2 does not show this case.) As firms examine value creation in the practice and its different segments, they are able to identify value-improvement opportunities which they can translate to new value propositions for participating consumers. In Figure 2, Firm Y has identified two new value propositions VP1 and VP2 for practice segment X2. It can materialize them as offerings to be used by Consumers C5 and C6, participating in practice segment X2.

I have examined value creation in practices but on purpose I have not yet touched upon the concept of value. Based on this paper's examination on value creation in practices, Here is a brief summary of findings about the concept of value. First, value presupposes a value-creating practice; without it there is no value creation, value experience, and thus no value. Second, no offering has value: it is tied to a practice. Therefore, the value of an offering is dependent on how well it, as an operand resource, is capable of improving value creation in a practice. Third, consumers look for three types of value from practices: functional and emotional benefits and meanings. Fourth, consumers experience value where experience is defined as an arena in which reality shows itself. Consumers experience value by consciously interpreting it or without reflection. Fifth, consumers manifest and signify the experienced value in bodily activities, such as in sayings and doings. However, they cannot necessarily express linguistically all dimensions of their experienced value. Sixth, value is dynamic since consumers, using their practical intelligibility and being capable of learning, are willing to change their participation in the practice according to what makes best sense for them. It is worth emphasizing here that practical intelligibility does not mean that consumers always act rationally. In many circumstances, irrational behavior makes best sense for the consumers, as shown earlier in this paper. Finally, and importantly, value is socially constructed as it is tied a practice. Directing consumers' participation in practices, practice-specific meaning structures are central agents in the social construction of value. As they are normative for consumers (what is correct, acceptable, desirable, and realistic behavior in the practice), they direct both value creation and experienced value. Since the elements of socially constructed practices vary by practice context, there is no universal value. Therefore, in order to provide superior value propositions for socially constructed consumers, the examination of the

---

value creation context becomes vital, and the segmentation of value-creating practices appears to be relevant.

### Limitations and suggestions for further research

The paper examines conceptually value creation in practices. Therefore, the logical area for further research would be an empirical study, focusing on examining the value creation logic in a certain practice with the aim to test and develop further the conceptual framework, based on the empirical evidence. The empirical study could illuminate the following themes. How do consumer resources and the socio-cultural, spatial and temporal context influence the composition of the meaning structure? How does the meaning structure steer consumer participation in the practice? What types of value do consumers experience? What is the match between the meaning structure and the experienced value? What types of value-improvement opportunities can be identified?

The paper examines value creation in practices in which consumers participate. Business-to-business markets are clearly as important as consumer markets. Furthermore, these two markets are interdependent (Gummesson and Polese, 2009). Therefore, future research could apply the practice approach, developed in this paper, in the investigation of value creation in business-to-business practices as well as in larger value networks integrating these markets.

The paper suggests the segmentation of value-creating practices and introduces practice elements as segmentation bases. Therefore, it offers theoretical underpinnings for the segmentation of value-creating practices. However, this paper includes no segmentation methodology choices which are needed to develop and operationalize segmentation (Wedel and Kamakura, 2000, pp. 5-17). Hence, future research could prioritize alternative methodologies and operationalize the segmentation of value-creating practices in the empirical study.

Finally, the paper introduces an offering (a value proposition) as a resource in a social value-creation process/phenomenon, that is, a (social) practice. Therefore, a practice could provide a fruitful theoretical standpoint for investigating the concept of the value proposition. Similarly, the practice would introduce an enriching viewpoint for examining the concepts of brand and brand value when the brand is perceived as a dynamic social process and the brand value is perceived as value-in-use (Merz *et al.*, 2009).

### References

- Allen, D.E. (2002), "Toward a theory of consumer choice as sociohistorically shaped practical experience: the fits-like-a-glove (FLAG) framework", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 28 No. 4, pp. 515-32.
- Allen, D.E. and Anderson, P.F. (1994), "Consumption and social stratification: Bourdieu's distinction", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 70-4.
- Araujo, L., Kjellberg, H. and Spencer, R. (2008), "Market practices and forms: introduction to the special issue", *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 5-14.
- Arnould, E.J. and Price, L.L. (2006), "Market-oriented ethnography revisited", *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 46 No. 3, pp. 251-62.
- Arnould, E.J. and Thompson, C.J. (2005), "Consumer culture theory (CCT): twenty years of research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 868-82.

- Arnould, E.J., Price, L. and Malshe, A. (2006), "Toward a cultural resource-based theory of the customer", in Lusch, R.F. and Vargo, S.L. (Eds), *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions*, M.S. Sharpe, New York, NY, pp. 91-104.
- Belk, R.W. (1988), "Possessions and the extended self", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 139-68.
- Bolton, R.N. (2006), "Toward a cultural resource-based theory of consumer", in Lusch, R.F. and Vargo, S.L. (Eds), *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions*, M.S. Sharpe, New York, NY, pp. ix-xi.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990), *The Logic of Practice*, Polity Press, Cambridge, MA (translated by Nice, R.).
- Burr, V. (2006), *Introduction to Social Constructionism*, Routledge, London.
- Cetina, K.K. (2001), "Objectual practice", in Schatzki, T.R., Cetina, K.K. and von Seivigny, E. (Eds), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, Routledge, London, pp. 175-88.
- Coulter, R.A., Price, L.L. and Feick, L. (2003), "Rethinking the origins of involvement and brand commitment: insights from postsocialist central Europe", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 151-69.
- Cova, B. and Cova, V. (2002), "Tribal marketing: tribalization of society and its impact on the conduct of marketing", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 36 Nos 5/6, pp. 595-620.
- Day, G.S. and Montgomery, D.B. (1999), "Charting new directions for marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 63 No. 4, pp. 3-13.
- Deer, C. (2008), "Doxa", in Grenfell, M. (Ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, Acumen, Stocksfield, pp. 119-30.
- Etgar, M. (2008), "A descriptive model of the consumer co-production process", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 97-108.
- Firat, A.F. (1997), "Educator insights: globalization of fragmentation – a framework for understanding contemporary global markets", *Journal of International Marketing*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 77-86.
- Firat, A.F. and Shultz, C.J. II (1997), "From segmentation to fragmentation", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 183-207.
- Firat, A.F. and Venkatesh, A. (1995), "Liberatory postmodernism and the reenchantment of consumption", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 239-67.
- Giddens, A. (1984), *Constitution of Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Grönroos, C. (1997), "Value-driven relational marketing: from products to resources and competencies", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 13 No. 5, pp. 407-19.
- Gummesson, E. (2004), "In invited commentaries on evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 68 No. 1, pp. 18-27.
- Gummesson, E. (2008), "Quality, service-dominant logic and many-to-many marketing", *The TQM Journal*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 143-53.
- Gummesson, E. and Polese, F. (2009), "B2B is not an island!", *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 24 Nos 5/6, pp. 337-50.
- Hirschman, E.C. and Holbrook, M.B. (1982), "Hedonic consumption: emerging concepts, methods and propositions", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 46 No. 3, pp. 92-101.
- Holbrook, M.B. (1996), "Customer value – a framework for analysis and research", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 138-42.
- Holbrook, M.B. and Hirschman, E.C. (1982), "The experiential aspects of consumption: consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 132-40.

- Holt, D.B. (1995), "How consumers consume: a typology of consumption practices", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 1-16.
- Holt, D.B. (1998), "Does cultural capital structure American consumption?", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 1-25.
- Ingram, J., Shove, E. and Watson, M. (2007), "Products and practices: selected concepts from science and technology studies and from social theories of consumption and practice", *Design Issues*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 3-16.
- Korkman, O. (2006), *Customer Value Formation in Practice: A Practice Theoretical Approach*, Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration, Helsinki, No. 155.
- Korkman, O., Storbacka, K. and Harald, B. (2008), "Practices as markets: value co-creation in e-invoicing", *Proceedings of the Forum on Markets and Marketing: Extending Service-Dominant Logic*, December, Sydney.
- Levy, S.J. (1959), "Symbols for sale", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 37, July-August, pp. 117-24.
- Lusch, R.F., Vargo, S.L. and Tanniru, M. (2009), "Service, value networks and learning", *Journal of the Academy of the Marketing Science*, available at: <http://springerlink.metapress.com.proxy.shh.fi/content/j40277m4u826mu51/fulltext.html> (accessed October 25, 2009).
- Merz, M.A., He, I. and Vargo, S. (2009), "The evolving brand logic: a service-dominant logic perspective", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 37 No. 3, pp. 328-44.
- Normann, R. (2001), *Reframing Business: When the Map Changes the Landscape*, Wiley, Chichester.
- Payne, A.F., Storbacka, K. and Frow, P. (2008), "Managing the co-creation of value", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 83-96.
- Peñaloza, L. and Venkatesh, A. (2006), "Further evolving the new dominant logic of marketing: from services to the social construction of markets", *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 299-316.
- Prahalad, C.K. and Ramaswamy, V. (2000), "Co-opting customer competence", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 78 No. 1, pp. 79-87.
- Prahalad, C.K. and Ramaswamy, V. (2004), "Co-creating unique value with customers", *Strategy & Leadership*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 4-9.
- Reckwitz, A. (2002), "Toward a theory of social practices: a development in cultural theorizing", *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 243-63.
- Sandström, S., Edvardsson, B., Kristensson, P. and Magnusson, P. (2008), "Value in use through service experience", *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 112-26.
- Schatzki, T.R. (1996), *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Schatzki, T.R. (2000a), "The social bearing of nature", *Inquiry*, Vol. 43, pp. 21-38.
- Schatzki, T.R. (2000b), "Wittgenstein and the social context and an individual life", *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 93-107.
- Schatzki, T.R. (2001a), "Introduction PT", in Schatzki, T.R., Cetina, K.K. and von Seivigny, E. (Eds), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, Routledge, London, pp. 1-14.
- Schatzki, T.R. (2001b), "Practice minded orders", in Schatzki, T.R., Cetina, K.K. and von Seivigny, E. (Eds), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, Routledge, London, pp. 42-55.
- Schatzki, T.R. (2002), *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change*, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.

- Schatzki, T.R. (2003), "A new societist social ontology", *Philosophy of Social Sciences*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 174-202.
- Schatzki, T.R. (2005), "Peripheral vision: the sites of organizations", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 26 No. 3, pp. 465-84.
- Schouten, J.W. and McAlexander, J.H. (1995), "Subcultures of consumption: an ethnography of the new bikers", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 43-61.
- Shove, E. and Pantzar, M. (2005), "Consumers, producers and practices: understanding the invention and reinvention of Nordic walking", *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 43-64.
- Smith, W.R. (1956), "Product differentiation and market segmentation as alternative marketing strategies", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 3-8.
- Thévenot, L. (2001), "Pragmatic regimes governing the engagement with the world", in Schatzki, T.R., Cetina, K.K. and von Seivigny, E. (Eds), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, Routledge, London, pp. 56-73.
- Vargo, S.L. (2008), "Customer integration and value creation: paradigmatic traps and perspectives", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 211-5.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2004), "Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 68 No. 1, pp. 1-17.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2006), "What it is, what it is not, what it might be", in Lusch, R.F. and Vargo, S.L. (Eds), *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions*, M.S. Sharpe, New York, NY, pp. 43-56.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2007), "Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 1-10.
- Warde, A. (2005), "Consumption and theories of practice", *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 131-53.
- Wedel, M. and Kamakura, W.A. (2000), *Market segmentation: Conceptual and Methodological Foundations*, 2nd ed., Kluwer Academic, Dordrecht.
- Wedel, M. and Kamakura, W.A. (2002), "Introduction to the special issue on market segmentation", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 181-3.
- Zeithaml, V.A. (1988), "Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: a means-end model and synthesis of evidence", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 52 No. 3, pp. 2-22.

#### Further reading

Wittgenstein, L. (1958), *Philosophical Investigations*, 2nd ed., Blackwell, Oxford (translated by Anscombe, G.E.M.).

#### About the author

Heli Holttinen is a doctoral student at The Department of Marketing, Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland. She possesses two Master's degrees: Master of Social Sciences (Economics) and Master of Science (Food Economics) from the University of Helsinki. She has 12 years of working experience in management, marketing, consulting, and advertising. Heli Holttinen can be contacted at: heli.holttinen@hanken.fi

HOW PRACTICES INFORM THE MATERIALIZATION OF CULTURAL IDEALS IN  
MUNDANE CONSUMPTION

HELI HOLTTINEN

**ESSAY 2**

This essay has been conditionally accepted for publication in *Consumption  
Markets & Culture*.

## **Abstract**

This study examines how consumers enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption. The empirical context is a weekday dinner practice among Finnish households. The findings demonstrate how practices inform consumers how, where, when, and with whom to enact and compromise cultural ideals and identity projects. Thus the practices guide food consumption choices and the meanings that the consumers ascribe to food consumption objects. The consumers are pragmatic, flexible and fragmented as they enact identity projects and cultural ideals in mundane consumption in relation to practices. They compromise the identity projects and the cultural ideals in some practice(s) but not across practices. As the practices serve different ends for the consumers at different times, the meaning of the practices is constantly re-created by the consumers. The perceived value of mundane consumption is related to how well and how frequently the consumers can enact their identity projects and cultural ideals in practices.

### **Key words:**

Consumer choice, Cultural ideal, Cultural Studies, Material culture, Mundane consumption, Practice Theory

## Introduction

Studies in consumer culture have portrayed how cultural ideals form identity projects, consumer narratives, and actions in idiosyncratic life contexts (e.g. Epp and Price 2008; Kozinets 2008; Fischer, Otnes and Tuncay, 2007; Holt and Thompson 2004; Moisio, Arnould and Price 2004; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). These studies have shown how consumers in their identity projects are faced by countervailing cultural ideals and ideologies, as well as how they negotiate these tensions in their narratives and doings. Additionally, these studies have illuminated how consumers' unique social, cultural, and psychological conditions and resources influence how cultural ideals and ideologies are manifested in consumer thoughts and doings.

When examining our daily lives, one cannot avoid thinking about how much consumer behavior is tied to mundane situations, such as repetitive occasions in which consumers perceive to be neither extraordinary nor dramatic – such as having breakfast or going to work. However, mundane consumption has often been overlooked in terms of consumer research, which has been highlighted in a 2005 Association for Consumer Research (ACR) round table session on possession constellations and identity (Kleine 2007). According to current knowledge, mundane consumption is characterized more by routines and less by conscious activity (Gronow and Warde 2001). At the same time, mundane consumption is also known to be symbolic. Mundane consumption objects contribute to and reflect identity projects and become objects of attachment (Kleine, Schultz-Kleine and Kernan 1993; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). Inconspicuous mundane consumption allows sub-cultures to protect their group identity from mainstream co-optation (Cronin, McCarthy and Collins 2012). In routine situations such as weekday dinners, cultural ideals are negotiated and enacted (or not enacted) many times a day; week in and week out; year in and year out. With that being said, how consumers perform cultural ideals in mundane consumption is an area that has remained under-explored.

Drawing on Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) and Practice Theory (PT), the objective of this study is to examine how consumers enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption. A practice was chosen as a research unit for two reasons. First, it ties consumer behavior to a specific sociocultural, spatial and material setting at a certain time in history and in a consumer's life (Schatzki 2005). Second, a practice as an ontological unit makes it possible to examine consumer behavior and the circumstances of life as a mosaic of practices. It is within one practice and across practices where consumers enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption. As the practice offers one theoretical vantage to investigating how the sociocultural and material setting informs consumption, it responds to Borgerson's (2005, 2009) call for conceptualizations on subject formation in relation with material culture.

Everyday occasions in terms of food consumption represent a suitable context for examining this theme. They are a repetitive and routine part of everyday life, and their food choices are often a product of habits and routines (Ilmonen 2001, Lupton 1996). Additionally, foodways are known to be symbolic - they reflect cultural ideals and discourses. For instance, at food occasions, consumers produce and re-produce their collective sub-culture and family identities, as well as their individual feminine and masculine identities (e.g. Cronin, McCarthy and Collins 2012; Sellaeg and Chapman 2008; Bahr Bugge and Almås 2006; Moisio, Arnould and Price 2004; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991; Charles and Kerr 1988). The empirical context of this study is a weekday dinner practice among Finnish households.

