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**Exploring Online Value Destruction in Consumer-to-
Consumer Engagement**

By
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Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Adam Smith Business School

College of Social Sciences

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Abstract

The current study advances the understanding of value destruction by conceptualising consumer-to-consumer online value destruction, explaining why and how consumers engage in it, and its consequences. Consumer empowerment is prominent in the utilisation of digital platforms. Engaged consumers seek information and share experiences with others, but their engagement in consumption-related activities online, such as product reviewing, can destroy value rather than create it. Value destruction research mostly focuses on provider-involving interactions, which invokes a service orientation. By employing consumer-dominant logic, this study's approach proposes a reorientation in value destruction conceptualisation to capture consumer-oriented insights which broadens perspective on the notion.

This study adopts a multi-method qualitative design by employing netnography to examine consumers' online value-destroying behaviour in Amazon reviews and consumer-created Facebook pages. This was followed by 18 semi-structured interviews with consumers who had engaged in online value-destroying behaviour.

This study understands the nature, drivers, forms and consequences of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction and introduces the factors potentially influencing online value destruction. It conceptualises consumer-to-consumer online value destruction as a process that reveals the roles of consumer engagement dimensions (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) before, during and after online value destruction. A key contribution is proposing that there is a positive element within the process of value destruction that is built on consumer collegiality and wellbeing. The current study also offers managerial implications and recommendations for mitigating and handling online value destruction.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Noha Refaie

Signature:

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores online value destruction in consumer-to-consumer online engagement activities. The internet has revolutionised the way consumers and businesses interact within and outside the service ecosystem. Consumers actively utilise digital platforms, mostly third-party websites like social networking sites and review aggregators, to communicate with others, express themselves and seek information. They engage in a range of consumption-related online activities such as reviewing, which, especially when negative, may be destructive to value. For example, consumers sometimes share their negative experiences with a company by writing reviews on a review site or posting on social media. This may be destructive to value from the perception of other consumers or potential consumers who read those negative posts. Looking at negative content about a company or a brand may negatively impact the consumers' perception of that company's value proposition, which may lead to avoiding a purchase or even boycotting. Value destruction can then happen when consumers that were initially interested in the brand, perhaps due to value-creating activities, cease to be interested or refrain from making a purchase because they have seen negative brand-related content from other consumers which has diminished their value perception.

Given the speed and user-friendliness of online platforms, companies need to understand what those online value-destroying behaviours between consumers mean for their businesses. Considering the increased connectedness between consumers, the findings of this study are expected to assist managers in understanding, mitigating and dealing with online value-destroying behaviour. This study strives to do so by offering a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of the phenomenon of value destruction between consumers in the online context, specifically through the identification of a process with antecedents and consequences of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the thesis and the phenomenon under investigation. It begins by addressing the research background and focus, followed by the research purpose and objectives. This chapter then briefly demonstrates the research method adopted and the expected contributions. Finally, the chapter closes with an overview of the thesis structure, briefly describing what each chapter in the study addresses.

1.2 Research Background and Focus

In the connected world nowadays, academics and practitioners seem to agree on stakeholders' (including consumers) empowerment (Morrongiello *et al.*, 2017). With a simple click the average person can find, compare and choose the top market offers, evaluate and review them by posting on several platforms, and communicate with other users on third-party websites. This is an era of empowered consumers (Bernoff and Schadler, 2010) who have the tools to assist each other through cooperation and interaction via digital platforms, sometimes for the maintenance or restoration of equity and fairness in the marketplace (Morrongiello, 2017). Consumer engagement potential and the consumer role are expected to grow with fast-growing online platforms (Dessart *et al.*, 2016; Harrigan *et al.*, 2018). Consumers are also empowered by third-party websites, such as social media and review aggregators, as they use them to instantly share all their negative brand-related experiences with others (Ward and Ostrom, 2006).

According to Labrecque *et al.* (2013), consumer power comes from four successive sources classified in two individual-based power sources (demand-based and information-based) and two network-based power sources (network-based and crowd-based). The evolution of social networks and the internet enabled consumers to shift their power sources from individual-based towards more dynamic, connected and other-oriented network-based power sources. Power sources are not mutually exclusive and newer power sources coexist with the prior ones; they are complementary and are consecutively built to add to one another. Therefore, the most comprehensive form of consumers' empowerment is crowd-based power because it reflects the other three power sources and more.

Previously, consumer power was linked to aggregate consumer demand; then this evolved into information-based power, where information became a source of power with the ability to create content and access information. Subsequently, network-based power was in the ability to modify, expand and share the created content across a network. Consumers were then empowered by the ability to use technological resources for the benefit of individuals and groups (Labrecque *et al.*, 2013). Accordingly, the current study is concerned with consumer crowd-based power because consumer-to-consumer value destruction needs to rely on the highest level of consumer power to facilitate a higher level of destruction using technological resources.

Generally, research has shown that consumers influence each other's experiences through physical and virtual social interactions (Harris and Reynolds, 2003; Kozinets, 1999; Wu, 2007). Consumers nowadays strongly rely on others' experiences for information, guidance, purchase decisions and risk minimisation (Mathwick and Mosteller, 2017). Consumer-to-consumer shared brand-related experiences can significantly influence their choices and opinions about products and services (Lopez-Lopez and Parra, 2016). Specifically, online consumer reviews and shared experiences on individual and group levels are considered key sources of information for consumers and potential consumers (Azer and Alexander, 2018). In return, those consumers and potential consumers sometimes also go back and write about their own consumption experience for others to see and benefit from.

Consumer engagement as a concept is significant in understanding the growing consumer role, influencing consumer experiences and value judgements, as well as business performance (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2016). Consumer engagement has recently been defined as "*a consumer's positively/negatively valenced cognitive, emotional, and behavioural investments during or related to interactions with focal objects or agents*" (Bowden *et al.*, 2017, p.880). Consumers engage online with organisations and other consumers. Consumer online engagement activities are highly recognised in literature as a source of value creation (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). Being one of the principal concepts in marketing (Holbrook, 1999), consumer value creation involves an overall improvement in consumers' wellbeing upon the purchase or consumption of a product or service (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Vargo and Lusch, 2008a). Although consumer engagement and value creation

are distinct research streams, they are still linked because consumer engagement is a representation of the shift in value creation from being a provider's activity to the inclusion of consumers in the process. Engaged consumers can be value creators who aid in the value creation process for businesses, especially in the digital context (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). The concepts of consumer engagement and value co-creation have been investigated from different perspectives in marketing research (Van Doorn, 2011; Verhoef *et al.*, 2010; Vivek *et al.*, 2012; Vivek *et al.*, 2014). However, marketing literature has concentrated more on the positive side of engagement and that is a criticism that has appeared in the consumer engagement literature (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010).