The article starts by introducing key concepts and their relationships, and continues by presenting and justifying a critical discourse analysis (CDA)-informed approach as the methodology. The findings are then presented and elaborated on in detail, and finally, the article concludes by summarizing contributions and suggesting areas for further research.



## **Practices, Mundane Consumption and Cultural Ideals**

Practices range from dispersed practices, such as questioning and following rules, to more complex integrative practices, such as business practices and farming (Warde 2005). The integrative practices house particular contexts where people think and act, and are informed by understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures consisting of goal-oriented reasons for doing, as well as feelings and emotions (Schatzki 1996). Consumers having different histories, different knowledge, and different mental states possess their own versions of teleoaffective structures (Schatzki 2003). Therefore, understandings, rules, and teleoaffective structures capture the influence of both the individualistic conditions of consumers as well as collectivist social structures on consumer thought and behavior. The research unit of this study is an integrative practice, and henceforth the concept of a practice refers systematically to integrative practices.

Most practice theorists agree that a practice is a meeting point for mind, activity, and society (Schatzki 2001). The notion emphasizes the interplay between consumers and the sociocultural environment. Consumer behavior is informed by specific sociocultural and material settings, related to times, places, traditions, and events (Schatzki 2005), and at the same time consumer behavior shapes practices as consumers interpret, produce, and reproduce them (Warde 2005). PT emphasizes that while also being symbolic, most consumer behavior is spontaneous or routine without explicit consideration (Schatzki 1996). According to Bourdieu (1984), practices result from the interplay between habitus, that is, dispositions internalized via socialization, and the unique position and situation of the social agent at the social arena. In this interplay, habitus is a powerful structuring force and to a great extent, social agents take informal and formal rules for granted and act on them (Bourdieu 1984). As a result of past experiences, socially shared and unquestioned beliefs produce and reproduce consumers' perceptions and practices. Having a "feel for the game" (Bourdieu 1990, 66), consumers accomplish many daily activities on the basis of what feels right and natural in the given conditions. Consumption is not a practice but rather a moment in most practices (Warde 2005). Offerings are not important for their own sake but instead for carrying out practices (Korkman, Storbacka and Harald 2010; Schau, Muñiz and Arnould 2009; Warde 2005).

This study perceives a practice as a sociocultural, spatio-temporal and material arena for mundane consumption. Drawing on Gronow and Warde (2001), mundane consumption in this study refers to consumer behavior which occurs in situations that the consumers perceive neither extraordinary nor dramatic and which are often characterized more by routines than conscious activity. Thompson and Holt (2004) regard cultural ideals as cultural discourses, which as tacit understandings, frame what people desire, say, and do. They inform and are represented in consumer identity projects which refer to the projects of constructing one's sense of "self" (Arnould and Thompson 2005). The identity projects inform consumer life goals, consumer narratives, doings, and consumption choices (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). This study views the cultural ideals as cultural discourses and informal norms that inform identity projects and consumer behavior, including mundane consumption in practices. Thus, they have a conceptual correspondence to the understandings and rules of practice theory. For instance, in the weekday dinner practice, consumers enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption.

## **Critical Discourse Analysis Informed Approach**

### ***Discourses in this Study***

This study understands and uses the concept of a discourse, which deals with how individuals ‘make’ meaning in order to cope with one’s social life (Van Dijk 1997). A discourse is also a set of meanings, representations, images and statements of how people represent themselves and their social world (Bryman 2008). Discourses are performative in the sense that not only do they influence what people think, feel, and desire but also affect what they say and do (Burr 2003). Being represented in social interaction, discourses are social and shared (Van Dijk 1997); they spread to different practices, overlap, and refer to one another (Wodak 2008). Discourses are produced in social interactions by means of language and other symbolic systems; therefore, text is the manifestation of one or more discourses (Wodak 2008; Burr 2003). According to social conventions, text can refer to anything that can be read for meaning (Wodak 2008).

Discourses are tied to local, situational contexts and to wider cultural and historical settings, and therefore, they produce different material outcomes in terms their sphere of influence (Alvesson and Kärreman 2000). In this study, cultural ideals (materialized as cultural discourses) and the specific sociocultural, spatio-temporal and material setting (materialized as local discourses) inform what consumers perceive as desirable, acceptable, and realistic to do in practices. The cultural and local discourses produce and re-produce practices, and are represented in the practices as the consumers enact them through their speech and actions.

### ***Research Approach and Data Sources***

A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emphasizes the constitutive role of a discourse and focuses on examining the relations between discourses, social structures, and social phenomena (e.g. Fairclough 2005; Van Dijk 1997), and therefore was a logical choice for the research approach. In the CDA-informed approach I concentrated on understanding the interplay among cultural ideals, practices and consumer action. I did not purposefully examine discourses as sociocultural phenomena, which permeate societies and consumer lives from a macro to a micro level.

The research objective guided the selection of data sources. I needed rich contextual data of weekday dinner practices in order to understand this complex, sociocultural and situational phenomenon. Furthermore, I needed an access to people’s experiences and actions which, together with my theoretical underpinnings, would enable me to examine the interplay among cultural ideals, practices and consumer doings (Fairclough 2005; Johnson and Duberley 2000). Based on the data requirements, I chose participant observation, focused unstructured interviews, field notes, and photos to be my data sources. Participant observation meant that I participated in the weekday dinner at the homes of my case families from the start of cooking until the end of dinner, after which or during which we had an informal discussion. I used observations as an input to the interviews and for understanding the dynamism between talkings and doings. In other words, how different discourses materialized into activities. In order to enhance memorizing and interpreting meaningful observations, I used photos and field notes as a supporting resource.

Unstructured focused interviews provided textual material for the CDA-informed analysis, in addition to observations and photos. The interviews gave informants an opportunity to give their account of the weekday dinner and its relations to the other practices of their everyday lives, such as work, studying, hobbies, and domestic duties. In discourse-oriented interviews, an open format is crucial because it allows informants to discuss matters which are meaningful for them, rather than important for the researcher (Oberhuber and Krzyzanowski 2008). During the interviews, I brought up my observations if informants did not discuss them. Informants may not always disclose all the potentially important details of the event

(Ochs 1997). Interviews were tape-recorded with the approval of the interviewees and transcribed verbatim.

**Table 1. Description of Weekday Dinner Cases**

Case number	Household type	Age of adult(s), (R) = responsible for dinner	Profession	Education	Dinner participants
C1	DINK	37 year old female (R) 33 year old male	Entrepreneur Dancer	Master's degree Secondary education	Responsible for dinner
C2	Single parent - 3 year old son	30 year old female	Civil servant	Master's degree	All
C3	Family with children - 17 year old daughter - 13 year old son	46 year old female (R) 47 year old male	Children's nurse Logistics worker	Vocational school Vocational school	All
C4	DINK	56 year old female (R) 63 year old male (R)	Clerical employee Clerical employee	Vocational school Vocational school	All
C5	Single	24 year old male (R)	Office worker	Secondary education	All
C6	Single	46 year old female (R)	Superior clerical employee	Bachelor degree	All
C7	Single	27 year old female (R)	Entrepreneur and artist	Bachelor degree	All
C8	Single	58 year old female (R)	Worker	Vocational school	All
C9	Family with children - 13, 12 year old sons - 12 year old daughter	48 year old male (R) 49 year old female	Superior clerical employee Superior clerical employee	Master's degree Bachelor degree	All but the older son
C10	DINK	21 year old female (R) 21 year old male	Worker Worker	Secondary education Primary education	All
C11	Single	35 year old male	Superior clerical employee	Master's degree	All
C12	DINK	50 year old male (R) 53 year old female	Superior clerical employee Housewife	Master's degree Master's degree	Responsible for dinner
C13	DINK	29 year old male (R) 28 year old female	Clerical employee Clerical employee	Bachelor degree Bachelor degree	Responsible for dinner
C14	Single	49 year old male	Clerical employee	Bachelor degree	All
C15	Family with children - 9 year old daughter	40 year old female (R) 39 year old male	Worker Worker	Vocational school Primary education	All but father
C16	Family with children - 6 year old daughter	46 year old female (R) 45 year old male	Teacher Entrepreneur	Master's degree Master's degree	All but father
C17	Family with children - 4 and 5 year old sons	29 year old female (R) 34 year old male (R)	Civil servant Clerical employee	Bachelor degree Vocational school	All
C18	Family with children, - 7, 8 year old sons - 1 year old daughter	35 year old female (R) 41 year old male	Clerical employee, on maternity leave Director	Bachelor degree Master's degree	All
C19	DINK	55 year old male (R) 56 year old female (R)	Entrepreneur Clerical employee	Secondary education Vocational school	All
C20	Family with children - 5 year old son - 3 year old daughter	35 year old female (R) 36 year old male	Clerical employee Superior clerical employee	Vocational school Bachelor degree	All but father

### **Case Selection**

My empirical study was based on twenty weekday dinner cases where one case corresponded to a 1.5 - 4 hour home visit to a Finnish household at one weekday evening between October 2009 and January 2010. The cases represented households in the Greater Helsinki Area

where at least one adult was working full-time. The summary of cases is presented in table 1. As cases represent different types of households and their weekday dinner practices, in the study 'a case' and 'a household' as concepts are used interchangeably.

In selecting suitable cases, I applied theoretical sampling, the purpose of which is to look for a sample which is representative in terms of concepts (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The cases were chosen so that they would represent heterogeneity in terms of weekday dinner practices. As table 1 indicates, the examined cases capture variance between the social settings. Four different types of households were represented in the cases: single, double income no kids (DINK), families with children under seven years old, and families with children over seven years old living at home. Furthermore, the age of the household member responsible for the weekday dinner practice caught the variance in consumers' intangible and tangible resources, which often change as people age. Finally, education levels and professions captured the variance in social, cultural, and financial resources. Equipped with my written instructions, an external market research company recruited households with whom I had no earlier acquaintance. As promised in the recruiting call, each household received a 100 euro gift voucher from a well-known Finnish department store as a reward for their participation in the research.

### ***Analysis***

I kept complete records of the research throughout the research process: a research plan, sample selection, field notes, photos, and interviews in order to keep the analysis as transparent as possible (Pollak 2008). I used nVivo8 as a centralized data repository, which enabled me to gain a holistic but detailed view on rich empirical data. My theoretical underpinnings of cultural ideals, practices, mundane consumption, and discourses offered me lenses through which I viewed the data, while the empirical findings guided my analysis. Following Eisenhardt (1989), I analyzed within-case data in order to examine interplay among cultural ideals, practices, and consumer thoughts and doings. It meant analyzing (1) which cultural ideals and other discourses (both cultural and local) were present; (2) why they were present, referring to what was meaningful for households in the weekday dinner practice; (3) which cultural ideals materialized into consumer action, and which did not; (4) why; and (5) how the cultural ideals materialized in the consumer action. In addition to within-case data analysis, I searched for cross-case patterns for different concepts and their interdependencies (Eisenhardt 1989). I also analyzed similarities across cases because I wanted to understand which cultural ideals and other discourses were present across cases and whether they were able to produce similar outcomes. Additionally, I analyzed differences across cases and why those differences were present.

I conducted the within-case and cross-case data analyses in two dimensions: as the text analysis of interviews and by comparing the observed findings to the text analysis findings. In the text analysis, my analytical process followed Fairclough's (2003) approach. I examined the semantic and vocabulary relationship between words and longer expressions in order to identify discourses in place. In addition to cultural discourses, I focused on identifying local discourses, which would illuminate themes relating to a specific case. Moreover, I analyzed interdiscursive relations, that is, how the discourses were linked, in order to examine the interaction among cultural discourses, and a specific sociocultural, temporal and material setting, and consumer doings. Finally, by comparing the text analysis findings with the observation findings, I could identify how the cultural ideals materialized into consumer action.

### ***Findings***

The findings demonstrate that practices informed how the examined households enacted a food ideal in mundane consumption. Before elaborating on this theme in detail, I will first provide insight into the Finnish eating habits and meals, and continue by introducing the

food ideal. According to the survey of Nordic eating patterns (2001), in Finland eating is concentrated at peak times: breakfast, lunch and dinner. During weekdays the average number of daily eating events is 3.9 whereas the average number of daily hot eating events is 1.4 (Gronow and Jääskeläinen 2001). Most hot meals are simple. They include one course which contains two or three elements: a main ingredient (the most common being meat), a staple (most often potatoes), and a vegetable side dish. Simple dishes from minced meat are very common. The most popular dishes are meatballs, minced meat in sauce, and meat and macaroni casserole. (Mäkelä, Kjaernes and Pipping Ekström 2001.) In Finland the annual consumption of ready-made food is estimated to be 12-15 kilograms per capita. The majority of the buying situations are related to busy lifestyles. Thus convenience is the biggest driver for the use of ready-made food. (Kupiainen and Järvinen 2009.)

Weekday dinner practices take place as an integrated part of everyday life in the midst of work and recreation activities. Women and men are equally represented in the Finnish labor force: Women and men are equally represented in the Finnish labor force: the employment rate is nearly 70% (Confederation of Finnish Industries 2013). Despite this, cooking is mainly women's work in Finland. According to the survey of Nordic eating patterns (Pipping Ekström and L'orange Fürst 2001), 77% of the household members who do cooking are women. Eating and meals are known to be important for family cohesion and the upbringing of children (Kjaernes et al. 2001). During weekdays 53% of the Finnish households have a family dinner, that is, a hot meal shared by all household members (Holm 2001).

### ***Food Ideal and its Materialization in Weekday Dinners***

For the Finnish households, a weekday dinner was an arena for enacting family and individual identity projects (a good family, a good parent, a food enthusiast, and a fit and healthy body), and having hedonistic pleasures. All these dimensions were embedded in the food ideal, which set an informal norm of what and with whom to eat, and how to prepare the food. In the ideal case, a weekday dinner is homemade, unprocessed, fresh and pure, provides both healthiness and taste sensations, and it is enjoyed together as a family. Most households did not describe the essence of the food ideal in terms of ingredients and consumption outcomes explicitly or directly. Rather, they revealed it indirectly via a discourse of 'an inferior ready-made food.' This discourse represents the ready-made food as almost the opposite to the food ideal, which is processed, impure, unhealthy, and overall not as tasty as homemade food. Parents even felt guilty for preparing inferior ready-made food for their children for the weekday dinner meal, one of them being the mother (C17<sup>1</sup>) of four and five year old sons:

"I make something for the boys, like now that we've made a big portion of food, I'll heat up some for them or then I boil a potato, cut it up and add some milk. Something simple like that. I've tried, you know, to follow a New Year's resolution and not use so much things like (ready-made) spinach pancakes or sausages, because they have quite a lot of additives and salt; I thought I'd try to go for basic food more, the healthy kind. I try to feed them vegetables and fruits but food is sometimes Saarioinen<sup>2</sup> or something like that. I'm pretty tired after work, and being on my own making food for them, I don't have the strength to make nice food."

Aligned with the findings of Moisio, Arnould and Price (2005), in this study, cooking homemade food is about care-giving and showing love. Using ready-made food symbolically threatens the parents' expressions of care (Warde 1999). Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard and Brogard-Kristensen (2011) have shown how Scandinavian middle-class consumers perceive manual work and simple craftsmanship as a more ethical and legitimate form of

<sup>1</sup> C17, that is, case 17, refers to household 17 and its weekday dinner practices.

<sup>2</sup> Saarioinen is a Finnish ready-made food brand.

consumption than only consuming brands. The food ideal of this study links the ethical self-production of food with the valuable identity project of being a good parent.

Providing healthiness in the food ideal relates to the identity projects that aim at cultivating one's "bodily regimes" (Giddens 1991, 105). This refers to the ability of food to provide both short and long term physical health impacts, such as preventing flu, helping alleviate immediate stomach problems, achieving dieting goals, and preventing cardiovascular diseases. The Finns have been educated for decades by parents, the media, the national healthcare system, the schooling system, as well as the national institute of health and welfare to eat in a healthy way (Kjaernes et al. 2001). Additionally, an individual's physical resources influence how willingly and seriously households and individuals follow this norm. For example, a male in his twenties (C5) started eating in a healthier way after realizing his stomach had 'grown' for the first time in his life. For him, eating in a healthier manner meant preparing more homemade food while avoiding fattening fast food such as pizza and hamburgers. On a similar account, parents in their thirties (C20) followed a low carbohydrate diet in order to lose weight. A cardiovascular seizure of a sixty-three-year old husband (C4) guided the household to consistently and carefully locate, choose and use low-salt and low-fat options in order to lead a long and healthy life.