Linking consumer engagement to value creation is the foundation upon which most value destruction research is built. It has been argued that consumers' online engagement activities can be value-destroying rather than creating (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). Recent research (for example, Quach and Thaichon, 2017) has classified the creation and destruction of value as outcomes of engagement. The current study builds on this foundational idea or argument of consumer engagement being value-destroying rather than only value-creating and accordingly, the initial link between consumer engagement and value creation is essential in this research.

Despite the attention and recent growth of the concept, studies investigating value destruction in the online context are still relatively rare compared to those looking at value destruction offline (Frau *et al.*, 2018; Neuhofer, 2016; Quach and Thaichon, 2017). The growth of digital and interactive media reflects the importance of examining online value destruction. Particularly, this increase in digital connectedness has also provided a medium for new forms of negative online consumer behaviour that can be destructive to value, such as negative electronic word-of-mouth (Bachleda and Berrada-Fathi, 2016; Nam *et al.*, 2018), negative consumer brand engagement (Juric *et al.*, 2016) and negatively valenced influential behaviour (Azer and Alexander, 2018; 2020).

Value destruction can be briefly described as a decline in value for one or more actors resulting from their involvement in direct interactions together (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Engen *et al.*, 2020; Smith, 2013). It has been debated that the

term value destruction should be replaced with value diminution because destruction is a strong word to describe a decline in consumers' value perceptions (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). The current study acknowledges this argument, but when it comes to the online context, value destruction can potentially spread and extend to many consumers. Unlike value destruction in consumer-provider interactions, where value destruction is experienced by one or both parties, consumer-to-consumer online value destruction can be more destructive because of the speed and ease of sharing of the negative content among users. The current study therefore, acknowledges that there is a range for the level of destruction and the term value destruction is preferred here because of the extent of the damage that can potentially be done in the online context.

Most studies addressing value destruction have mainly focused on resource misuse and misalignment (Quach and Thaichon, 2017; Smith, 2013) as well as practices that destroy value (Cabiddu *et al.*, 2019; Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Dolan *et al.*, 2019; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011). Although extant research offers highly valuable insights into value destruction, still, only limited studies have addressed the idea that value destruction process can involve multiple-actor interactions (Dootson *et al.*, 2016; Frau *et al.*, 2018; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). Research has focused more on value destruction in dyadic interactions while broader networks of interactions between multiple actors have been overlooked (Frau *et al.*, 2018; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). However, in the current economy of increasing connectedness, value creation and destruction can be influenced by other actors outside the dyadic interactions within service ecosystems, such as other consumers. Therefore, the dyadic outlook can provide an incomplete understanding of value destruction (Frau *et al.*, 2018), which also limits the comprehension of its potential impact.

Specifically, most of the studies examining the destruction of value have adopted a service-dominant logic (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Järvi *et al.*, 2018; Kashif and Zarkada, 2015; Kirova, 2020; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Smith, 2013; Sthapit and Björk, 2019; Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto, 2019; Sthapit, 2019; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Those studies that adopted a service-dominant logic lens examined the destruction of value in business-to-consumer (for example, Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Kashif and Zarkada, 2015), business-to-business (for example, Prior

and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016), business-to-government or government-to-consumer (Järvi *et al.*, 2018) interactions in the online and offline contexts. Studies of consumer-to-consumer value destruction remain scarce in extant literature (Kim *et al.*, 2019). The current study therefore argues that value can also be destroyed in consumer-to-consumer online interactions on digital platforms. Furthermore, consumer-to-consumer brand-related, value-destroying interactions online have not been fully acknowledged to date.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the notion of value destruction has not yet been examined from a consumer-dominant logic perspective, as most studies on value destruction have adopted a service-dominant logic (for example, Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011) including the study that addressed consumer-to-consumer value destruction (Kim *et al.*, 2019). Adopting a consumer-dominant logic is important in this context because, as mentioned above, consumers can have a high influential power over each other outside the provider ecosystem. This calls for adopting consumer-dominant logic because consumer centrality is key when examining value destruction between consumers and deriving deeper consumer-based insights that may be beyond the scope of service-dominant logic. Precisely, this study capitalises on the idea of a value destruction process in the consumer's social sphere beyond organisational control. It therefore aims to capture consumers' perspective on value destruction and hence adopts the consumer-dominant logic as a lens to examine this phenomenon (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015).

According to Heinonen *et al.* (2010), the conceptualisation of customer-dominant logic is based on consumer centrality, making consumers the primary focus instead of the service provider (as suggested by service-dominant logic). Consumers' dominance also involves their brand-related interactions that are independent from corporate agent relations and that can potentially affect the organisation positively or negatively (Anker *et al.*, 2015). This study follows Anker *et al.* (2015) in adopting the term "consumer-dominant", to refer to the concept previously termed as "customer-dominant" logic by Heinonen *et al.* (2010). The terms "customer" and "consumer" have been used interchangeably in marketing literature. However, more recent literature on value seems to move more towards adopting the term "consumer value" (for example, Holbrook, 2005; 2006) to

describe a broader perspective. Additionally, Anker *et al.* (2015) also clarified that “customer” describes an individual who consensually participates in a value-creating relationship with an organisation; while a “consumer” on the other hand, is not bound to directly engage in an interactive relationship with the provider; however, there is an implication of engagement with provider-supplied entities. Accordingly, the term “consumer” is believed to be more suitable in this study.

Finally, the central phenomenon being investigated in this study has been popularly referred to as “value co-destruction”. However, here the term “value destruction” is preferred rather than “co-destruction” (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). This is because in the context of consumer-to-consumer online interactions, value is not necessarily co-destroyed, because one actor could be solely destroying value while the other actor is only a receptor without actively engaging in destructive behaviour. This study argues that the use of “co-destruction” can be misleading in this context because it implies that the destruction of value in online consumer-to-consumer engagement experiences is always mutual, and this is not the case.

In this study, value destruction is viewed as a subjective notion in consumers’ minds, where the value that a certain object (for example, a brand) used to represent to a consumer diminishes or is destroyed after engaging online with other consumers or becoming exposed to their opinions and experiences. Hence, it examines the online behaviours of value-destroying consumers as agents of value destruction on third-party websites. Third-party websites in this study are viewed as a platform for those agents (consumers) to destroy the value perceptions of other consumers through the ability to post and share with others negative brand-related reviews, comments and content, which are considered to serve as a form of an agency for value destruction. In addition to that, this study focuses on consumer value, but its destruction rather than its creation, from the consumers’ perspective. This study adopts Holbrook’s (2006, p.715) conceptualisation of consumer value, “*Consumer value is an interactive relativistic preference experience*”, which acknowledges interactions and relationships between subjects and objects, which is suitable for studying online engagement experiences where interaction plays an important role.