For all households, pleasure is a self-evident property of the ideal food: it offers hedonistic taste sensations (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). In the ideal case, food combines pleasure with healthiness. This became evident in the households' negotiations between pleasure and healthiness. Households simultaneously used both healthy-perceived and pleasure-bringing food ingredients during the weekday dinner. For example, the mother (C20) put whipped cream (pleasure) on her children's fruit (healthiness) as a dessert after the weekday dinner in order to get her children to eat fruit. How the weekday meal accommodated both healthiness projects and hedonistic pleasures in this study contrasts with Warde's (1997) health-indulgence antinomy. Households' narratives also illuminated how the households balanced between healthy and pleasure moments and foods during the day and during the week. Weekday dinners and weekdays in general were regarded as healthier moments whereas weekends were the moments of pleasure where unhealthy choices were more acceptable and allowed. According to American men's masculinity projects (Thompson and Holt 2004), the healthiness-pleasure negotiations between weekdays and weekends were informed by the Protestant ethics that value self-discipline, self-denial, and deferred gratification.

As earlier discussed, (e.g. Bove, Sobal and Rauschenbach 2003; Kemmer, Anderson and Marshall 1998; Lupton 1996; DeVault 1994), a shared meal is a symbol for an ideal family life and also for the examined households. A shared weekday dinner has a social and symbolic role in constructing family identities: spending time together as a family and thereby strengthening family bonds. If the households did not share the weekday dinner, they justified it with legitimate reasons related to other valuable practices: work (C1, C15, C16, C18, C20), and hobbies (C9, C12, C13). In general, the households perceived a weekday dinner meal as symbolic material through which they enacted and contested cultural ideals while leading their identity projects. The finding is in line with Miller's theory of materiality according to which consumers use objects to formulate ideals and resolve conflicts (Miller 1994).

How did the food ideal materialize in mundane consumption in a weekday dinner practice among Finnish households? As table 2 shows, the weekday dinner materialized into preparing quick, ordinary-perceived meals from scratch, such as spaghetti bolognese or sausage soup, warming up their earlier made food, or using ready-made food as ingredients or as a whole meal. In thirteen of the households, a weekday dinner meal is shared by the whole family.

**Table 2. Weekday Dinner Meals among Finnish Households**

Case number	Weekday dinner meal (food, drink)	Home-made / prepared from the scratch	Home-made / heated	Ready-made meal	Big portion for more than one dinner	Dinner participants
C1	Goat cheese and spaghetti in a tomato sauce, fresh vegetables, tap water	x				Responsible for dinner
C2	Macaroni - minced meat casserole, milk, tap water		x		x	All
C3	Minced meat soup and dark bread, tap water	x			x	All
C4	Goat cheese salad and bread, tap water	x				All
C5	Tuna fish and macaronis in a tomato sauce, no drink	x			x	All
C6	Schnitzel in a mushroom sauce, ham salad, tap water			x		All
C7	Salmon-oat bran-vegetable casserole, no drink	x			x	All
C8	Karelian pies (salty pies), tea			x		All
C9	Pork ribs, roasted vegetables, milk	x				All but the older son
C10	Meatballs and wedge potatoes, milk	x				All
C11	Anchovy casserole, no drink		x		x	All
C12	Rye bread sandwiches with cheese and salmon, frozen strawberries, sour milk	x				Responsible for dinner
C13	Male: Indian chicken (frozen vegetables, rice and chicken), protein drink, Female: dark bread, fruit and yogurt			x		Responsible for dinner
C14	Minced meat, chanterelles and ready-made mashed potatoes, no drink	x		x	x	All
C15	Tortillas with minced meat and green salad filling, tap water	x				All but father
C16	Pasta bolognese, rye bread, green salad, tap water	x			x	All but father
C17	Pasta bolognese, rye and white bread, green salad, milk and bottled water	x			x	All
C18	Sausage soup, milk	x				All
C19	Moroccan chicken tagine, wine	x				All
C20	Sausage soup, milk, fruits with whipped cream, milk	x			x	All but father

The food ideal was fully materialized in only four households in this study (C4, C10, C18, C19). These households shared together a fresh, homemade dinner that provided them with both pleasure and healthiness. In addition, they did not prepare extra portions for the following nights. In four households (C1, C9, C12 and C15) dinner food is aligned with the food ideal but family members were missing from the dinner table. In the rest of the cases, the food ideal was compromised. The households heated a ready-made meal or used ready-made ingredients. In addition, they warmed up earlier prepared home-made food or prepared a big portion for this dinner occasion and the following days. Finally, family members ate at different times. Why did the food ideal materialize only in four cases?

### ***Enacting a Good Parent Project across Practices and Compromising a Food Ideal in the Weekday Dinner***

A good parent project is “a life-project framing discourse” (Fischer, Otnes and Tuncay 2007, 427) which suggests parents to prioritize their children and their wellbeing. A food ideal informed the good parent project in food-related practices: the parents aimed at enacting the food ideal into their children’s eating. Table 2 shows how households with children followed the food ideal more conscientiously than other households. None of the households with children (C3, C9, C15, C16, C17, C18, and C20) prepared inferior-perceived ready-made food; they either prepared food from scratch or heated up homemade food. Three households with

children (C15, C16, and C20) compromised the social dimension of the food ideal as the father was not present.

The narratives of household 18 and household 2 illuminate how a good parent project is enacted in a weekday dinner practice but also in other (both food and non-food related) practices that influence children's wellbeing. When parents lead their good parent projects, they look at and assess their doings and success across all the practices that influence their children's wellbeing. Therefore, they allow and make compromises with the good parent project and the food ideal at a weekday dinner. However, they do not compromise the good parent project across the practices influencing their children's wellbeing. Even though the whole family of household 18 shared a weekday dinner during the researcher's visit, the father was often at work during the weekday dinner. This household represents an upper middle class family with three children. The father leads a demanding career as a partner of an international auditing company, while at the time of the study, the wife was at home in their spacious detached house with a one-year old daughter. In addition to playing golf, the father was active in organizational activities: a sport team coach, the chairman of the board in his son's school, and a member of the delegation of the Olympic Committee. Neither of the parents expected the father to share a weekday dinner night after night. They acknowledged and accepted the demands of his work as well as appreciated its financial rewards. Enacting a breadwinner masculine ideal (Holt and Thompson 2004) was a legitimate part of being a good parent for the husband. Additionally, the mother recognized and appreciated her husband's input in other practices where the good parent project was enacted, such as driving their sons to their hobbies or chairing the school board. Like Norwegian suburban mothers (Bahr Bugge and Ålmas 2006), being responsible for the weekday dinner was the mother's way of taking care of the family and children.

In household 2, a single working parent lived with her three-year-old son. Weekdays were busy and tiring for the mother in the midst of work and home-related duties. Homemade food was time and energy - consuming material force that restricted the mother from enacting the food ideal in the weekday dinner day after day. She occasionally compromised the food ideal in the weekday dinner by preparing ready-made food while compensating it with other practices where the good parent project was enacted.

Mother (C2): "It depends on the situation (on a week night), sometimes you just think to yourself that you'll make it easy on yourself and get the spinach casserole or spinach pancakes from the local shop. I don't see any harm in it, no reason why one couldn't do that... I mean I do like to cook but there's your own energy and all that to consider, I won't start doing everything from scratch just for the boy, you'd have to go the whole way then."

Researcher: "You say you see no harm in it?"

Mother (C2): "Well yes, sometimes it feels like you're judged for using ready-made food.. it is said of course that there's more additives in ready-made food. It might just be an assumption, that you're a better mother if you do everything yourself from scratch; it's part of some kind of maternal ideal that's behind it, that you're not as good if you feed your children with ready-made food."

Researcher: "So, you have made your own choices, then?"

Mother (C2): "Yea. And I don't really think... I mean the boy has grown okay, even if he does eat something not entirely home made occasionally... It makes things a bit easier, and the main thing for me is that daily life runs fairly smoothly. I think the main thing is that I'm happy and therefore my child is - that's more important than being totally stressed out making food from scratch, and being half dead, not able to give any time for your child. You might save half an hour if you buy the spinach pancakes, and you can then spend that time playing with your child instead of cooking; I feel that's more valuable...And he gets home



cooking in daycare every day, they follow the official kindergarten list, and that's varied. So I don't have to worry about variety and whether he's had fish this week, since I know he has varied meals in daycare."

The mother in household 2 felt a strong need to justify the use of ready-made food with the weekday dinner context-related arguments: the choice is acceptable (even though not desirable) acknowledging her limited energy levels and a need for feeding a very hungry child as fast as possible. As the food ideal informed the mother's choices, one can also assume that using ready-made spinach pancakes as healthy ready-made food was more acceptable for her compared to less healthy ready-made food options. Additionally, and most important, the choice has no severe negative impact on her children's wellbeing when taking into consideration all practices influencing it. According to the mother, the ready-made food made it possible to have more enjoyable, wellbeing-increasing playtime with her son during weekday evenings. Because the lunch practices of the kindergarten followed the food ideal, during weekday nights it was acceptable for her to prioritize wellbeing-increasing play practices over the food ideal at the weekday dinner. Her good parent project was not compromised across the practices.

Aligned with Miller's (1987, 1995) and Chitakunye's and Maclaran's (2012) findings of the role of objects in subject formation, the narrative of household 2 shows how weekday dinner meals act as symbolic and material objects guiding the good parent project and consumption choices. However, this narrative also illuminates how specific practices (that influenced the wellbeing of the son) informed how the mother led her good mother project. Finally, this narrative witnesses the specificity of individual consumers who use both objects and practices to enact cultural ideals and identity projects in their unique ways. When the mother enacted her good parent project across practices, she was being pragmatic and flexible in relation to specific practice circumstances.

### ***Enacting a Food Ideal Consistently in the most Frequent and Resourceful Food-related Practice: a Weekday Dinner***

According to Warde (2005), practices have differential perceived value. It results from their varying internal psychic rewards, such as self-esteem and satisfaction, and extrinsic rewards, such as economic, social and cultural capital. The perceived value of a practice influences how committed consumers carry it. In this study, one household (C19) had a true food enthusiast. For this DINK couple in their late 50s, cooking was a hobby and a passion. It was a vehicle of self-representation (Bahr Bugge and Almås 2006). The first comment of the husband right after the researcher's arrival at their home manifests this well: "We are not like the others. We do everything from scratch each night."

A weekday dinner practice was very valuable for the couple as it represented an arena for self-actualization, gaining hedonistic pleasures, and also carrying a good family project through a shared hobby: "Yes, well, cooking together is... how should I put it - it's sort of like a hobby of ours: it's like the time for us to be together, to do things together, to talk with each other. On other levels, too, it's our together time, so it's about more than just the cooking." (Wife)

Consumer resources influence how consumers enact their projects and achieve their life goals (e.g. Epp and Price 2008; Arnould, Price and Malshe 2006). Material objects are known to restrict and offer opportunities for identity creation (Miller 1987). Meals, meal participants (e.g. Herman, Roth and Polivy 2003) and time constraints (e.g. Pliner, Hirsch and Kinchla 2006; Bell and Pliner 2003) are known to inform food choices. Additionally, material resources such as television mealtime rituals (Chitakunye and Maclaran 2012). Unlike the other households, the DINK food enthusiast couple could easily follow their passion throughout the weeknights because they had the required time and financial resources to invest in the weekday dinner and no good parent project to follow. The wife had a regular

eight-hour job while her husband worked even less after his profitable career as an entrepreneur. Their well-equipped large kitchen which served as a material resource did not hinder their cooking experiments. Finally and most important, weekday dinners offered the couple the most frequent food-related practice to enact their valuable identity projects and the relating food ideal. Weekday lunches were impossible for shared cooking and eating because the wife worked full-time, and weekend meals were less frequent compared to weekday night meals. Consequently, for this food enthusiast couple, a weekday dinner offered the most frequent and resourceful practice for enacting the food enthusiast and good family projects. Therefore, they consistently enacted the food ideal in this valuable practice and furthermore, as a result, the weekday dinner practice transformed into a celebration dinner experience. The couple looked for cooking inspirations from various sources (such as the cookbooks of world class chefs) and tried new exotic recipes. They used fresh high-quality fresh ingredients such as scallops and entrecôte, which brought both healthiness and pleasure for them. They prepared food longer than an hour with professional-level cooking equipment while enjoying wine. Finally, the couple often enjoyed dinner and each other's company in a ceremonial way at the living room dinner table. Watching or listening television during cooking and eating was allowed only during the most important sports events. To summarize, enacting a food ideal consistently in the weekday dinner was a reflected choice for the food enthusiast couple. As weekday evenings passed in loved food-related routines, it was easy for the wife to skip gym classes even though she paid a monthly gym fee; food enthusiast and good family projects were prioritized over a keeping fit project during weekday nights.

### ***Compromising a Food Ideal in the Weekday Dinner more Often than in the Weekend Dinner***

Two dimensions characterize the temporal setting of a weekday dinner. First, the weekday dinner is tightly linked to other regular and valuable practices: work and hobbies. Second, the weekday dinner occurs during ordinary weekdays instead of leisure and pleasure weekends. They both influenced how a food ideal was enacted in the weekday dinner. The former dimension materialized the demands of work and hobbies into the weekday dinner practice: households had limited energy level and time available for the weekday dinner and cooking. The finding is aligned with the current research which has shown how time constraints influence food choices (e.g. Sellaeg and Chapman 2008; Pliner, Hirsch and Kinchla 2006; Bell and Pliner 2003). Additionally, because it was acceptable to prioritize hobbies and work over the shared weekday dinner, family members (C1, C9, C12, C15, C16, C20) were missing from the dinner table.

In addition to individual energy and time constraints, the ordinary temporal setting, that is, a weekday night made the examined households compromise the food ideal more easily compared to weekend dinners. Because it was an ordinary weekday night, the households looked for more basic and easier meals while they saved larger efforts for more enjoyable weekend dinners. The influence of the Protestant ethics about hard-working, disciplined weekdays and weekends with postponed gratification (Thompson and Holt 2004) was visible in the household's dinner choices. Except for the food enthusiast household (C19), all the examined households took the distinction between an ordinary weekday dinner and an experiential weekend dinner for granted; none of the households questioned the status quo.

The discourse of 'a better weekend dinner' manifested the distinction. According to the discourse, compared to a weekday dinner, during weekends households make food that they truly value. They spend more money on food and choose food items that bring them true pleasure. The households are more experimental and less routine-oriented in their meal choices than during weekdays. Parents can be even more selfish in their meal selections compared to the weekday dinners, which they carry on their children's terms. Their good parent project allows it because their children's wellbeing is not compromised across practices. Compared to the weekdays, during weekends the households spend more time and

effort on preparing the dinner from scratch; the food ideal is not compromised. In general, compared to the weekday dinner, the weekend dinner resembles more of a banquet. The households prepare more than one course, drink wine, use better cutlery, and spend more time enjoying the dinner and each other's company. The whole family gets together at a dinner table, and the good parent and family projects are materialized.

Because pleasures are left more for weekends, households invest limited time, energy, and thought on weekday dinners. Therefore, as demonstrated in table 2, the weekday dinner materialized into preparing quick, ordinary-perceived meals from scratch, such as spaghetti bolognese or sausage soup, warming up their earlier made food, along with using ready-made food as ingredients or as a whole meal with the only exception being the food-enthusiast couple (C19). This finding is aligned with Marshall's (2005) speculative temporal, structural, and social typology of British eating occasions which discusses what people eat, how and with whom they eat with in celebratory/festive meals, weekend meals, weekday meals, light meals, and when having a snack. The finding also provides insight into how the temporal setting of the weekday dinner practice contributes to the distinction between weekend and weekday meals.