1.3 Research Purpose and Objectives

The current study brings together the three research streams mentioned above, which are value destruction, consumer engagement and consumer-dominant logic. Precisely, the purpose of this study is to explore the process value destruction in online consumer-to-consumer engagement. The process of value destruction has been examined in service settings within consumer-provider interactions (Smith, 2013). The main emphasis in this study examining value destruction as a process that can occur in consumer-based settings in consumer-to-consumer online interactions. It therefore explores the possible problems with consumers' online engagement with other consumers that can diminish value. Consumers interact online, and it has been suggested that value can be destroyed through interactions or the misuse of resources, which in this case is technology (Neuhofer, 2016; Smith, 2013). Accordingly, this study also aims to better understand the drivers or antecedents of online value destruction among consumers.

Consumer engagement has been conceptualised in literature as a multi-dimensional construct, consisting mainly of three dimensions, which are cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Dessart *et al.*, 2015; Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). This study will therefore examine the dimensionality of the engagement experience, as it aims to reveal the thoughts, feelings and actions of consumers during their engagement in the process of value destruction. The study also aims to propose possible consequences of the value destruction between customers in the digital context. Accordingly, the primary objective is to explore and understand the process of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction, which this study aims to achieve through addressing the following secondary aims:

1. To understand the reasons that drive consumers to engage in online value-destroying behaviour.
2. To examine how value is destroyed during consumer-to-consumer online interactions.
3. To explore which online engagement dimensions (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) are active when consumers engage in online value destruction.
4. To explore the consequences of online value destruction.

1.4 Research Methodology

To explore the evolving and complex phenomenon of value destruction in the digital context, the present study adopts a multi-method qualitative approach to data collection by using netnography to observe consumers' online value-destroying behaviour in its natural context. Netnography is the term used to describe adopting ethnographic techniques to examine communities online (Kozinets, 2002; 2010). Netnography also involves qualitative semi-structured interviews with consumers to gain more insights into online value destruction as well as to help in interpreting and understanding the behaviours observed. This study also employs qualitative thematic analysis, which is one of the most commonly used methods of analysing data in qualitative research (Bryman, 2008) and involves iteration between data and theory.

In the first phase of data collection, this study follows Kozinets (2019), Langer and Beckman (2005) and Rageh *et al.* (2013) in adopting the netnographic research guidelines created by Kozinets (2002; 2010). This phase mainly involves observing two types of third-party websites, which are review aggregators and social networking sites. Only negative reviews about regular products or services are observed, as the study examines value destruction. This study employs semi-structured interviews with social media users as a second phase of data collection. According to Kvale (1996), meanings that come out of individuals and events in their natural context are not always observable; hence, interviewing consumers can be a highly effective way to provide insights into those unobservable constructs. Therefore, interviews can be a more insightful way to capture consumers' emotions and cognitions during and after online value destruction and can widen understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

1.5 Research Contribution

This study offers several theoretical and empirical contributions (See Chapter 7 for a detailed discussion) to three research areas. The first is in consumer engagement literature, by exploring the downside of the online engagement experience that customers may have with each other about a brand. Second, it explores the dimensionality of engagement during value destruction as it reveals

how these elements (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) play out during value destruction process. It also contributes to the consumer-dominant logic literature by examining value destruction in online engagement experiences in the consumers' sphere. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, value destruction has not yet been examined using consumer-dominant logic as a lens. It also provides a more refined conceptualisation for value destruction as a process in the digital context by developing and proposing a conceptual framework for the antecedents and consequences of value destruction in consumer-to-consumer interactions. Finally, it enables practitioners to better understand customers' perspective when it comes to value destruction, making it possible for them to deal with online value destruction, reduce it, control it and maybe even prevent it or its consequences. Another important aspect of this research for practitioners is that they will better understand the power of social media as a communication tool among consumers and the possible impact of value destruction that is beyond an organisation's control.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into seven chapters and is structured as follows. **Chapter 1** offers a background and introduces the thesis. It demonstrates the research purpose and problem and presents the research objectives. It also provides a brief explanation of the methodology adopted and contribution of the thesis. **Chapter 2** presents the first half of the literature review. It is an extensive review of current and previous literature on two of the three identified research streams. It introduces the concept of value and clarifies the current study's theoretical perspective and outlook on value. It also presents a comparison of consumer-dominant logic with other marketing logics in the literature to establish the rationale and significance of adopting it as a theoretical lens. The chapter then offers a critical review of consumer engagement definitions, dimensions and conceptualisation in literature, proposes a definition for consumer engagement for the context of the current study and addresses the concept of negative online consumer engagement.

Chapter 3 builds on the theoretical perspectives introduced in Chapter two and addresses the focal concept of the current study by offering a detailed critical

literature review on the concept of value destruction. This chapter demonstrates the theoretical connection between value destruction, consumer engagement and consumer-dominant logic. It also provides a critical review of the definitions of value destruction and proposes a working definition for value destruction for the current study. It finally identifies the gaps in existing literature that need to be addressed.

Chapter 4 demonstrates the research methodology and design adopted. It begins by presenting and discussing the research philosophy of the current study and clarifies its ontological and epistemological position. The chapter also discusses the data collection procedure over two phases of data collection and describes the context and rationale of the data sampling and analysis approaches adopted. **Chapter 5** presents the findings of the current study. Specifically, this chapter addresses the findings from both netnography and interviews. The relevant themes that emerged from the data are demonstrated, organised and discussed. The chapter finally presents and explains a process for online value destruction. This process consists of three phases reflecting the drivers, the forms and the consequences of online value destruction from the consumers' perspective.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of the current study in relation to the existing body of knowledge on value destruction, consumer engagement and consumer-dominant logic. This in-depth discussion outlines the similarities and deviations between the findings and the relevant literature. In addition, it addresses each research objective and discusses the extent of its attainment. It demonstrates how the findings fit and add to the ongoing discussion in relevant literature. This chapter also proposes a speculative conceptual framework based on the discussion of the process of online value destruction. This framework proposes potential relationships within the process of online value destruction that can be tested in future research. **Chapter 7** presents the key contributions of the thesis. Theoretical and empirical implications are discussed, followed by the practical implications and recommended strategies for management in mitigating and handling online value destruction. The chapter then addresses the limitations of the current study and recommendations for future research directions.

Chapter 2 Literature Review: Consumer Value, Engagement and Consumer-Dominant Logic

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the first part of the literature review and addresses two of the three research streams briefly introduced in the previous chapter. It begins by introducing the idea of consumer value in literature and the value outlook adopted by this study. This chapter then offers a critical review of consumer engagement literature and demonstrates its conceptualisation in online and offline contexts. Then, the evolving concept of negative online consumer engagement is presented. Finally, it thoroughly addresses dominant logics in marketing, presenting consumer-dominant logic as the theoretical perspective adopted.

2.2 Consumer Value

Despite its importance to marketing, consumer value research is still growing and is considered in its primary stages in terms of conceptual development (Smith and Colgate, 2007). The term 'consumer value' in marketing literature has been approached, used and evaluated in diverse ways (Woodruff, 1997). Early research concentrated on the importance of the concept (for example, Band, 1991; Gale, 1994), defining and conceptualising consumer value and consumer value types (Ulaga, 2003; Woodruff, 1997; Woodall, 2003). Others have emphasised the strategies of consumer value creation (for example, Slywotzky, 1996; Treacy and Wiersama, 1993).

Several studies have attempted to define consumer value, but there was no consistency in these definitions. Consumer value therefore can have several meanings (Woodall, 2003). There are however two dominant approaches to consumer value. The first is value for the firm and the second is value for consumers. From a company's perspective, consumer value involves evaluating the attractiveness of consumers to the business, either individually (commonly known as consumer lifetime value), or in groups (commonly referred to as

consumer equity). This term and perspective was popular in research related to relationship marketing (Krafft *et al.*, 2005; Reinartz and Kumar 2003; Rust *et al.*, 2004). From the consumers' perspective, consumer value refers to consumers' perception of the value created by a company's product or service and how those products or services help consumers achieve their desired goals. This study focuses on consumer value from the consumers' perspective, but its destruction rather than creation since it is taking a consumer-dominant logic lens on the destruction of value.

The value notion has been presented as a diverse concept when it comes to the context of consumers. This has been emphasised from different perspectives in services marketing literature. Different terms have been used to describe the notion of value in the context of consumers. These terms were customer value (Gale, 1994; Helkkula, 2011; Holbrook, 1994; 1996; Oh, 2000; Woodruff, 1997), consumer value (Holbrook, 2005; 2006), relationship value (Ravald and Grönroos, 1996), perceived value (Chang and Wildt, 1994; Dodds, *et al.*, 1991; Liljander and Strandvik, 1993; Zeithaml, 1988), subjective expected value (Bolton, 1998), and stakeholder value (Lankoski *et al.*, 2016).

Table 1 below presents some of the most popular and commonly used definitions for consumer value in marketing literature. As the table shows, it can be concluded that the definition of consumer value has evolved over time to become more complex and encompass more aspects, and this is something that this study acknowledges and accounts for. Several general differences and commonalities can be highlighted in the definitions. They all present consumer value as a theoretical construct related to consumers' viewpoint of a provider's offering (Huber *et al.*, 2001; Spiteri and Dion, 2004) and all agree on the idea that value is subjective and includes several value components (Huber *et al.*, 2001; Ulaga, 2003).

Despite these commonalities, the definitions below, and the consumer value models that accompany them, come from different research streams. Accordingly, the consumer value definitions in Table 1 below can be divided into two categories (Graf and Maas, 2008). The first, which is a transactional and more cognitive perspective (Heinonen *et al.*, 2013), conceptualises consumer value as a trade-off

between the costs and benefits of a product/service and focuses on more transactional and functional aspects of the product/service in terms of characteristics and performance (for example Gale, 1994; Zeithaml, 1988). The second category emphasises more experiential aspects and more abstract value dimensions (for example, Holbrook, 1994; Woodruff, 1997).

According to the transactional viewpoint, consumers' perceived value was positioned as basic and highlighted the trade-offs between consumers' perception of benefits and costs (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996), or what Zeithaml (1988) described as "gets" and "gives". Therefore, perceived value is described as a ratio of perceived benefits compared to the perceived costs or sacrifices (Monroe, 1991). Literature highlighted the tangible and intangible elements of costs and benefits. Tangible elements include functional and technical elements and intangible elements can include experiential value and hedonic consumption value (Heinonen, 2004).

Research on value in marketing has pointed out that consumers are more sensitive to costs compared to benefits. In other words, consumers will probably respond better to a reduction in cost than to an increase in benefits (Monroe, 1991). In this sense, organisations need to pay more attention to consumers' sacrifices rather than just the additional benefits they are receiving. If they focus more on value-adding strategies, they might be adding value through some unwanted or unnecessary features that may not be perceived as benefits by consumers; and if these features are accompanied by a small increase in price, consumers' perception of value may either remain the same or decrease rather than increase.

With the idea of consumers' sensitivity to costs in mind, it is suggested that a good way of increasing perceived value could be through the reduction of perceived costs. To achieve this, organisations need to understand the determinants of consumers' perception of value, that is, which company activities are perceived as negative and which are positively perceived (Ravald and Grönroos, 1996).

Simple, earlier definitions of consumer value describe it as a comparison between costs and benefits of a product or service as evaluated by consumers (for example, Gale, 1994; Heard, 1993; Zeithaml, 1988). Thus, what consumers get out of buying

and using a product (for example, quality, durability, benefits, utility) versus what the product costs them (for example, price, time, effort). This evaluation helps consumers create and develop an attitude towards the product, which can be positive or negative (Butz and Goodstein, 1996). This perspective presents consumer value as a unidimensional construct that is simple enough to be measured by asking consumers to rate the amount of value received from a product or service. However, it has been argued that this exchange-based view of value is too simplistic and narrow (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) and that for its usefulness to be increased, other dimensions also need to be included (Graf and Maas, 2008). Consumer value has therefore subsequently been approached as a multidimensional construct that includes multiple notions (Babin *et al.*, 1994; Holbrook, 1994; 1999; Mathwick *et al.*, 2001; Sinha and Desarbo, 1998; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). Value has been constantly described as complex (Lapierre, 2000), subjective (Zeithaml, 1988), dynamic (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996), and multifaceted (Babin *et al.*, 1994). This vagueness about the notion of value explains why there is a lack of scholarly consensus on the conceptualisation of consumer value.