As regards the examined households' interest in food and cooking, the food enthusiast couple (C19) was passionate about cooking. For one household (C9) cooking was one hobby among others. Fourteen households enjoyed cooking, and four households (C5, C6, C12, C16) did not particularly appreciate it as much. However, all households had at least basic skills for cooking as a result of the mandatory home economics classes of the Finnish secondary school. Table 2 reveals how the weekday dinner meal choices of nineteen out of twenty households resembled one another, irrespective of differences in the households' cooking interests and skills, and in their cultural and material resources - except for the food-enthusiast couple (C19). Their weekday dinners were more similar than their different habitus would imply. Consequently, this study suggests that the social class differences in food consumption in Finland are prone to diminish in a weekday dinner practice - particularly among non-food enthusiast households.

One may ask whether social class differences exist in the welfare state of Finland, and whether they are capable of influencing consumers' everyday lives. The evidence from Eurostat and the Finnish National Institute for Health and Wellbeing (Rotko et al. 2011) shows how social class differences exist and how they impact consumer practices. Based on Eurostat, in 2010 the highest income quintile of the Finnish population earned 3.6 times more than the lowest income quintile. In 2007, according to the Finnish National Institute for Health and Wellbeing (Rotko et al. 2011), the difference in the life expectancy between males (females) in the highest income quintile and males (females) in the lowest income quintile was 12.7 (6.5) years. The same research institute (Rotko et al. 2011) discusses how health and health differences are partly socially determined, that is, socio-economic differences directly affect people's living conditions, habits, and the use of health services, and indirectly health and life expectancy.

## **Discussion**

This study examined how consumers enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption in the empirical context of a weekday dinner practice among Finnish households. The study highlights four different points on how practices inform the materialization of cultural ideals in mundane consumption. First, when consumers can enact identity projects and relating cultural ideals in more than one practice, they may compromise these identity projects and cultural ideals in some practice. It was acceptable for the Finnish parents to occasionally compromise a good parent project and a food ideal in the weekday dinner practice whereas they did not compromise the good parent project across all practices that influence their children's wellbeing.

Consequently, this study deepens knowledge on fragmented consumption. According to a postmodern perspective (Firat 1997; Firat and Schulz 1997; Firat and Venkatesh 1995, Firat 1991), consumers are not committed to one meta-narrative when communicating their preferences and identities via consumption. As a result, they show multiple preferences towards the same product category, meaning that their consumption is fragmented. A practice-theoretical perspective (Warde 2005) suggests that fragmented consumption results from the diversity of practices; it is the different understandings and norms of the individual practices which guide consumer behavior. This study portrays consumers as flexible and pragmatic as they enact identity projects and cultural ideals in relation to practices. As the consumers compromise identity projects and cultural ideals in some practice(s) but not across practices, their consumption becomes fragmented. The dichotomy between ordinary weekday dinners and pleasure weekend dinners contributes to the fragmentation of food consumption. The findings show how consumers informed by the Protestant ethics compromise the food ideal in the weekday dinner in the midst of the valuable but time and energy consuming practices: work and hobbies. They postpone gratification to a weekend dinner where the food ideal is materialized. This study identifies fragmented food consumption and supports the use of food-related lifestyle segmentation criteria (Brunso and Grunert 1998; Brunso and Grunert 1995), which recognizes that values and use situations inform the desired consequences of food consumption.

Second, this study tells about practice circumstances when mundane consumption is likely to become less fragmented and thus, more predictable. Three themes contribute to this phenomenon: a strong commitment to a specific identity project; enough relevant resources for enacting the identity project across practices; and no competing, more valuable identity projects to be enacted in the same practices as this identity project. Because weekday and weekend dinners fulfilled these practice circumstances, they offered the food enthusiast couple a continual arena for systematically enacting the food enthusiast project and the food ideal. The narrative of the food enthusiast couple shows that in these particular practice circumstances, following a cultural ideal is a reflected choice and also demonstrates that following the cultural ideal becomes a routine part of mundane consumption.

Third, this study links the perceived value of mundane consumption with materializing cultural ideals in a practice. According to Warde (2005), the perceived value of practices relates to internal psychic rewards and extrinsic rewards. The findings propose that the perceived value of a practice and mundane consumption is related to how well and how frequently consumers can enact their identity projects and cultural ideals in the practice. The food enthusiast couple perceived the weekday dinner as very valuable because they could frequently enact their valuable identity project and the food ideal in this practice. Consequently, even though mundane consumption is characterized more by everyday routines than extraordinary consumption (Gronow and Warde 2001), consumers can, and do, perceive it as very valuable. Additionally, when the perceived value of practices and mundane consumption is tied to enacting identity projects and cultural ideals in the practice, it becomes dynamic. When constraints on enacting the identity projects and the cultural ideals disappear in the practice, perceived value increases. As portrayed in the narratives, the families could enact the food ideal particularly well in weekend dinners because work and hobbies did not put time or energy constraints on them. Thus, the weekend dinners became more valuable for the families compared the ordinary weekday dinners where the food ideal was compromised.

Fourth, the findings introduce practice circumstances when the mundane food consumption of consumers from different backgrounds becomes more similar than what their habitus would suggest. Many researchers argue that social class differences are diminishing in food consumption (Warde and Martens 2000). According to a survey of the Nordic eating patterns (Kjaernes et al. 2001; Mäkelä 2001), the effect of social status on weekday night meals is limited in Finland. Middle-class white-collar employees were less likely to eat 'proper meals' compared to both workers and higher white-collar employees. A proper meals refers to a

meal containing a center, staple food or/and bread, and vegetables, with trimmings as an additional alternative. Bahr Bugge and Almas (2006) show subtle differences in the use of seemingly insignificant ingredients, such as tomato and pesto sauces, among Norwegian women from different social classes. According to the findings, the weekday dinner choices of nineteen out of twenty Finnish households become more similar than their different habitus would suggest because it is acceptable for them to compromise the food ideal in this specific temporal setting: the ordinary weekday evening in the midst of other valuable but demanding practices such as hobbies and work. Therefore, this study offers a practice-theoretical and cultural explanation of why the social class differences are prone to diminish in mundane food consumption.

The finding of the convergence of the Finnish households' weekday dinner practices is different from the findings of current consumer culture studies which show that social class guides how cultural ideals are materialized in consumer behavior (e.g. Holt and Thompson 2004; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) identified differences in the Thanksgiving Day consumption rituals across social classes. The upper and upper-middle class families enacted the Thanksgiving Day meal in a more formal manner than the lower class families. This was visible in multiple ways, such as, preferring table service over a buffet, using matching tableware and place cards, and avoiding branded food packages at the dinner table. At the same time, the highlight of the Thanksgiving Day meal was the traditional turkey for all families irrespective of the social class. The difference in the perceived value of these two meal occasions offers one explanation for somewhat different research findings. Thanksgiving Day is a national celebration and a sacred ritual that is linked to cultural and religious values, and historical traditions. Therefore a Thanksgiving Day meal is more valuable for American families than an ordinary weekday dinner for Finnish families. Furthermore, a Thanksgiving meal as a ritual follows stricter rules compared to an ordinary weekday dinner (Ilmonen 2001). As a result, the American families strive more for enacting the cultural ideals in the Thanksgiving Day meal compared to the Finnish families in the weekday dinner.

Holt and Thompson (2004) demonstrated how American males from different social classes enacted an American masculinity ideal in different ways aligned with their habitus. The reasons for the difference in the research findings between this study and that of Holt and Thompson (2004) are not clear. Differences in the research set-up may partially explain this. This study examined how and when consumers enact or do not enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption. Thus, compared to Holt and Thompson (2004), this study may have focused more on understanding about circumstances where consumers can compromise identity projects and cultural ideals. The difference could also indicate that for the American men it is more important to enact the American masculinity ideal throughout their everyday practices than for the Finnish parents to consistently enact a good parent ideal; thus, a food ideal in the weekday dinner practice. However, this warrants further research.

This study increases understanding about subject formation in relation with material culture by highlighting how practices inform the materialization of cultural ideals in mundane consumption. Aligned with Miller (1987, 1994), this study presents food consumption as a process of materializing values, meanings and resolving cultural conflicts. It also shows how meals as symbolic and material objects guide and restrict consumers' daily activities and identity creation (Miller 1987). Most important, this study illuminates the interplay among consumers, objects, and practices in subject creation; in addition to objects, practices as sociocultural, spatio-temporal, and material settings inform the consumers how, where, when, and with whom to enact and compromise cultural ideals and identity projects. Thus the practices guide food consumption choices and the meanings that the consumers ascribe to food consumption objects.

Current CCT research has shown how consumers interpret and enact cultural ideals in ways that suit their life circumstances and resources (e.g. Kozinets 2008; Holt and Thompson

2004; Thompson and Tambyah 1999). This study reinforces the consumer portrait of a pragmatic and flexible consuming agent. It demonstrates how the consumers enact and compromise the cultural ideals and identity projects in relation to different practices. As the practices serve different ends for the consumers at different times, the meaning of the practices is constantly re-created by the consumers. To summarize, while this study illuminates the interplay among cultural ideals, practices and consumer actions, it offers a cultural and practice-theoretical conceptualization on how consumers, material objects, and a sociocultural environment interact and co-create each other at a certain time in history and in the consumers' lives.

## **Conclusion**

This study sheds light on mundane consumption in relation to cultural ideals and practices. According to the findings, practices inform how consumers enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption in four ways. The consumers are pragmatic, flexible and fragmented as they enact the identity projects and the cultural ideals in mundane consumption in relation to practices. The perceived value of mundane consumption is related to how well and how frequently consumers can enact their identity projects and cultural ideals in practices. However, this varies across practices and across consumers. Consumers can and do perceive mundane consumption as very valuable. By illuminating the interplay among cultural ideals, practices, and consumer action, this study conceptualizes how consumers, material objects, and sociocultural and spatio-temporal settings interact and co-create one another.

This study did not focus on examining the routinized and reflexive aspects of mundane consumption. Yet the findings hint how mundane food consumption varies across consumers and practices in terms of reflexivity. Additionally, they show how consumers can perceive mundane consumption as very valuable. Acknowledging these two points, one can raise a question for further research: how much and in which theoretical aspects do mundane and extraordinary consumption differ from one another? Another valuable theme for future research would be a differential value of practices and how it informs consumer behavior. Based on the food enthusiast couple narrative, one can assume that the more valuable consumers perceive a practice, the more diverse the actions of the consumers with different habitus become. In order to get heterogeneity in terms of weekday dinner practices, this research sample consisted of the weekday dinners of twenty households with different backgrounds. The researcher shared only one weekday dinner per examined household. A logical continuation could be to examine the food-related practices of households for a longer period of time. The aim would be to better understand how much variation occurs in respect with materializing the food ideal within a household, across households, why in the weekday dinner practice, and across food related practices.

## REFERENCES

- Alvesson, Mats, and Dan Karreman. 2000. Varieties of Discourse: On the Study of Organizations through Discourse Analysis. *Human Relations* 53 (9): 1125-1149.
- Arnould, Eric J., and Craig J. Thompson. 2005. Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research. *Journal of Consumer Research* 1 (March): 868-882.
- Arnould, Eric J., Linda L. Price, and Avinash Malshe. 2006. Toward a Cultural Resource - Based Theory of the Customer. In *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, debate, and directions*, edited by Robert F. Lusch and Stephen L. Vargo, 91-104. New York: M.S. Sharpe.
- Bahr Bugge, Annechen, and Reidar Almås. 2006. Domestic Dinner: Representations and practices of a proper meal among young suburban mothers. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 6 (2): 203-228.
- Bell, Rick, and Patricia Pliner. 2003. Time to eat. The relationship between the number of people eating and meal duration in three lunch settings. *Appetite* 41 (2): 215-218.
- Borgerson, Janet L. 2005. Materiality, Agency, and the Constitution of Consuming Subjects: Insights for Consumer Research. *Advances in Consumer Research* 32: 439-443.
- 2009. Materiality and the comfort of things: drinks, dining and discussion with Daniel Miller. *Consumption Markets & Culture* 12 (2): 155-170.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- 1990. *The logic of practice*. Trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Bove, Caron F., Jeffery Sobal, and Barbara S. Rauschenbach. 2003. Food choices among newly married couples: convergence, conflict, individualism, and projects. *Appetite* 40: 25-41.
- Brunso, Karen, and Klaus G. Grunert. 1995. Development and Testing of a Cross-Culturally Valid Instrument: Food-Related Life Style. *Advances in Consumer Research* 22: 475-479.
- 1998. Cross-Cultural Similarities and Differences in Shopping for Food. *Journal of Business Research* 42: 145-150.
- Bryman, Alan. 2008. *Social Research Methods*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burr, Vivien. 2003. *Social Constructionism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Hove, East Sussex & New York: Routledge.
- Charles, Nickie, and Marion Kerr. 1988. *Women, food and families*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Chitakunye, Pepykayi, and Pauline Maclaran. 2012. Materiality and family consumption: the role of the television in changing mealtime rituals. *Consumption Markets & Culture*. doi:10.1080/10253866.2012.695679.

- Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK),  
[http://www.ek.fi/ek/fi/tyomarkkinat\\_ym/tyoelama/tasa\\_arvo/naiset\\_miehet/index.php](http://www.ek.fi/ek/fi/tyomarkkinat_ym/tyoelama/tasa_arvo/naiset_miehet/index.php); accessed October 15, 2013.
- Cronin, James M., Mary B. McCarthy, and Alan M. Collins. 2012. Covert distinction: how hipsters practice food-based resistance strategies in the production of identity. *Consumption Markets & Culture*. doi:10.1080/10253866.2012.678785.
- DeVault, Marjorie L. 1994. *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work*. Chicago: The University Chicago Press.
- Eisenhardt, Kathleen M. 1989. Building Theories from Case Study Research. *The Academy of Management Review* 14 (4): 532-550.
- Eurostat. <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/setupModifyTableLayout.do>; accessed March 13, 2012.
- Epp, Amber M., and Linda L. Price. 2008. Family Identity: A Framework of Identity Interplay in Consumption Practices. *Journal of Consumer Research* 35 (June): 50-70.
- Fairclough, Norman. 2003. *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. New York: Routledge.
- 2005. Discourse analysis in organization studies: The case for critical realism. *Organization Studies* 26 (6): 915-939.
- Firat, Asim F. 1997. Educator Insights: Globalization of Fragmentation - A Framework for Understanding Contemporary Global Markets. *Journal of International Marketing* 5 (2): 77-86.
- Firat, Asim F., and Alladi Venkatesh. 1995. Liberatory Postmodernism and the Reenchantment of Consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research* 22 (3): 239-267.
- Firat, Asim F., and Clifford J. Shultz II. 1997. From segmentation to fragmentation. *European Journal of Marketing* 31 (3): 183-207.
- Fischer, Eileen, Cele C. Otnes, and Linda Tuncay. 2007. Pursuing Parenthood: Integrating Cultural and Cognitive Perspectives on Persistent Goal Striving. *Journal of Consumer Research* 34 (December): 425-440.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Gronow, Jukka, and Anni Jääskeläinen. 2001. The Daily Rhythm of Eating. In *Eating Patterns: A Day in the Lives of Nordic Peoples*, edited by Unni Kjaernes, 91-124. Oslo: The National Institute for Consumer Research.
- Gronow, Jukka, and Alan Warde. 2001. Introduction. In *Ordinary Consumption*, edited by Jukka Gronow, and Alan Warde, 1-8. London and New York: Routledge.
- Herman, C. Peter, Deborah A. Roth, and Janet Polivy. 2003. Effects of the Presence of Others on Food Intake: A Normative Interpretation. *Psychological Bulletin* 129 (6): 873-884.
- Hirschman, Elizabeth C., and Morris B. Holbrook. 1982. Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concepts, Methods and Propositions. *Journal of Marketing* 46(3): 92-101.