The traditional perspective that dominated the unidimensional approach to value was derived from neoclassical economic theory, which recognises that consumers rationally try to maximise utility and realise value by comparing the amount of utility the product/service provides with the disutility represented by the price paid (Sweeney *et al.*, 1996). This perspective therefore states that consumers' preferences are utility-driven (Chiu *et al.*, 2005). Most conceptualisations of consumer value in the literature are therefore functional in nature, where value is described in terms of quality/performance and price, i.e. a trade-off between costs and benefits. Monroe's (1979; 1990) studies for example were based on pricing theory, where the main determinants of consumer value are consumers' perceptions of quality versus price. Moreover, in adopting this outlook on value, some authors included the term 'utility' in their consumer value definitions (for example, Afuah, 2002; Zeithaml, 1988). Zeithaml (1988) presented consumer value as a trade-off between costs and benefits, where consumers evaluate all product/service attributes (price included) to realise benefit.

The current study however, views consumer value as a construct that encompasses more than rationally evaluating utility against price. Price is usually considered to

be the monetary cost of a product/service, but to fully acknowledge the idea of costs or sacrifices, it is not only price that should be considered. Other aspects such as consumers' time and effort throughout the consumption experience should also be considered (Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). A multidimensional approach to value is therefore adopted for its accommodation of these aspects.

Despite providing a holistic view of a complex phenomenon, the multi-dimensional approach to value was criticised for being conceptually ambiguous and challenging to operationalise (Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). Overall, this study regards both approaches as worthy contributions to value-related research. The present study also acknowledges their differences without regarding them as opposing approaches. The unidimensional approach to the nature of value can be described as simple whilst the multidimensional approach is complex.

Table 1: Overview of Consumer Value Definitions

Author	Term	Definition
Zeithaml (1988, p.14)	Perceived value	<i>“Perceived value is a customer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given.”</i>
Gale (1994, p. XIV)	Customer value	<i>“Customer value is market perceived quality adjusted for the relative price of your product. [It is] your customer’s opinion of your products (or services) as compared to that of your competitors.”</i>
Holbrook (1994, p.27; 1999, p.5; 2005 p.46)	Consumer value	<i>“Consumer value is an interactive, relativistic [comparative, personal, and situational], preference, and experience. ”</i>
Woodruff (1997, p. 141)	Customer value	<i>“Customer value is a “customer’s perceived preference for and evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performance, and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the customer’s goals and purposes in use situations.”</i>

In Woodruff’s (1997) definition, there is an implication that value is perceived at different stages where the product is evaluated before and after use. This is a

broad conceptualisation that encompasses several evaluation criteria (attributes, performances and consequences). However, the experiential aspect of value is within the boundaries of use and product attributes, hence ignoring the idea that consumers experience other things that can add to or reduce value beyond the product and its use. In addition to that, experience in this definition is limited to the consequences of use. This study views experience in a broader way to encompass before, during and after use brand-related experiences and interactions that add or reduce value.

Experiences and interactions are broader and more enduring than product use in the sense that use is just the act of using the product at a point in time whereas experience and interaction occur even before owning and using the product and continue to evolve during and even after product use. For example, someone sees a celebrity they like recommending and using a certain perfume on social media (value adding pre-use interaction). Then he/she goes and smell that perfume in a shop (value adding pre-use experience), likes it and buys it. Then after some time and a few compliments later (value adding post-use interaction), he/she realises that two or three of their work colleagues are also wearing it. Suddenly, it is no longer unique and he/she may want to stop wearing it (value-destroying post-use experience). What can be concluded from this example is that a bundle of experiences and interactions that consumers go through before, during and after using a product or a service play a very important role in adding to or taking away from consumer value. Hence, definitions emphasising experiences and interactions rather than use are more suitable for the current study.

Holbrook's (1994) definition acknowledges the notions of experience and interaction. This is also a broad outlook on consumer value that captures various important characteristics of it. It is described as relative, which reflects that consumers compare the evaluated object with other alternative objects or options. Value also varies from one person to another and is dependent on the situation. Both Woodruff (1997) and Holbrook (1994) refer to a subject (the consumer) and an object (product/service) in their definitions; the difference however is around what consumers evaluate. In Holbrook's conceptualisation, consumers evaluate the interaction experience with that object; while in Woodruff's (1997) definition, consumers evaluate the object itself or its utility

and functionality in terms of attributes and performance. More precisely, physical or functional attributes of a product or service are not always enough to determine its value to consumers, as it is the whole experience with that product or service that counts. For example, a resort might have the best spot and facilities in terms of location and design, but a consumer's experience there may not be positive because of the ambiance or because the attitudes of people there did not appeal to him/her. In addition, using the term "object" instead of "product" extends the suitability of this definition over varying contexts, because as mentioned in the definition, an object can be any good, service, person, place, thing, event or idea. In elaborating further on the definition, Holbrook (2005) explains that there is a relationship between consumers and an object (product), which makes consumer value interactive.

Holbrook (2005) then explains that consumer value differs according to the comparison made with another object, the person experiencing it and the situation of evaluation. This therefore makes it relativistic in three ways (comparative, personal and situational). Holbrook elaborates that consumer value is comparative across objects, meaning that objects are evaluated by the same individual in reference to other objects, for example, saying "I like Burger King more than McDonald's". Interpersonal comparisons such as saying, "I like Burger King more than you like Burger King" are not, however, considered value statements. Holbrook's idea here is that for a statement about value to be accurate, it must involve the same individual's intrapersonal comparisons between different objects.

The term personal indicates that value varies between people, meaning that what is valuable for one person may not be valuable to another. Holbrook (2005) argues here that it is because of this personal relativity that marketing even exists, since without differences between consumers, there would be no point in segmenting the market or having a variety of products and services. For example, a rollercoaster ride can be the most exciting experience for one person and the worst experience for another person who suffers from motion sickness.

Moreover, being situational reflects that consumer value is context-dependent. This means that consumers tend to have different basis for their evaluations

according to the situation or the context which they are in. For example, a consumer may highly appreciate a hot beverage in cold weather but on a hot summer day an iced drink would be more attractive. The term preference reflects the idea that consumer value encompasses evaluations such as liking/disliking, good/bad and favourability. Experience in this definition refers to the consumption experience (not the object/product) which the interactive relativistic preference is attached to. Such experiences can involve emotions, imaginations, satisfaction or other outcomes of product usage (Holbrook, 2005).

Holbrook (2005) conceptualises value as something that resides in the consumption experience rather than in the product, service or brand owned. This is a foundational idea in the work of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) in their highly subjective outlook on value known as value-in-use. This was later extended in consumer-dominant logic as value-in-the-experience (Helkkula *et al.*, 2012). The perspective of value-in-the-experience is based on the idea of lived experiences (Langdridge, 2007). It suggests that only a consumer can interpret and make sense of his or her internal and subjective value experience (Helkkula *et al.*, 2012).

As shown, consumer value overview approaches and definitions display complexity and breadth. Overall, there are still commonalities that exist despite the differences emphasised. Consumer value is a subjective concept as it is built on consumers' judgement (Huber *et al.*, 2001; Woodruff and Gardial, 1996; Zeithaml, 1988). Consumer value is also relative as it is based on comparisons and assessments made in relation to previous consumers' experiences or other alternatives and offerings (Graf and Maas, 2008). Therefore, in this study, value is regarded as a complex notion that embodies more than just a trade-off between benefits and costs. The idea of exchange is still valid, but it is not enough to describe what happens from consumers' perspective.

When comparing the relevant definitions and approaches, it can be concluded that Holbrook's (1994; 1999; 2005) definition approached value in the most comprehensive way, as it captures and identifies many value components compared to others. As much as this approach can be considered challenging, it can also be considered an interesting outlook to take on value as it provides a broad foundation to help reveal more about the destruction of value. To be more

specific, Holbrook's viewpoint on value presents it as something that is embedded in actions and interactions that are collectively constructed and experienced subjectively.

Moreover, the definition indicates that value is a function of an interaction between subjects (or an object); and is also a function of attitudes, emotions, satisfaction or judgements. These implications in the definition are in alignment with the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of consumer engagement, making it suitable for and adaptable to the context in which this study is examining value destruction, that is online engagement experiences. The idea that value is interactive also fits the present study as it focuses on consumer-to-consumer online interactions that are value-destroying.

Another important aspect of adopting Holbrook's definition in value destruction is the idea that value is relativistic in personal, situational and comparative ways. This is because what is value-destroying for one person does not necessarily have to be destructive for another. For example, a negative review of a hotel based on the food not being good will only be value-destructive to those who enjoy eating at the hotel during their stay and it is hence personal. What is value destructive in one context may also not be destructive in another. For example, a review of a hotel room being too hot in summer with no air conditioning is value-destroying in summertime but may not matter in wintertime and is hence situational. Finally, on the matter of comparison, consumers interact online and those interactions facilitate and increase comparisons between products and services. The value of something thus varies according to what it is being compared with. For example, consumers may compare online movie ratings and reviews before choosing which movie to watch at the cinema.

Therefore, following Echeverri and Skålén (2011), this study adopts Holbrook's (1994; 2005; 2006) conceptualisation of consumer value because it acknowledges interactions and relationships between subjects and objects. That approach fits examining online engagement experiences, where interaction plays an important role. In addition to that, for the purposes of this study consumption experiences are more suitable than product use because what consumers usually share with each other on online platforms are their positive and negative consumption

experiences and preferences. Those shared consumption experiences play a role in developing other consumers' evaluations and preferences and hence, aid in creating or destroying consumer value.

2.3 Value Creation and Well-being

A link between value co-creation and enhanced consumer well-being was demonstrated in literature suggesting that consumer value outcomes of co-creation activities enhance consumer well-being. Well-being was defined in terms of achieving a balance between an individual's resources (physical, social and psychological) and the challenges (physical, social and psychological) that individual faces (Dodge *et al.*, 2012). Co-creation activities may therefore be beneficial for consumers and not just organizations (Sharma *et al.*, 2017).

To further clarify, value was described in terms of a system's well-being improvement (Vargo *et al.*, 2008). Woodruff (1997) also associated customer value with goal attainment, which was also linked to improving consumer well-being where several factors in consumers' lives could be improved like, saving time, less efforts, needs satisfaction and reduction of risks or responsibility (Grönroos and Voima, 2013).

Well-being has been identified as an outcome for consumers engaging in value creating activities with organizations (Sharma *et al.*, 2017; Sweeney *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, generally value co-creation as a process enhances consumer well-being in a certain way (Grönroos, 2008; Vargo *et al.*, 2008). In that sense, interacting service providers and consumers contribute to the betterment and well-being of both systems.

However, literature also suggested that interactions with service providers can also leave the consumer with reduced well-being reflecting that value co-creation may not always end positively (Echeverri and Skålen, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010) and this is the argument that value co-destruction research is mostly built upon (see Chapter 3 for more details on value destruction). On the other hand, the current study's argument is that consumers also interact with other consumers and those interactions may also have a negative impact.

2.4 Consumer Engagement

Consumer engagement is viewed as an extension to the area of relationship marketing, which emphasises human interactions that are embedded in the value delivery process of service organisations. According to Ashley *et al.* (2011), consumer engagement can be studied as part of the broader concept of relationship marketing and this is where consumer engagement theories originated (Vivek, 2009). Earlier studies conducted during the exchange orientation of marketing tackled the transactional side of the marketing process and were directed at improving transactional aspects between the organisation and its consumers, which mainly included exchange of goods and services for cash (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Schau *et al.*, 2009; Vivek, 2009). In other words, the prime concentration was on the company's products and services rather than the complementary interactive activities that revolve around the simple act of exchanging these goods and services for money. Organisations were therefore value creators and consumers were value receivers while consumer engagement was viewed as something that was external to relationship marketing rather than an extension to it (Bijmolt *et al.*, 2010).

However, evidence of practices like relationship marketing can be tracked back to the 1880s (Tadajewski and Saren, 2009), especially in the areas of retailing (Tadajewski, 2008) and business-to-business marketing (Keep *et al.*, 1998). Based on this evidence, critics claim that the practice of relationship management is not new to businesses, and is the conceptualisation of the previously existing practice of relationship marketing that began to appear in the late 1970s, with some themes related to relationship marketing being found in marketing literature even before the twentieth century (Tadajewski and Saren, 2009).

According to relationship marketing literature, reciprocity has been portrayed as one of the essential characteristics of relationship marketing (Bagozzi, 1995; Barnes, 2001; O'Malley and Tynan, 1999; Varey, 2002). Therefore, Tadajewski and Saren (2009) argue that any literature that is related to the establishment of a relationship between consumers and organisations must contain the idea of reciprocity. The relationship marketing perspective highlights value-creating

relationships between the organisation and consumers over a long period of time (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995), which goes beyond the transactional approach of value exchange that focuses on the instant cash flow that is received by the organisation in return for the good or service received by consumers (Van Doorn, 2011).

There were fewer studies that focused on the relationship with potential consumers compared to those that focused only on current consumers. However, looking at relationship marketing considering the concept of consumer engagement expanded the focus to include potential consumers (Vivek *et al.*, 2012). This perspective also revealed the value of interactive consumers, whose level of engagement can range from follows and likes on social media to comments, ratings, reviews and advocacy. Engagement can also take the offline form of engaging with events, activations, booths and word-of-mouth (Brodie *et al.*, 2011).