- Holm, Lotte. 2001. Family Meals. In *Eating Patterns: A Day in the Lives of Nordic Peoples*, edited by Unni Kjaernes, 99-112. Oslo: The National Institute for Consumer Research.
- Holt, Douglas B., and Craig J. Thompson. 2004. Man-of-Action Heroes: The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 (September): 425-440.
- Imonen, Kaj. 2001. Sociology, Consumption and Routine. In *Ordinary Consumption*, edited by Jukka Gronow, and Alan Warde, 9-24. London and New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, Phil, and Joanne Duberley. 2000. *Understanding Management Research*. London: Sage.
- Kemmer, Debbie, Annie S. Anderson, and David W. Marshall. 1998. Living together and eating together: changes in food choice and eating habits during the transition from single to married/cohabiting. *The Sociological Review* 46: 48-72.
- Kjaernes, Unni, Marianne Pipping Ekström, Jukka Gronow, Lotte Holm, and Johanna Mäkelä. 2001. Introduction. In *Eating Patterns: A Day in the Lives of Nordic Peoples*, edited by Unni Kjaernes, 25-64. Oslo: The National Institute for Consumer Research.
- Kleine, III Robert E. 2007. Roundtable summary: Exploring the Co-Evolution of Possession Constellations, Self, and Identity: Part Two – Mundane Consumption. *Advances in Consumer Research* 34: 588-589.
- Kleine, III, Robert E., Susan Schultz-Kleine, and Jerome B. Kernan. 1993. Mundane Consumption and the Self: A Social-Identity Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 2 (3): 209-235.
- Kleine-Schultz, Susan, Robert E. Kleine, III, and Chris T. Allen. 1995. How Is a Possession “Me” or “Not Me”? Characterizing Types and an Antecedent of Material Possession Attachment. *Journal of Consumer Research* 22 (December): 327-343.
- Korkman, Oskar, Kaj Storbacka, and Bo Harald. 2010. Practices as markets: value co-creation in e-invoicing. *Australasian Marketing Journal* 18 (4): 236-247.
- Kozinets, Robert V. 2008. Technology/Ideology: How Ideological Fields Influence Consumers’ Technology Narratives. *Journal of Consumer Research* 34 (April): 865-881.
- Kupiainen, Terri, and Eeva Järvinen. 2009. *Miksi kuluttaja ostaa valmisruokaa? Valmisruokien valintaan vaikuttavat tekijät eri kuluttajaryhmissä* [Why does a consumer buy convenience food? – Factors affecting the choice of convenience foods in various consumer groups]. Helsinki: MTT Agrifood Research in Finland, Economic Research.
- Lupton, Deborah. 1996. *Food, the Body and the Self*. London: Sage.
- Marshall, David. 2005. Food as Ritual, Routine or Convention. *Consumption Markets & Culture* 8 (1): 69-85.
- Miller, Daniel. 1987. *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- 1994. *Modernity: An Ethnographic Approach: Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad*. Oxford: Berg.

- 1995. *Acknowledging Consumption*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Moisio, Risto, Eric J. Arnould, and Linda L. Price. 2004. Between Mothers and Markets: Constructing family identity through homemade food. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 4 (3): 361-384
- Mäkelä, Johanna. 2001. The meal format. In *Eating Patterns: A Day in the Lives of Nordic Peoples*, edited by Unni Kjaernes, 125-158. Oslo: The National Institute for Consumer Research.
- Oberhuber, Florian, and Michal Krzyzanowski. 2008. Discourse Analysis and Ethnography. In *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*, edited by Ruth Wodak, and Michal Krzyzanowski, 182-203. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ochs, Elinor. 1997. Narrative. In *Discourse as Structure and Process*, edited by Teun A. Van Dijk, 185-207. London: Sage.
- Pliner, Patricia, Rick Bell, Edward S. Hirsch, and Mark Kinchla. 2006. Meal duration mediates the effect of “social facilitation” on eating humans. *Appetite* 46 (2): 189-198.
- Pipping Ekström, Marianne, and Elisabeth L'orange Fürst. 2001. The Gendered Division of Cooking. . In *Eating Patterns: A Day in the Lives of Nordic Peoples*, edited by Unni Kjaernes, 213-234. Oslo: The National Institute for Consumer Research.
- Pollak, Alexander. 2008. Analyzing TV Documentaries. In *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*, edited by Ruth Wodak, and Michal Krzyzanowski, 77-94. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rotko, Tuulia, Timo Aho, Niina Mustonen, and Eila Linnanmäki. 2011. *Kapeneeko kuilu? Tilannekatsaus terveysterojen kaventamiseen Suomessa 2007-2010*. [Is the gap getting narrower? A report about reducing health inequalities in Finland 2007-2010]. Helsinki: National Institute for Health and Wellbeing.
- Strauss, Anselm, and Juliet Corbin. 1998. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage.
- Schatzki, Theodore R. 1996. *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 2001. Introduction: Practice Theory. In *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, edited by Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina, and Eike von Savigny, 1-14. London and New York: Routledge.
- 2005. Peripheral Vision: The Sites of Organizations. *Organization Studies* 26 (3): 465-484.
- Schau, Hope J., Albert M. Muñoz Jr., and Eric J. Arnould. 2009. How Brand Community Practices Create Value. *Journal of Marketing* 73 (5): 31-51.
- Sellaeg, Kari, and Gwen E. Chapman. 2008. Masculinity and food ideals of men who live alone. *Appetite* 51: 120-128.
- Thompson, Craig J., and Siok Kuan Tambyah. 1999. Trying to Be Cosmopolitan. *Journal of Consumer Research* 26 (December): 214-241.

- Thompson, Craig J. and Douglas B. Holt. 2004. How Do Men Grap the Phallus? *Journal of Consumer Culture* 4 (3): 313-338.
- Ulver-Sneistrup, Sofia, Soren Askegaard, and Dorthe Brogard-Kristensen. 2011. The new work ethics of consumption and the paradox of mundane brand resistance. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 1 (2): 215-238.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. 1997. The Study of Discourse. In *Discourse as Structure and Process*, edited by Teun A. Van Dijk, 1-34. London: Sage.
- Wallendorf, Melanie, and Eric J. Arnould. 1988. "My Favorite Things": A Cross-Cultural Inquiry into Object Attachment, Possessiveness, and Social Linkage. *Journal of Consumer Research* 14 (4): 531-547.
- 1991. "We Gather Together": Consumption Rituals of Thanksgiving Day. *Journal of Consumer Research* 18 (June): 13-31.
- Warde, Alan. 1997. *Consumption, Food and Taste: culinary antinomies and commodity culture*. London: Sage.
- 1999. Convenience Food: Space and Timing. *British Food Journal* 101(7): 518-527.
- 2005. Consumption and Theories of Practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5 (2): 131-153.
- Warde, Alan, and Lydia Martens. 2000. *Eating Out: Social Differentiation, Consumption and Pleasure*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wodak, Ruth. 2008. Introduction: Discourse Studies – Important Concepts and Terms. In *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*, edited by Ruth Wodak, and Michal Krzyzanowski, 1-29. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

CONTEXTUALIZING VALUE PROPOSITIONS: EXAMINING HOW  
CONSUMERS EXPERIENCE VALUE PROPOSITIONS IN THEIR PRACTICES

HELI HOLTINEN

**ESSAY 3**

This essay will be published in *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 2014, 22 (1).





Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Australasian Marketing Journal

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/amj](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/amj)

## Contextualizing value propositions: Examining how consumers experience value propositions in their practices

Heli Holttinen\*

Hanken School of Economics, Department of Marketing, P.O. Box 479, Arkadiankatu 22, 00101 Helsinki, Finland

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 11 August 2013  
 Revised 15 September 2013  
 Accepted 5 October 2013  
 Available online xxxx

#### Keywords:

Value proposition  
 Value creation  
 Cultural discourse  
 Practice  
 Service-dominant logic  
 Consumer culture theory

### ABSTRACT

As a value proposition connects firms and customers, it becomes one of the central marketing concepts. Currently it has remained de-contextualized. Drawing on service-dominant logic, practice theory and consumer culture theory, this study aims at contextualizing value propositions by investigating theoretically how consumers experience and evaluate value propositions in practices. It pinpoints what their essence is in customers' lives: the ability of offerings to help customers to enact desirable cultural discourses into experience in practices. Hence the study constructs value propositions as firms' proposals which integrate sign value (the meanings of value propositions addressing desirable cultural discourses), experience value (sign value materialized into experience in a practice), exchange value (financial and non-financial sacrifices), and resources needed to address and materialize sign value. In general this study extends understanding on the socio-cultural and situational character of value propositions, value creation and value co-creation.

© 2013 Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

"The customer determines who the business is" (Drucker, 1977, p. 56). In the language of contemporary marketing one can rephrase Drucker's suggestion as follows: firms can only offer value propositions (Vargo and Lusch, 2008) – it is always a customer or any other beneficiary who accepts them. Thus firms get an opportunity to co-create value with their customers with the help of the value propositions (Grönroos, 2008). As the value proposition ties firms and their customers together, it becomes one of the central concepts of marketing. At the same time, only less than 10 per cent of firms have managed to successfully develop and communicate their value propositions (Frow and Payne, 2011).

Since the introduction of the concept of a value proposition by Lanning and Michaels at McKinsey & Company in the 1980s (Ballantyne et al., 2011), marketing research has emphasized its resonance with customers and other beneficiaries. It has meant dividing the value proposition into generic benefit and sacrifice categories: economic, functional, emotional and symbolic benefits, and monetary and nonmonetary sacrifices (e.g. Rintamäki et al., 2007; Flint and Mentzer, 2006; Day, 2006; Payne et al., 2005; Kaplan and Norton, 2004; Keeney, 1999; Aaker, 1995). Furthermore, service-dominant logic-informed researchers have conceptualized it as a process of designing reciprocal value (e.g. Ballantyne et al., 2011; Cova and Salle, 2008; Ballantyne and Varey, 2006; Flint

and Mentzer, 2006). In an information technology services context the value proposition has been viewed as "a request from one service system entity to others to run a procedure or an algorithm" (Maglio and Spohrer, 2013, p. 367). The value generation potential of these relationships is known to depend on client characteristics, vendor characteristics, and the vendor-client relationship (Levina and Ross, 2003). Even though scholars have acknowledged that the value propositions relate to specific users and use situations (e.g. Ballantyne et al., 2011; Cova and Salle, 2008; Johnson et al., 2008; Lusch et al., 2007; Grönroos, 2007, 2009; Arnould et al., 2006; Flint and Mentzer, 2006; Lanning, 1998) they have not examined the implications further – with the exception of Arnould et al. (2006). These researchers argue for establishing meaningful links between the value propositions and consumers' goals and resources so that by using the value propositions the consumers can better perform their life projects and roles in different cultural environments. Despite the contribution of Arnould et al. (2006), the value propositions have largely remained de-contextualized.

The objective of this study is to contextualize value propositions in customers' practices. The approach is to investigate theoretically how consumers experience and evaluate the value propositions in their practices, based on the research contributions within service-dominant (S-D) logic (e.g. Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008), practice theory (PT) (e.g. Schatzki, 1996), and consumer culture theory (CCT) (e.g. Arnould et al., 2006; Venkatesh et al., 2006). More specifically, this study investigates consumer value creation in everyday situations: repetitive occasions which consumers perceive

\* Tel.: +35 8504618212.

E-mail address: [heli.holttinen@hanken.fi](mailto:heli.holttinen@hanken.fi)

neither extraordinary nor dramatic, such as having supper. In the examination, value propositions are regarded as signs to which consumers ascribe intersubjective meanings while experiencing them in different socio-cultural, spatio-temporal and material contexts. More specifically, this study looks for conceptual explanations to three questions: (1) what is the essence of value propositions as signs that are experienced and evaluated by the consumers in their practices; (2) on what basis do the consumers evaluate the value propositions as signs; and (3) what implications can be drawn for further development of the value proposition concept?

S-D logic, CCT and PT were chosen as the key theoretical foundations of this study because they, by complementing one another, make it possible to achieve the research objective in the best possible way. S-D logic research has highlighted the importance of the concept of the value proposition in the co-creation of value (e.g. Ballantyne et al., 2011; Frow and Payne, 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008). Furthermore, it has conceptualized and examined *how* value is co-created in value networks in which different stakeholders, such as consumers and firms, integrate resources and exchange service for service (e.g. Lusch et al., 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008). Thereby S-D logic helps examine the role of the value propositions in the consumers' value-creating practices. However, S-D logic studies have not focused on investigating why different stakeholders are willing to participate in value co-creation in different contexts. CCT research in its turn has widely evidenced how cultural discourses, such as ideologies and cultural ideals, drive consumption choices in different socio-cultural and historical settings where consumers use their culturally situated understandings to buy things for what they mean (e.g. Arnould, 2006; Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Consequently, CCT research has accumulated theoretical knowledge on *why* consumers choose to consume certain offerings in different socio-cultural contexts. Thereby CCT assists in understanding why the consumers accept or do not accept value propositions. However, CCT scholars have not focused particularly on examining how the practical material and temporal context of everyday life impacts consumer choices. Here PT closes the circle; its research unit, a practice, ties consumer value creation to a specific socio-cultural and spatio-temporal and material setting (Schatzki, 2005). In practices, offerings are not important for their own sake but for carrying out practices (e.g. Korkman et al., 2010; Schau et al., 2009a; Warde, 2005).

This study is positioned ontologically and epistemologically within critical realism. Critical realism acknowledges the existence both natural and social worlds and argues that they differ from one another. Unlike the natural world, the social world depends on human thought and action for its existence and meaning: it is socially constructed discourse in social practices where people produce and reproduce discourses (Fairclough, 2005). Human-beings are social agents who make sense of discourses, draw upon them and act on them (Fairclough, 1992). As individuals have different experiences and resources, they interpret discourses and act on interpretations in different ways (Fairclough, 1992). Social construction is constrained by extra-discursive elements, such as materiality and social structures (Sims-Schouten and Willig 2007; Fairclough, 2005; Nightingale and Comby, 2002). Social structures and conventions shape and constrain discourses, their production and interpretation (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough (2005, p. 916) conceptualizes discourses as "the linguistic/semiotic elements of social events and the linguistic/semiotic facets of social structures and social practices". Critical realism does not privilege between human agency and social structures (Fairclough, p. 2005; Fleetwood, 2005). They reciprocally presuppose each other (Johnson and Duberley, 2000): "one is what it is, and can exit, only in the virtue of the other" (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 216). In other words, while social structures govern the everyday activities of human-

beings, the human-beings reproduce and transform social structures in daily life.

The study starts by examining what the essence is of value propositions as signs for consumers. It continues by investigating on what basis the consumers experience and evaluate value propositions in their everyday life. Next, the implications for the contextualized value proposition concept are derived from two perspectives: the customers' and value co-creation design perspectives. In the end the study pinpoints contributions and suggests areas for further research.

## 2. What is the essence of value propositions as signs?

This study starts by examining how consumers experience and evaluate value propositions as signs in their practices based mainly on the research contributions within S-D logic, CCT and PT. The findings introduce two standpoints.

### 2.1. Value propositions as firms' proposals for consumers' resource integration in practices

S-D logic perceives consumers as resource integrators who, in order to enhance their value creation in their daily lives, acquire, use, change, and integrate resources, including offerings where offerings refer to goods, services and solutions (e.g. Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008; Arnould et al., 2006). Customer resource integration refers to "the processes by which customers deploy their resources as they undertake bundles of activities that create value directly or that will facilitate subsequent consumption/use from which they derive value" (Arnould, 2005). Lusch et al. (2007, p. 13) relate value propositions, at least implicitly, with offerings: "A value proposition can be thought of as a promise the seller makes that value-in-exchange will be linked to value-in-use. When a customer exchanges money with a seller s/he is implicitly assuming the value-in-exchange will at least result in value-in-use that meets or exceeds the value-in-exchange". The value-in-use concept means that value is created in use rather than being embedded in offerings (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008). In addition to the financial sacrifices, non-financial sacrifices, such as time costs and search costs, have been shown to influence the perceived value of offering (e.g. Zeithaml, 1988).

According to Korkman et al. (2010), enhancing value creation is about providing customers with resources that fit with the other elements of customer practices: places, tools, images, physical spaces, and actors. Consequently, they conceptualize the value propositions as resource integration promises. The promised value is derived from resource integration rather than using offerings in isolation. Additionally, they locate resource integration within practices, the examples of which are cooking and working. Finally, Arnould et al. (2006) stress that consumers may derive value from offerings creatively in ways which vary from firms' intents. The above theorizing invites one to draw the following conclusion: value propositions are firms' proposals on how consumers can derive value from integrating offerings with their other resources. What does the conclusion imply?