Interactive consumers are important and should be benefitted from even if they have not yet made a purchase (Moore, 2012). However, it is also important not to forget that highly interactive consumers can also be value destroyers and engage in value-destroying activities such as negative word-of-mouth, low ratings, bad or negative reviews, that can affect other consumers and potential consumers (Grant and O'Donahoe, 2007). This is because there are consumer-to-consumer interactions that assist in the decision-making, meaning that these interactive consumers may eventually interact with potential consumers and influence their opinions using electronic word-of-mouth, which could be positive as well as negative (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010).

Overall, the focus started to take a different form by moving away from the product or service, making consumer experience the main approach. In this approach, interactivity plays an important role as consumers take part in value creation (Vivek, 2009). With the help of communities and consumer experiences that are considered interactive with the organisation, consumers can participate in the process of value co-creation with organisations (Vargo and Lusch 2006).

2.4.1 Overview of Consumer Engagement

The idea of engagement has been used in numerous fields and has been examined from different perspectives. It was originally used in management as part of organisational behaviour in terms of employee engagement with work and the working environment, as well as stakeholder engagement with the organisation. It has also been studied in fields like sociology and psychology in the form of civic engagement and social engagement (Hollebeek, 2011). In addition to that, as an extension to psychology in education, student engagement has been examined. Nation states engagement has also been explored in the field of political science (Brodie *et al.*, 2011). However, most importantly, engagement has also been applied in marketing in the form of consumer engagement or brand engagement, and this is the aspect of engagement that this research is focusing on. This section examines consumer engagement in marketing literature.

Previous studies have shown that the performance of an organisation is indirectly affected by consumer engagement (Bijmolt *et al.*, 2010; Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Verhoef *et al.*, 2010). This explains the high level of attention that consumer engagement has recently been getting in marketing research. Engaged consumers are likely to communicate with others about products, services and brands and this can be in the form of a recommendation that can lead to a purchase, and therefore considered to be word-of-mouth marketing. Highly engaged consumers are also likely to participate in content creation, as they may for example take part in uploading videos or images related to a certain product. They may even have a role in developing that brand or the product itself through proposed innovations for the product or the way the brand looks. For example, PepsiCo's Lays Chips created an online engagement campaign for consumers to vote online for a new flavour that they would like Lays to add to their chips and after the result was declared, consumers were encouraged to give suggestions for the colour and design of packaging. By doing so, consumers played a part in the company's product innovation, which explains the indirect effect of consumer engagement on the performance of the organisation (Brodie *et al.*, 2011).

However, if it was highly successful, why was the new Lays Chips flavour (shrimps) that was selected and developed discontinued? There could be many possible

reasons for that, ranging from the company's ability to create good-tasting potato chips with the flavour voted for, to the questionability of the engaged consumers' real intentions. The consumers that voted might have not taken the process as seriously as the company expected. The question here is whether the consumers' suggestions and high participation level were really that beneficial. Another consideration in this case is regarding the consumers that voted for a flavour that did not win, since there is a possibility that this experience could have destroyed value for them and they consequently might refrain from further participation or from buying the chips with the winning flavour.

Overall, as products and services have evolved and competition has increased at the national and international levels, marketers have come to realise the importance of creating and managing a relationship with consumers (Vivek *et al.*, 2014). Recently, the way organisations view consumers has changed. Value is created mutually by the cooperation of the organisation and its consumers; in other words, value is co-created. This cooperation is achieved through having an open and interactive two-way communication channel between consumers and the firm (Grönroos, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; 2006; 2008a; 2008b).

Companies are now competing to get more and more consumers to take part in the creation of marketing activities, brand personalities and identities, and even new product features (Verhoef *et al.*, 2010). These non-transactional value-creating activities have become the focus of companies' marketing efforts rather than the simple act of transacting with the company. This is because viewing consumers as active creators is said to have a greater impact on the business in terms of profit maximisation (Van Doorn, 2011).

2.4.3 Critical Review of Consumer Engagement Definitions

Authors in engagement lacked consistency when it came to defining engagement. Some took a more behavioural approach (for example, Pansari and Kumar, 2017; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Wirtz *et al.*, 2013), while others tackled it from a psychological perspective (for example, Bowden, 2009; Brodie *et al.*, 2011). The terminology used differed between studies with most of the authors referring to

it as customer engagement (Gummerus *et al.*, 2012), while others used the terms consumer engagement (Brodie *et al.*, 2011), brand engagement (Spratt *et al.*, 2009), online brand engagement (Mollen and Wilson, 2010) and customer brand engagement (Hollebeek, 2011).

Moreover, authors had different perspectives regarding the dimensionality of engagement. Some of them presented engagement as multidimensional, while others presented it as unidimensional. Authors with the unidimensional approach (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010) usually focused on the behavioural dimension, while those following the broader multidimensional approach (Bowden, 2009; Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Patterson *et al.*, 2006; Wirtz *et al.*, 2013) included two additional dimensions, cognitive and emotional.

Another important aspect of engagement that has not been clear in most of the definitions is valence. Most of the definitions are neutral on the idea of valence in engagement (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). Engagement can be positive (brand advocacy, content creation and positive word-of-mouth), neutral (observation, lurking and searching) or negative (boycott and negative word-of-mouth) and this aspect of engagement is worth mentioning when conceptualising it because it reflects an important characteristic that is relatively scarce in the literature (Dessart *et al.*, 2015). According to Brodie *et al.* (2011), consumer engagement has been evolving in the literature. Their article shows the different definitions that were found in the literature over that period and suggests that all definitions contained at least one of three dimensions - cognitive, emotional and behavioural - if not all of them.

Patterson *et al.* (2006) gave one of the earliest definitions of consumer engagement (see Table 2). Their definition addresses all the dimensions, if physical presence is considered to be part of the behavioural aspect. However, this definition limited itself to service organisations. The definition of a broad concept like consumer engagement should not be limited to a specific sector; it should be broad enough to be applied to any sector as consumers can engage with products, services, brands, people, ideas, etc. There may be variations in the types of engagement consumers have with each sector, and this is when a specific definition can be given to consumer engagement in each sector (for example,

consumer engagement with service organisations) where it will be more specified to the type of cognitive, behavioural and emotional dimensions involved.