Firstly, consumers have the power to accept value propositions or not (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Acquiring an offering is an explicit sign of the acceptance of the value proposition. It signals that the anticipated use value at least meets financial and non-financial sacrifices from the consumers' perspective. Secondly, because deriving value from the offerings always requires resource integration from consumers, a value proposition is invariably linked with more consumer resources than a specific offering only. Therefore, the value proposition includes a specific offering and an explicit or implicit suggestion of how to integrate this offering with other

consumer resources in their practices. For example, the shape and the wrapping of a food item implicitly inform consumers how to eat it: manually or using cutlery. Furthermore, the value proposition includes hints about in which practice(s) the consumers could use it. For example, in a workplace restaurant, priced food and drink products, layout and furniture, and the lack of electricity plugs and wireless Internet connection guide employees to use the restaurant for eating practices only. Finally, the value proposition can invite using the offering before its purchase. Co-developing design drawings of kitchen fitments illustrates this case.

Thirdly, consumers can choose to follow the firms' suggestion on how to integrate the offerings with their other resources, or they can choose to pursue their own plan. As with experiencing value (Vargo and Lusch, 2008), consumers experience and evaluate the value propositions idiosyncratically: subjectively in each specific resource-integration context. Here the context informs resource integration: resources are more valuable in certain contexts and less valuable in others (Chandler and Vargo, 2011). For example, the value of the chocolate bar as the only source of energy is very high for a hungry hiker on the mountain, which is not the case at the party where the same hiker can choose among a wide selection of desirable food and drink offerings, including the same chocolate bar. When evaluating the value propositions, the consumers judge how they can fit the value proposition-related offerings with their other resources in order to derive value from their use. Because consumer goals and resources vary by consumer or by consumer network (Epp and Price, 2011; Arnould et al., 2006), and by context in the case of the same consumer (Holttinen, 2010a), the consumers might imagine different uses and resource integrations for the same value propositions. Thus consumers can apply value propositions flexibly and mold them to fit with their own value-creation circumstances. "Consumers can then weave their own combination of products and services to satisfy their specific needs and desires – to get what they like, when and how they like it" (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 13).

Customers may also need new knowledge and skills to be able to integrate the new offering effectively with their resources (Hibbert et al., 2012). Then the role of firms is to support customer learning so that the customers can materialize the desired value (Payne et al., 2008; Arnould, 2005). For example, mobile operators organize voluntary, free-of-charge courses during which consumers learn to use and benefit from mobile devices and their applications more holistically in their everyday lives. Consequently, the scope of value propositions varies according to the resource integration needed to derive the desired value from integrating the offering with other consumer resources in a specific context. The scope is unique to each value proposition and to each resource integration context. Finally, firms can and do control the scope of the consumers' resource integration. For example, the limited selection of locally-produced and organic food offerings at the nearby groceries narrows the weekday dinner meal choices of households (Holttinen, 2010b).

## 2.2. Meanings as the primary source of value of the proposed resource integration

Sydney Levy (1959) introduced the idea that consumers are buying meanings in (or through) offerings. The underlying assumption was that market actors are socio-cultural interpreters who assign intersubjective meanings to signs (such as offerings) and act upon them (such as buying or not buying offerings) (Mick, 1986). According to Kleine and Kernan (1991), a meaning is a perception or an interpretation of any object. The interpretation has two dimensions: what the object is and what it can perform. The interpretation is not inherent to the object but rather arises from

the interaction among the object, interpreter (e.g. a consumer) and a context.

CT research in particular has illuminated the symbolic role of possessions and brands in identity projects (e.g. Schau et al., 2009b; Holt and Thompson, 2004; Belk and Costa, 1998; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Belk, 1988) and group identity projects (e.g. Martin et al., 2006; Kates, 2004). Identity projects refer to the projects of constructing a sense of self (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). They inform consumer life goals, consumer narratives, doings, and consumption choices (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999). For example, a Nike shoe as a value proposition is not a highly functional sports shoe but "a vehicle to "just do it"" (Arnould et al., 2006, p. 95). Thus Nike shoes help the consumers to achieve their fitness goals in their keeping fit project by offering functional shoes and by enhancing their self-confidence and fitness identity. The meanings of possessions are not only linked to the identity projects; offerings as symbols comprise multiple layers of meanings dependent on social groups and cultural contexts (Venkatesh et al., 2006).

Consumer studies have evidenced how consumers, in addition to symbolic benefits, look for different types of value from offerings, such as hedonistic experiences, emotions, and functional and economic benefits (e.g. Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Khalifa, 2004; Woodall, 2003; Woodruff, 1997). Holbrook (2006) has proposed a customer value typology which is based on two dimensions: extrinsic value (consumption experience serves a further end) versus intrinsic value (consumption experience is valued for its own sake), and self-oriented value (consumption experience is valued for one's own sake) versus other-oriented value (consumption experience is valued for the others' sake). His typology includes economic value, social value, hedonic value and altruistic value. Grönroos concludes: "consumers look for value in terms of becoming 'better off' in some way" (Grönroos, 2011, p. 285).

To summarize, consumers are the co-creators of meanings, and they selectively interpret and use them for their own purposes (e.g. Arnould, 2005; Peñaloza, 2001; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). Consequently, a value proposition is a source of many potential meanings related to the value that the consumers want derive from it. A chocolate bar, for example, can be a source of many potential meanings, such as 'a vehicle for a fascinating taste sensations' (providing hedonic value), 'this dark chocolate provides us both healthiness and pleasure' (helping consumers in their identity project of 'having a healthy and fit body' and providing hedonic value) and, 'such a high-esteem chocolate brand – a perfect gift to my friend' (helping consumers in the identity project of 'being close friends' and thus providing social value).

Irrespective of the type of value that consumers are seeking, evaluating value propositions always involves signification: each value proposition as a sign conveys meanings which the consumers interpret idiosyncratically from their personal and situational circumstances, either consciously or unconsciously. The potential array of meanings makes value propositions dynamic; consumers choose which meanings they use in their value creation. Consumers are not loyal to the value propositions but to the meanings that the consumers co-produce with firms while integrating offerings with their other resources (according to the firms' proposal or their own plan). "It is not to brands that consumers will be loyal, but to images and symbols, especially to images and symbols that they produce while they consume" (Firat and Venkatesh 1995, p. 251). Notice that consumers may not perceive every meaning in the accepted value proposition as desirable. For example, impurity and lack of freshness are not valuable meanings in the ready-made food value propositions for the Finnish households (Holttinen, 2010b). However, when feeling tired or busy, households can purchase the ready-made food for another valuable meaning: convenience.



### 3. On what basis do consumers experience and evaluate value propositions?

What makes certain value propositions more acceptable and desirable than others? Venkatesh et al. (2006) give priority to meanings and values over signs: when market actors exchange signs for signs, such as the offerings for money, the meanings and values 'give the signs their currency'. Research on cultural values has evidenced a strong link between cultural values and the organization of social life: how people choose their actions, evaluate others, things and events, and how they explain their actions and evaluations (e.g. Schwartz, 1992; Rokeach, 1973). Cultural values refer to shared, trans-situational conceptions about the desirable end states and behaviors: they are guiding principles in people's lives (Schwartz, 1992). Edvardsson et al. (2011, p. 333) have introduced the concept of "value-in-social context". This notion emphasizes the intersubjective nature of value and that social forces guide value creation.

Acknowledging the influence of cultural values (e.g. Schwartz, 1992; Rokeach, 1973) and situational factors (e.g. Belk, 1975) on consumer behavior, means-end-theory has drawn a link between the perceived value of offerings, their consumption consequences, and cultural values in different end-use situations (e.g. Overby et al., 2005; Woodruff, 1997; Gutman, 1982). Consumer value is a consumer's evaluation of the offering attributes and its perceived consumption consequences that enable (or do not enable) consumers to materialize desired end-states in a specific consumption context (e.g. a hotel room) where the desired end-states refer to consumer goals and needs (Overby et al., 2005; Woodruff, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988; Gutman, 1982). Some researchers equate end-states to universal cultural values (Overby et al., 2005). However, means-end theory has not focused on examining how a particular socio-cultural use context informs which end-states are desirable except for Overby et al. (2005). They acknowledge that what desired end-state means and symbolizes for consumers differs across cultures; each offerings is perceived via "a cultural lens", (Overby et al., 2005, p. 147).

A group of CCT studies have operationalized cultural values as cultural discourses and illuminated how they inform consumption in a specific socio-cultural context (e.g. Fischer et al., 2007; Holt and Thompson, 2004; Thompson and Tambyah, 1999); for example, how the cultural discourse of biological parenthood influences the persistent goal-striving of parenthood (Fischer et al., 2007), and how the cultural ideal of American masculinity as a cultural discourse informs males' masculine identity construction and thereby consumption (Holt and Thompson, 2004). Cultural discourses refer to informal norms and tacit understandings which frame what people desire, say, and do (Holt and Thompson, 2004). Discourses are determined by the social rules, norms and conventions of a specific socio-cultural setting (Wodak, 2008; Fairclough, 2005). Cultural discourses are produced in social interactions via language and other symbolic systems (Wodak, 2008).

CCT studies have also evidenced how firms drawing on cultural discourses intentionally spread them via offerings and norms and evaluative standards in order to reach their ideological and competitive goals (e.g. Peñaloza and Mish, 2011; Thompson, 2004; Peñaloza, 2000; McCracken, 1986). In summary, the research contributions of CCT suggest that cultural values in the form of cultural discourses inform consumers of what kind of meanings to seek and not to seek from the value propositions. They act as formal and informal norms for consumers by informing what identity projects, goals, and doings consumers perceive as desirable and acceptable in different socio-cultural contexts. However, CCT studies have not focused on examining the influence of micro-level

contexts on evaluating value propositions: a situation, and material and spatial surroundings.

An integrative practice as an ontological unit ties consumer behavior to a specific socio-cultural, spatio-temporal and material context (Schatzki, 1996). Most practice theorists agree that a practice is a meeting point for mind, activity, and society (Schatzki, 2001). The notion emphasizes the interplay between consumers and the social. Consumer behavior is informed by specific socio-cultural and material settings, related to times, places, traditions, and events (Schatzki, 2005), and at the same time the consumer behavior shapes practices as consumers interpret, produce, and re-produce them (Warde, 2005). According to PT-informed marketing researchers (e.g. Warde, 2005; Schau et al., 2009a), practices guide the use of offerings and not vice versa. Consumption is not a practice but a moment in most practices (Warde, 2005). Korkman et al. (2010) suggest that the resource fit of different types of practice resources, such as places, tools, images, physical spaces and actors, is central for value creation in practices.

Drawing on Wittgenstein, Schatzki (1996) takes another perspective. He prioritizes understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures over other practice elements: they orchestrate consumer activities in practices. The rules are explicit formulations of what to do (such as acts of law, precepts and instructions) whereas the teleoaffective structures guide activities "by shaping what is signified to an actor to do" (Schatzki, 1996, p. 123). The teleological dimension relates to the goal-oriented reasons for 'doing', whereas the affective dimension refers to how different things matter at an emotional level (Schatzki, 1996). The teleoaffective structure is not the property of a consumer but rather a property of a practice which consumers carry (Schatzki, 2003). However, at the same time, individual consumers, having different resources, possess their own versions of the teleoaffective structures that organize their activities in practices (Schatzki, 2003).

Notice that in addition to the engaged practice, other practices simultaneously inform consumer behavior (Schatzki, 1996). For example, a mother following her good parent project (informed by the good parent ideal) does not want to provide an unhealthy-perceived ready-made meal for her children for a weekday dinner. At the same time, she would like to prepare something very quick and easy, in order to have time to for an aerobics class that belongs to her 'being fit' project. Then it is her practical intelligibility that organizes her decisions and activities (Schatzki, 1996). It reveals the hierarchy of both her cultural ideals (a good parent ideal and a fit woman ideal) this specific moment: which one to prioritize over the other.

Integrating CCT knowledge on cultural discourses, and Schatzki's theorizing on understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures, this investigation suggests that it is cultural discourses (ideologies and cultural ideals) as well as opportunities and constraints (such as material opportunities and constraints) present in practices which inform how consumers experience and evaluate value propositions: which meanings of the value propositions consumers experience as desirable, acceptable and realistic in a given practice context. I illustrate this with an example of how desirable-perceived value propositions need to address cultural discourses as well as the constraints and opportunities of the practices. In the examination of a weekday dinner practice, Holttinen (2010b) showed how dinner choices were guided by a food ideal according to which the ideal food was home-made, authentic (unprocessed), fresh and pure, and provides both taste sensations and health. At the same time, this temporal context in the midst of hobbies and work made families have insufficient energy and time for cooking. Consequently, they were willing to accept value propositions which would materialize the food ideal easily and conveniently. At the same time, the families experienced a ready-made food

(convenience food) value proposition as almost the opposite to the food ideal: not as tasty as home-made food, processed, not fresh, impure and unhealthy. The families negotiated the tension between the food ideal and their energy and time constraints by preparing large portions of home-made food for the sequential days. Even though this solution did not materialize fully their food ideal, it was more desirable than accepting the ready-made food value proposition more often.

Evaluating value propositions is not always a conscious reflection. On the contrary, the majority of consumer activities are spontaneous or routine behavior without any explicit consideration (Schatzki, 1996). Having a “feel for the game” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66), consumers accomplish many daily activities on the basis of what feels right and natural in the given specific conditions. This implies that value propositions and related offerings need to address relevant cultural discourses as well as the constraints and opportunities of the practice better than the current consumer resources. Otherwise consumers may not acknowledge them in the first place.

#### 4. Implications for the concept of the value proposition

Next, based on the theoretical examinations, implications for the concept of value propositions are derived from two perspectives: the customers' and that of value co-creation design.

##### 4.1. Implication from customers' perspective: Value propositions as the integrators of sign value, experience value, exchange value and resources

Drawing on my theoretical investigations, this study suggests that from the customers' perspective, value propositions are firms' resource integration proposals for integrating offerings with other customers' resources. The value propositions integrate sign value, experience value, and resources, and exchange value. Fig. 1 illustrates this conceptualization. In Fig. 1, a Venn diagram stands for a value proposition, and the circles of the diagram depict the overlapping elements that the value proposition includes: sign value, experience value, resources, and exchange value. Representing the sign value circle above the other value proposition elements illustrates its superiority over the others. Similarly, positioning the exchange value lower compared to the other elements shows that it is a subordinate to the others.

##### 4.1.1. Sign value

Practices contextualize customers' value creation, resource integration and value propositions; the customers experience and evaluate value propositions and related offerings as their potential resources relative to practices. In practices, cultural discourses (such as ideologies and cultural ideals) as well as the opportunities and constraints of practices inform resource integration. They

inform the customers which meanings of the value propositions are desirable and acceptable, and thereby guide the acceptance of value propositions and how the offerings are used and integrated with other customers' resources. The opportunities and constraints of practices refer to context-bound and situational factors which influence how well customers can enact desired cultural discourses in practices, examples being consumer resources, material constraints, other practice participants, and other practices.

Sign value means the ability of the value proposition to address desirable cultural discourses (such as ideologies and cultural ideals) which customers either consciously or unconsciously (try to) enact in a specific practice. The value propositions can include meanings that customers perceive as undesirable. If the customers evaluate that the value propositions cannot provide improved sign value for them compared to their current state, they do not accept the value propositions. In the worst case, the value propositions are unable to raise their attention in the first place. Because each customer has unique resources and experiences and because each resource-integration context of a specific practice is different from others, each customer interprets sign value idiosyncratically. Thus the customers co-create the meanings of the value propositions. The customers often find new sources of the sign value compared to firms' intentions in two ways: by inventing different meanings and uses for the value propositions in the practice or by integrating the offerings in practices which did not belong to the firms' initial idea of the scope of the value propositions. The co-creation of meanings starts before the purchase of the value proposition, for example, through advertising (e.g. Mick and Buhl, 1992) or learning from others' experiences.

##### 4.1.2. Experience value

According to S-D logic, customers (and other beneficiaries) experience the value of offerings idiosyncratically in use (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Venkatesh et al. (2006) perceive use value and exchange value as derivations of sign value. Drawing on S-D logic and Venkatesh et al. (2006), I argue that experience value is subordinate to sign value. The experience value means that customers can materialize sign value into experience; with the help of the value proposition in a practice the customers can enact desired cultural discourses. The customers can anticipate whether or not sign value is likely to materialize into experience before purchase via cues, such as via advertising and recommendations. If the customers have prior knowledge or experience of the skills and knowledge of the suppliers, they use this knowledge as an indication for the experience value. The customers can actively search for information in order to become convinced that the proposed sign value will materialize into experience. This is well evidenced by countless online forums where peers share their use experiences. When the customers, based on their subjective interpretation, experience value in their practices as the value propositions promised, value becomes co-created. However, this is not what happens in real life where consumers tend to accept value propositions which disappoint them in use (e.g. Bougie et al., 2003).

##### 4.1.3. Resources

According to Vargo and Lusch (2008) applied operant resources, that is, specialized knowledge and skills, are the fundamental bases for exchange where offerings are the distributors of firms' operant resources for customers' use. As the primary source of value of the value propositions is their sign value and ability to materialize it into customer experience, it is logical to argue as follows: it is the meanings of the value propositions which inform the customers whether or not to benefit from the firms' skills and knowledge, and how they want to benefit from them. At the same time, the customers are dependent on the firms' operant resources which make the value propositions available for them. In most cases,

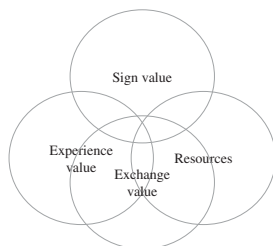


Fig. 1. Value propositions as experienced by customers.

the customers are not skilled enough or lack other relevant resources such as time so that they could materialize their desired sign value into experience by themselves. Therefore, the customers are willing to accept the value propositions proposed by firms (Arnould, 2005).

#### 4.1.4. Exchange value

Exchange value refers to the financial and non-financial sacrifices of a value proposition that are required to integrate an offering with other customers' resources, in order to materialize desired sign value. The purchase of an offering indicates that the customers accept the value proposition. The exchange value is always subordinate to the sign value and experience value; it is not worth the customers accepting the value proposition when the exchange value is not likely to exceed them. Notice that customers can represent more than one stakeholder groups. In this case, the financial sacrifice can be shared by all stakeholder groups or covered by one customer only. For example, an employer can sponsor its employees' fitness practices which benefit them both. Furthermore, the accepted exchange value manifests how much the sign value and its anticipated materialization into experience are worth for the customers. Finally, the exchange value manifests and signifies the value of applied skills and knowledge used for materializing the sign value into the customers' experience. For example, a high price signifies and manifests the prestigious image and excellent cooking skills of a luxury restaurant.

Like experiencing value (Holbrook, 1999) experiencing a value proposition is a relativistic experience. Customers compare value propositions against one another. If the sign and experience value of different value propositions are evaluated as equal, the customers can bargain. As a result, the exchange value can be significantly lower than the sign and experience value. In this specific case, the exchange value does not manifest to the importance of the value proposition in the customers' value creation. Finally, as earlier discussed, the value propositions are evaluated idiosyncratically. As a result, the desired sign value of the same value proposition varies from context to context. Therefore, the accepted exchange value for the customers also varies by context.

#### 4.2. Implication from the value co-creation design perspective: Value propositions as design architecture for reciprocal sign value, experience value, exchange value, and resource integration

Certain S-D logic informed researchers (e.g. Ballantyne et al., 2011; Cova and Salle, 2008; Payne et al., 2005) emphasize that value propositions need to contribute to reciprocal value creation. Therefore, the value propositions have been conceptualized as an interactive process and dialog of crafting reciprocal value promises (Ballantyne et al., 2011; Payne et al., 2005). In this way the value propositions facilitate value co-creation among different stakeholders in the value network (Payne et al., 2005). Co-crafting reciprocal value propositions contributes to the achieving of mutual benefits from the resource integration. I argue that customer value is still a prerequisite for value co-creation in most cases in modern markets where monopolies are seldom and cartels forbidden. Unless the anticipated sign value and its expected materialization into customer experience exceed the exchange value for the customers, they will not accept the value proposition and thus there will be no value co-creation in the first place.

However, at the same time, value propositions need to address and materialize the desirable cultural discourses and the goals of the other stakeholders, such as marketers and their suppliers. Otherwise these stakeholders are not willing or able to invest their knowledge and skills in co-designing the value propositions with/for their customers in the long run. Consequently, from the value co-creation design perspective, this study introduces the value

propositions as design architecture for reciprocal sign value, experience value, exchange value, and resource integration.

The findings of this study suggest that designing reciprocal value propositions can take at least three paths. The first path focuses on understanding how existing value propositions could better materialize desirable cultural discourses, such as cultural ideals, into customer experience in those practices where the value propositions are currently used. For example, a food marketer could aim at creating a ready-made food value proposition which addresses and materializes all dimensions of the food ideal. The second path takes a cultural ideal and a relating identity project as a starting point for designing value propositions. For example, a food marketer could aim at helping parents to enact their good parent project better than with the help of current value propositions. This would mean investigating how the parents enact their good parent projects across practices which influence their children's wellbeing. As an outcome, the food marketer could propose to parents non-food related value propositions in non-food related practices. The third path starts by taking current offering as a starting point for enhancing value co-creation and envisioning in which new customer practices it could be integrated. A marketer perceives markets as customer practices. For example, a contract catering firm could perceive a workplace restaurant as firms' spatial resource for carrying work-related practices, such as a meeting.

Irrespective of the chosen design path, the marketer needs to understand how it can help its customers to better materialize sign value into experience in customer practices. This means understanding what type of sign value customers want to experience in their practices and what obstacles they then face. Thus the design of experience value translates to planning which kind of resources need to be integrated and how so that the customers can materialize the sign value into customer experience. The planning acknowledges that the exchange value cannot exceed the other two value elements. McCracken (2005, p. 175) suggests perceiving marketing as 'meaning management'. Effective marketing and branding is about addressing valuable cultural meanings or cultural contradictions. This study adds a practical resource management dimension to the abstract meaning management; the marketers need to facilitate resource integration so that desired cultural discourses, such as cultural ideals, can be materialized into customers' lived experience in different practices.

Resource integration planning includes the practices of the marketer and a larger value network. It is about identifying stakeholders who are needed to design and materialize the value proposition so that the customers can experience the desired sign value. At this stage at the latest, value proposition design includes other participants beyond customers. At the very least they usually look for financial benefits, which has implications for the design of the exchange value. The exchange value needs to be high enough so that it makes sense for a firm and other stakeholders to participate in value co-creation. At the same time, the exchange value must not exceed the sign and experience value because it is not worth making non-financial sacrifices and paying more or than what the sign and experience value are worth for the customers. It is worth noticing that stakeholders can and do enter value co-creation for other benefits than financial benefits only. In the ideal case, the involved stakeholders experience improved value through co-creation according to their subjective standards informed by cultural discourses and practices.

## 5. Conclusions

By contextualizing the concept of a value proposition in consumer practices, this study aims to contribute to marketing theory, especially to the discussion within S-D logic, in four ways. Firstly,

this study extends understanding on the socio-cultural and situational character of value propositions, value creation and value co-creation. It links the generic benefits and sacrifices of the value propositions to the consumers' practices where the consumers try to enact desirable cultural discourses, such as cultural ideals, by integrating their available resources with offerings. Consequently, this study pinpoints what the essence of the value propositions is in the customers' real-life contexts: the ability of offerings to help the customers to enact desirable cultural discourses into experience in practices. Hence, from the customers' perspective, the study constructs the value propositions as firms' proposals which integrate sign value, experience value, exchange value and resources.

Secondly, informed by Venkatesh et al. (2006) and S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2008), this study integrates three different value concepts: sign value, experience value and exchange value as customers' decision-making criteria for accepting value propositions. By introducing the experience value and the exchange value as the derivatives of the sign value, this study conceptually captures the customers' value emphasis. As a result, this study directs the theoretical debate from the exchange value (of goods-dominant logic) versus the value-in-context or use value (of the service-dominant logic) to the primacy of sign value. Thereby this study extends current theorizing (Kowalkowski, 2011) on how circumstances both on the seller and buyer side influence the value emphasis of exchange: exchange value versus use value.

Thirdly, this conceptual investigation highlights the primacy of cultural discourses and practices in resource integration and exchange. The cultural discourses and practices inform customers which meanings of value propositions, and thus which value propositions, are desirable and thereby guide the customers' purchasing and resource integration decisions. In addition, they guide resource integration in the firms' sphere. They inform firms which skills and knowledge are needed for designing and materializing value propositions which their customers will value and accept and which will eventually benefit firms themselves. Hence, the study suggests that cultural discourses and practices inform firms where to specialize in terms of skills and knowledge. Furthermore, they guide how different actors as potential beneficiaries are willing to co-operate with each other.

Consequently, from the value co-creation design perspective, the study constructs the value propositions as design architecture for reciprocal sign value, experience value, exchange value, and resource integration. Thereby it offers firms a conceptual tool for designing more effective value propositions where the effectiveness refers to the ability of the value propositions to address and materialize desirable cultural discourses in customers' (and other beneficiaries') in practices. In addition, by perceiving markets as customer practices, this study helps firms to extend their market view from the current use situations of their value propositions into other customer practices where value can be co-created. Aligned with Karababa and Kjeldgaard (2013), this study perceives the value of an offering as a dynamic, context-dependent, intersubjective and subjective notion that is constantly co-created and created by customers and other involved stakeholders.

Finally, this study emphasizes the primacy of customers in value co-creation. It is the customers who accept and use value propositions in their own ways irrespective of firms' plans. Value is created by customers for customers (Heinonen et al., 2010). Vargo and Lusch (2008) suggest that value becomes co-created when customers use offerings. Compared to Vargo and Lusch's (2008) view on value co-creation, this study takes a narrower perspective. It suggests that value becomes co-created only when the customers can enact desirable cultural discourses in practices by integrating firms' offerings with their other resources – and as a result experience value.

The study has various limitations which offer scope for future research. First, even though this study uses the empirical evidence of prior research, it is a conceptual examination. Therefore, a logical continuation would be to examine empirically how consumers experience and evaluate value propositions in their practices. This could include operationalizing the value proposition concept to a construct. Second, it would be valuable to extend the empirical examination from consumers as customers to all the beneficiaries in a specific value network, in order to learn more from the contextualized value proposition. This study recognizes that customers cannot always materialize the desired value by integrating value propositions with their other resources. An empirical examination of value proposition failures would be a valuable approach to learn more from the contextualized value proposition and from customer learning. This study does not investigate post-consumption experiences. Nor does this study focus on examining value propositions as service interactions in practices even though S-D logic emphasizes the relational nature of value co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). These themes represent relevant future research areas. Finally, this study acknowledges the existence of brands and value propositions as concepts but does not investigate their relationship. Studying theoretically and empirically how these concepts are related to one another would contribute to marketing theory.

## References

- Aaker, D.A., 1995. *Building Strong Brands*. The Free Press, New York.
- Arnould, E.J., 2005. Animating the big middle. *Journal of Retailing* 81 (2), 89–96.
- Arnould, E.J., Thompson, C.J., 2005. Consumer culture theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 (4), 868–882.
- Arnould, E.J., 2006. Service-dominant logic and consumer culture theory: natural allies in an emerging paradigm. *Marketing Theory* 6 (3), 293–298.
- Arnould, E.J., Price, L.L., Malshe, A., 2006. Toward a cultural resource – based theory of the customer. In: Lusch, R.F., Vargo, S.L. (Eds.), *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions*. M.S. Sharpe, New York, pp. 91–104.
- Ballantyne, D., Varey, R.J., 2006. Creating value-in-use through marketing interaction: the exchange logic of relating, communicating and knowing. *Marketing Theory* 6 (3), 335–348.
- Ballantyne, D., Frow, P., Varey, R., Payne, A., 2011. Value propositions as communication practice: taking a wider view. *Industrial Marketing Management* 40 (2), 202–210.
- Belk, R.W., 1975. Situational variables and consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research* 2 (3), 157–164.
- Belk, R.W., 1988. Possessions and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research* 15, 139–168 (September).
- Belk, R.W., Costa, J., 1998. The mountain man myth: a contemporary consuming fantasy. *Journal of Consumer Research* 25, 218–240 (December).
- Bougie, R., Pieters, R., Zeelenberg, M., 2003. Angry customers don't come back, they get back: the experience and behavioral implications of anger and dissatisfaction in services. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 3 (4), 377–393.
- Bourdieu, P., 1990. *The Logic of Practice* translated by Richard Nice. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Chandler, J.D., Vargo, S.L., 2011. Contextualization and value-in-context: how context frames exchange. *Marketing Theory* 11 (1), 35–49.
- Cova, B., Salle, R., 2008. Marketing solutions in accordance with the S-D logic: co-creating value with customer network actors. *Industrial Marketing Management* 37, 270–277.
- Day, G., 2006. Achieving advantage with a service-dominant logic. In: Lusch, R.F., Vargo, S.L. (Eds.), *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate and Directions*. M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, pp. 68–85.
- Drucker, P.F., 1977. *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*. Pan, London.
- Edvardsson, B., Tronvoll, B., Gruber, T., 2011. Expanding understanding on service exchange and value co-creation: a social construction approach. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 39, 327–339.
- Epp, A.M., Price, L.L., 2011. Designing solutions around customer network identity goals. *Journal of Marketing* 75, 36–54 (March).
- Fairclough, N., 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Fairclough, N., 2005. Discourse analysis in organization studies: the case for critical realism. *Organization Studies* 26 (6), 915–939.
- Firat, F.A., Venkatesh, A., 1995. Liberatory postmodernism and the reenchantment of consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research* 22, 239–267 (December).
- Fischer, E., Otnes, C.C., Tuncay, L., 2007. Pursuing parenthood: integrating cultural and cognitive perspectives on persistent goal striving. *Journal of Consumer Research* 34, 425–440 (December).
- Fleetwood, S., 2005. Ontology in organization and management studies: a critical realist perspective. *Organization* 12 (2), 197–222.

- Flint, D.J., Mentzer, J.T., 2006. Striving for integrated value chain management. In: Lusch, R.F., Vargo, S.L. (Eds.), *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate and Directions*. M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, pp. 139–149.
- Frow, P., Payne, A., 2011. A stakeholder perspective of the value proposition concept. *European Journal of Marketing* 45 (1/2), 223–240.
- Grönroos, C., 2007. In Search of a New Logic for Marketing. *Foundations of Contemporary Theory*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd, London.
- Grönroos, C., 2008. Service logic revisited: who creates value? And who co-creates? *European Business Review* 20 (4), 298–314.
- Grönroos, C., 2009. Marketing as promise management: regaining customer management for marketing. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* 24 (5/6), 351–359.
- Grönroos, C., 2011. Value co-creation in service logic: a critical analysis. *Marketing Theory* 11 (3), 279–301.
- Gutman, J., 1982. A means-end chain model based on consumer categorization processes. *Journal of Marketing* 46, 60–72 (Spring).
- Heinonen, K., Strandvik, T., Mickelsson, K.J., Edvardsson, B., Sundström, E., Andersson, P., 2010. A customer-dominant logic of service. *Journal of Service Management* 21 (4), 531–548.
- Hibbert, S., Winklhofer, H., Temerak, M.S., 2012. Customers as resource integrators: toward a model of customer learning. *Journal of Service Research* 15 (3), 247–261.
- Holt, D.B., Thompson, C.J., 2004. Man-of-action heroes: the pursuit of heroic masculinity in everyday consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, 425–440 (September).
- Holbrook, M., 1999. Introduction to consumer value. In: Holbrook, M. (Ed.), *Consumer Value: A Framework for Analysis and Research*. Routledge, London, pp. 1–28.
- Holbrook, M., 2006. Consumption experience, customer value, and subjective personal introspection: an illustrative photographic essay. *Journal of Business Research* 59, 714–725.
- Holttinen, H., 2010a. Social practices as units of value creation: theoretical underpinnings and implications. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences* 2 (1), 95–112.
- Holttinen, H., 2010b. Meanings guiding value co-creation in practices: a critical discourse analysis informed approach to a weekday dinner practice. In: *Forum on Markets and Marketing*. University of Cambridge, England.
- Johnson, M.W., Christensen, C.M., Kagermann, H., 2008. Reinventing Your Business Model. *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 51–59, December.
- Johnson, P., Duberley, J., 2000. *Understanding Management Research*. Sage, London.
- Kaplan, R.S., Norton, D.P., 2004. Measuring the Strategic Readiness of Intangible Assets. *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 52–63, February.
- Karababa, E., Kjeldgaard, D., 2013. Value in marketing: toward sociocultural perspectives. *Marketing Theory*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1470593113500385>.
- Kates, S.M., 2004. The dynamics of brand legitimacy: an interpretive study in the gay men's community. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, 455–464 (September).
- Keeney, R.L., 1999. The value of internet commerce to the customer. *Management Science* 45 (4), 533–542.
- Khalifa, A.S., 2004. Customer value: a review of recent literature and an integrative configuration. *Management Decision* 43 (5), 645–666.
- Kleine III, R.E., Kernan, J.B., 1991. Contextual influences on the meanings ascribed to ordinary consumption object. *Journal of Consumer Research* 18, 311–324 (December).
- Korkman, O., Storbacka, K., Harald, B., 2010. Practices as markets: value co-creation in e-invoicing. *Australasian Marketing Journal* 18 (4), 236–247.
- Kowalkowski, C., 2011. Dynamics of value propositions: insights from service-dominant logic. *European Journal of Marketing* 45 (1/2), 277–294.
- Lanning, M.J., 1998. *Delivering Profitable Value: A Revolutionary Framework to Accelerate Growth, Generate Wealth and Rediscover the Heart of Business*. Perseus, New York, NY.
- Levina, N., Ross, J., 2003. From the vendor's perspective: exploring the value proposition in information technology outsourcing. *MIS Quarterly* 23 (3), 331–364.
- Levy, S.J., 1959. Symbols for Sale. *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 117–124 (July–August).
- Lusch, R.F., Vargo, S.L., O'Brien, M., 2007. Competing through service: insights from service-dominant logic. *Journal of Retailing* 83 (1), 5–18.
- Lusch, R.F., Vargo, S.L., Tanniru, M., 2009. Service, value networks and learning. *Journal of the Academy of the Marketing Science* 73 (1), 19–31.
- Maglio, P., Spohrer, J., 2013. A service science perspective on business model innovation. *Industrial Marketing Management* 42, 665–670.
- Martin, D.M., Schouten, J.W., McAlexander, J.H., 2006. Claiming the throttle: multiple femininities in a hyper-masculine subculture. *Consumption, Markets and Culture* 9 (3), 171–205.
- McCracken, G., 1986. Culture and consumption: a theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods. *Journal of Consumer Research* 13, 71–84.
- McCracken, G., 2005. *Culture and Consumption: Markets, Meaning and Brand Management*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis.
- Mick, D.G., 1986. Consumer research and semiotics: exploring the morphology of signs, symbols, and significance. *Journal of Consumer Research* 2, 196–213 (September).
- Mick, D.G., Buhl, C., 1992. A meaning-based model of advertising experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research* 19, 317–338 (December).
- Nightingale, D.J., Comby, J., 2002. Social constructionism as ontology. *Theory and Psychology* 12 (5), 701–713.
- Overby, J.W., Woodruff, R.B., Fisher Gardial, S., 2005. The influence of culture upon consumers' desired value perceptions: a research agenda. *Marketing Theory* 5 (2), 139–163.
- Payne, A., Ballantyne, D., Christopher, M., 2005. A stakeholder approach to relationship marketing strategy: the development and use of the 'six markets model. *European Journal of Marketing* 39 (7/8), 855–871.
- Payne, A., Storbacka, K., Frow, P., 2008. Managing the co-creation of value. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science* 36 (1), 83–96.
- Peñaloza, L., 2000. The commodification of the American West: marketers' production of cultural meanings at the trade show. *Journal of Marketing* 64, 82–109 (October).
- Peñaloza, L., 2001. Consuming the American West: animating cultural meaning and memory at a stock show and rodeo. *Journal of Consumer Research* 28, 369–398 (December).
- Peñaloza, L., Mish, M., 2011. The nature and processes of market co-creation in triple bottom line firms: leveraging insights from consumer culture theory and service – dominant logic. *Marketing Theory* 11 (1), 9–34.
- Pralhad, C.K., Ramaswamy, V., 2004. Co-creation of experience: the next practice in value creation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 18 (3), 4–14.
- Rintamäki, T., Kuusela, H., Mitronen, L., 2007. Identifying competitive customer value propositions in retailing. *Managing Service Quality* 17 (6), 621–634.
- Rokeach, M., 1973. *The Nature of Human Values*. Free Press, New York.
- Sánchez-Fernández, R., Iniesta-Bonillo, M.A., 2007. The concept of perceived value: a systematic review of the research. *Marketing Theory* 7 (4), 427–451.
- Schatzki, T.R., 1996. *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Schatzki, T.R., 2001. Introduction: practice theory. In: Schatzki, T.R., Knorr Cetina, K., von Savigny, E. (Eds.), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. Routledge, London and New York, pp. 1–14.
- Schatzki, T.R., 2003. A new sociologist social ontology. *Philosophy of Social Sciences* 33 (2), 174–202.
- Schatzki, T.R., 2005. Peripheral vision: the sites of organizations. *Organization Studies* 26 (3), 465–484.
- Schau, H.J., Muñiz Jr., A.M., Arnold, E.J., 2009a. How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing* 73 (5), 31–51.
- Schau, H.J., Gilly, M.C., Wolfingbarger, M.F., 2009b. Consumer identity renaissance: the resurgence of identity-inspired consumption in retirement. *Journal of Consumer Research* 36, 255–276 (August).
- Schouten, J.W., McAlexander, J.H., 1995. Subcultures of consumption: an ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research* 22, 43–61 (June).
- Schwartz, S.H., 1992. Universals in the content and structure of values: theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. In: Zanna, M. (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (25). Academic Press, New York, pp. 1–65.
- Sims-Schouten, W., Willig, C., 2007. Critical realism in discourse analysis: a presentation of a systematic method of analysis using women's talk of motherhood, childcare and female employment as an example. *Theory and Psychology* 1 (1), 101–124.
- Thompson, C.J., 2004. Marketplace mythology and discourses of power. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, 162–180 (June).
- Thompson, C.J., Tambyah, S.K., 1999. Trying to be cosmopolitan. *Journal of Consumer Research* 26, 214–241 (December).
- Vargo, S.L., Lusch, R.F., 2004. Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing* 68 (1), 1–17.
- Vargo, S.L., Lusch, R.F., 2008. Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 36 (1), 1–10.
- Venkatesh, A., Peñaloza, L., Firat, A.F., 2006. The market as a sign system and the logic of the market. In: Lusch, R.F., Vargo, S.L. (Eds.), *The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate and Directions*. M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, pp. 251–265.
- Warde, A., 2005. Consumption and theories of practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5 (2), 131–153.
- Wodak, Ruth., 2008. Introduction: discourse studies – important concepts and terms. In: Wodak, R., Krzyzanowski, M. (Eds.), *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire and New York, pp. 1–29.
- Woodall, T., 2003. Conceptualizing 'value for the customer': an attributional, structural and dispositional analysis. *Academy of Marketing Science Review* 12, 1–42.
- Woodruff, R.B., 1997. Customer value: the next source for competitive advantage. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 25 (2), 139–153.
- Zeithaml, V.A., 1988. Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: a means-end model and synthesis of evidence. *Journal of Marketing* 52 (3), 2–22.

**EKONOMI OCH SAMHÄLLE**  
Skrifter utgivna vid Svenska handelshögskolan

**ECONOMICS AND SOCIETY**  
Publications of the Hanken School of Economics

230. ANDREAS PERSSON: Profitable Customer Management: a Study in Retail Banking. Helsinki 2011.
231. MATHIAS HÖGLUND: Microfoundations of HRM Effects: Individual and Collective Attitudes and Performance. Helsinki 2011.
232. ANETTE SÖDERQVIST: Opportunity Exploration and Exploitation in International New Ventures. A Study of Relationships' Involvement in Early Entrepreneurial and Internationalisation Events. Helsinki 2011.
233. OSKARI LEHTONEN: An Examination of How Entrepreneurs Can Improve Their Position in Relationship to Investors. Helsinki 2011.
234. IMO ANTAI: Operationalizing Supply Chain vs. Supply Chain Competition. Helsinki 2011.
235. DMITRI MELKUMOV: Towards Explaining the Tasks and Roles of the Boards of Directors: The Role of Contextual, Behavioural and Social Identification Factors. Helsinki 2011.
236. CHARLOTTA NIEMISTÖ: Work/Family Reconciliation: Corporate Management, Family Policies, and Gender Equality in the Finnish Context. Helsinki 2011.
237. PAUL VILHO: Strategic Sales Process Adaptation: Relationship Orientation of the Sales Process in a Business-to-Business Context. Helsinki 2011.
238. KHALID BHATTI: Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing in Strategic Alliances: The Role of Knowledge Sharing as Strategic Control Behavior among Multinational Enterprises. Helsinki 2011.
239. STEFAN GRANQVIST: Effektivvärdering inom företagandebildning. Helsingfors 2011.
240. HEIKKI RANNIKKO: Early Development of New Technology-Based Firms. A Longitudinal Analysis of New Technology-Based Firms' Development from Population Level and Firm Level Perspectives. Helsinki 2012.
241. PAULINA JUNNI: Knowledge Transfer in Acquisitions: A Socio-Cultural Perspective. Helsinki 2012.
242. HENRIKA FRANCK: Ethics in Strategic Management: An Inquiry into Otherness of a Strategy Process. Helsinki 2012.
243. SEPPO LAUKKANEN: Making Sense of Ambidexterity. A Process View of the Renewing Effects of Innovation Activities in a Multinational Enterprise. Helsinki 2012.
244. MARKUS WARTIOVAARA: Values and Freedom: An Inquiry into the Rise and Fall of Billionaire Wealth. Helsinki 2012.

245. SAINT KUTTU: Essays on Volatility and Time Varying Conditional Jumps in Thinly Traded African Financial Markets. Helsinki 2012.
246. ROSA MARIA BALLARDINI: Intellectual Property Protection for Computer Programs. Developments, Challenges, and Pressures for Change. Helsinki 2012.
247. VIOLETTA KHOREVA: Gender Inequality, Gender Pay Gap, and Pay Inequity. Perceptions and Reactions in Finnish Society and Workplaces. Helsinki 2012.
248. VIRPI SORSA: Discourse and the Social Practice of Strategy. Of Interaction, Texts, and Power Effects. Helsinki 2012.
249. XING LIU: Empirical Research on Spatial and Time Series Properties of Agricultural Commodity Prices. Helsinki 2012.
250. ROLANDO MARIO TOMASINI PONCE: Informal Learning Framework for Secondment: Logistics Lessons from Disaster Relief Operations. Helsinki 2012.
251. LINDA SCHOLLENBERG: Essays on the Economics of Environmental and Sustainability Labelling. Helsinki 2013.
252. NADER SHAHZAD VIRK: Explanations for Finnish Stock Returns with Fundamental and Anomalous Risks. Helsinki 2013.
253. TAMARA GALKINA: Entrepreneurial Networking: Intended and Unintended Processes. Helsinki 2013.
254. JOHANNA ARANTOLA-HATTAB: Family as a Customer Experiencing Co-Created Service Value. Helsinki 2013.
255. ARGYRIS ARGYROU: Developing Quantitative Models for Auditing Journal Entries. Helsinki 2013.
256. JAKOB STORÅ: Earnings Management Through IFRS Goodwill Impairment Accounting: In the Context of Incentives Created by Earnings Targets. Helsinki 2013.
257. LILIA HYTTINEN: Pharmaceuticals' Strategic Interactions: Three Essays in Corporate Finance. Helsinki 2013.
258. TOMMY OLIN: Det sociala kapitalets inverkan på företagande: En studie i förutsättningarna för företagande i Purmo 1945 – 1976. Helsingfors 2013.
259. JONNA LOUVRIER: Diversity, Difference and Diversity Management: A Contextual and Interview Study of Managers and Ethnic Minority Employees in Finland and France. Helsinki 2013.
260. FRANS SAXÉN: Essays on the Economics of Retailing: Payments, Finance and Vertical Restraints. Helsinki 2013.
261. HILAL ANWAR BUTT: Asset Pricing in Small Sized Developed Markets. Helsinki 2013.
262. PAUL CATANI: Misspecification and Bootstrap Tests in Multivariate Time Series Models with Conditional Heteroskedasticity. Helsinki 2013.

HELI HOLTINEN

# CULTURAL IDEALS, PRACTICES AND VALUE PROPOSITIONS IN CONSUMER EVERYDAY VALUE CREATION

This thesis investigates consumer value creation as an everyday sociocultural and situational phenomenon. The first objective was to understand and conceptualize how cultural ideals and practices inform consumer everyday value creation. I examined empirically how consumers enact cultural ideals in mundane consumption in the empirical context of a weekday dinner practice among Finnish households. The second objective was to contextualize a value proposition concept in customers' practices. The approach consisted of a theoretical investigation of how consumers experience and evaluate value propositions in their practices in order to draw theoretical implications. Integrating complementing knowledge from S-D logic, Consumer Culture Theory, and Practice Theory provided me insightful theoretical lenses for the examinations.

The findings highlight the primacy of cultural ideals and practices in consumer everyday value creation and value co-creation. They inform the consumers regarding which value propositions are desirable and thereby guide resource integration and thus purchasing decisions. This thesis portrays consumers as pragmatic, flexible and fragmented value-creating agents. It demonstrates how the consumers enact and compromise cultural ideals and identity projects in relation to practices. They compromise identity projects and cultural ideals in some practice(s) but not across practices. As the practices serve different ends for the consumers at different times, the meaning of the practices is constantly re-created by consumers. As resource integrators the consumers accept and use value propositions in the practices in their own ways irrespec-

tive of firms' intentions, in order to enact cultural ideals. Value becomes co-created only when the consumers (as customers) can enact cultural ideals by integrating firms' offerings with their other resources - and as a result experience value.

While this thesis illuminates the interplay among cultural ideals, practices, value propositions, and consumer action, it offers a cultural and practice-theoretical conceptualization of how consumers, material objects and a sociocultural environment interact and co-create each other at a certain time in history and in the consumers' lives. The findings represent the value of an offering as a dynamic, context-dependent, intersubjective and subjective notion that is constantly co-created and re-created by customers.

This thesis introduces firms a sociocultural and practice-theoretical approach for the new offering development process. It means perceiving and investigating customers' lives and value-creating activities as a mosaic of practices in which the customers try to enact cultural ideals by integrating value propositions with their other resources. By contextualizing the value propositions in the customers' practices, the thesis helps firms to improve the effectiveness of the new offering development process. Effectiveness here refers to the ability of the firms to create offerings that are both culturally and practically desirable for the customers. By addressing the cultural ideals and the practical realities of everyday life, effective offerings make it possible for the customers to enact the cultural ideals in their everyday lives.



ISBN 978-952-232-212-8 (printed)  
ISBN 978-952-232-213-5 (PDF)  
ISSN-L 0424-7256  
ISSN 0424-7256 (printed)  
ISSN 2242-699X (PDF)

EDITA PRIMA LTD, HELSINKI

**HANKEN**  
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

**HELSINKI**  
ARKADIANKATU 22, P.O. BOX 479  
00101 HELSINKI, FINLAND  
TEL +358 (0)9 431 331. FAX +358 (0)9 431 33 333

**VAASA**  
KAUPPAPIISTIKKO 2, P.O. BOX 287  
65101 VAASA, FINLAND  
TEL +358 (0)6 3533 700. FAX +358 (0)6 3533 703

PUBL@HANKEN.FI  
HANKEN.FI/DHANKEN