In 2009, Bowden described customer engagement as a process and highlighted the term brand loyalty (see Table 2). Although not explicitly stated, referring to engagement as a psychological process can provide room for cognitive and emotional dimensions. Bowden here described engagement as a tool used to create and maintain loyalty, and that is rather a narrow outlook on the concept. There is no argument that part of consumer engagement is psychological, but the notion of loyalty here can be questionable. It is convincing that loyal consumers can make repeat purchases and keeping those loyal consumers engaged can maintain their loyalty, but this does not completely define what consumer engagement is. It is more than just a mechanism to gain new consumers and keep loyal consumers loyal. In fact, it could even be the other way around, where consumers that are already loyal can have a greater tendency to engage than consumers that are not loyal, because loyal consumers might have more interest in the company or brand. This however overlooks the idea that anyone can engage with the brand regardless of the level of their loyalty, since consumer engagement can be for negative reasons, such as negative word-of-mouth or even boycott activities. Bowden also limited the definition to service brands rather than brands in general.

Following that, three key articles defined consumer engagement concepts. Vivek *et al.* (2012) focused mainly on consumer participation and connection with activities regardless of who created them (see Table 2). The simplicity of this definition is what made it one of the clearest. The word “intensity” reflects that there are different levels of consumer engagement, participation is a behavioural aspect, while connection can involve both cognitive as well as emotional dimensions of consumer engagement. Engagement here was with the organisation’s offerings and activities and was not limited to a specific sector or medium, which makes it more generalizable. It also highlights a very important aspect of consumer engaging activities, which is that consumers can initiate them, not only organisations, which hints at the concept of content co-creation.

However, the definition of Van Doorn *et al.* (2010) considered consumer engagement to be a behaviour and they highlighted some specific behaviours in their description (see Table 2). Van Doorn *et al.* (2010) mentioned examples of some specific activities that reflect consumer engagement, but it is unclear why some motivational drivers are mentioned and others, such as complaining consumers or retaliation, were ignored. They also project consumer engagement as an expressed behaviour that goes beyond the purchase, but this still limits engagement to purchase, although consumers can engage with organisations without purchasing anything. They also seem to ignore cognitive and emotional dimensions even though motivational drivers can be based upon cognitive or emotional aspects and this is what drives the expressed behaviour that comes in the form of engagement.

Mollen and Wilson (2010) tackle the area of brand engagement in the online world (see Table 2). Previous definitions did not specify whether engagement was online or offline but in their study, it was vital for them to be specific about online consumer engagement. They mainly highlight the cognitive and emotional dimensions and the medium through which engagement takes place; there was however no direct mention of any behavioural dimensions in this definition, although describing the relationship as active does imply behavioural manifestations.

Hollebeek (2011) described consumer brand engagement as a state of mind (see Table 2). This definition can be considered as one of the most comprehensive definitions for consumer engagement as it covers many aspects without being too narrow. The definition highlights that consumer engagement has different levels and it does not ignore the impact of the brand itself on engagement. Additionally, the idea of context dependability is also interesting here, since the context can have an impact on the level or intensity of consumer engagement as well. Hollebeek here not only addresses all three dimensions, but also highlights that they are at specific levels and this can be an indication that different levels of engagement will be accompanied by different levels of cognitive, behavioural and emotional dimensions.

Table 2: Summary of Consumer Engagement Definitions

Consumer Engagement Definition	Components Covered			Scope
	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioural	
<p><i>“The level of a customer’s physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organization.”</i> (Patterson et al., 2006, p.4)</p>	X	X	X	Service organizations
<p><i>“A psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms for new customers of a service brand as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty may be maintained for repeat purchase customers of a service brand.”</i> (Bowden, 2009, p.65)</p>	X	X		Service Brands
<p><i>“The intensity of an individual’s participation & connection with the organization’s offerings & activities initiated by either the customer or the organization.”</i> (Vivek et al., 2012, p.133)</p>	X	X	X	Product/ service
<p><i>“Customers” behavioural manifestation towards a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers such as word-of-mouth activity, recommendations, helping other customers, blogging, writing reviews.”</i> (Van Doorn et al., 2010, p.254)</p>			X	Product/ service
<p><i>“The customer’s cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value.”</i> (Mollen and Wilson, 2010, p.5)</p>	X	X		Product/ service Online
<p><i>“The level of a customer’s motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in brand interactions.”</i> (Hollebeek, 2011, p.790).</p>	X	X	X	Product/ service
<p><i>“a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, cocreative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g. a brand) in service relationships”</i> (Brodie et al., 2011, p.260).</p>	X		X	Service Brands

<i>“the consumer’s intrinsic motivation to interact and cooperate with community members” (Wirtz et al., 2013, p.299)</i>			X	Community members
<i>“customers make voluntary resource contributions that have a brand or firm focus but go beyond what is fundamental to transactions, occur in interactions between the focal object and/or other actors, and result from motivational drivers” (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014, p.248)</i>	X	X	X	Brands
<i>“a consumer’s positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions” (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 149)</i>	X	X	X	Brands
<i>“a consumer’s positively/negatively valenced cognitive, emotional, and behavioural investments during or related to interactions with focal objects or agents” (Bowden et al., 2017, p.880)</i>	X	X	X	Brands and online brand communities
<i>“the mechanics of a customer’s value addition to the firm, either through direct or/and indirect contribution” (Pansari and Kumar, 2017, p.295)</i>			X	Product/service

The above table summarises the differences between the definitions of consumer engagement in the literature. In this study, a definition that is inspired by two other definitions, from Vivek *et al.* (2012) and Hollebeek (2011), has been developed. Accordingly, in this study, consumer engagement is defined as “A consumer’s state of cognitive emotional and behavioural connectedness, characterised by positive or negative interactions with a focal subject; initiated by either the consumer or the organisation in a specific context.” This definition highlights that consumer engagement is a state of connectedness that can be expressed through interactions that are associated with a brand. The cognitive,

emotional and behavioural activities are the elements of that state of connectedness, and they can appear at different levels and intensities.

This definition is one of the few (for example, Bowden *et al.*, 2017) that consider valence in engagement by stating that engagement can be positive or negative. Highlighting the existence of the negative side was an essential point in this study given that it is exploring value destruction in online engagement experiences. Finally, this definition suits this study in the sense that it is consumer-oriented and considers consumer initiations and context. More specifically, not only organisational initiations were considered but also those of consumers. This is an important point because this study focuses on the consumers' sphere and acknowledges all the elements of engagement (cognitive, emotional and behavioural), which is another point of examination in this study.

2.4.4 Consumer Engagement Dimensions

As mentioned in the section above, the literature has developed and examined three main categories of engagement with a focus on cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Dessart *et al.*, 2015; Vivek *et al.*, 2012). Dessart *et al.* (2015; 2016) examined the three categories of consumer engagement in online brand communities. However, their study overlooks valence in consumer online engagement activities, focusing only on positive cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). Hollebeek and Chen (2014) tackle the positive and negative aspects of consumer engagement and identify 'immersion', 'passion' and 'activation'. Bowden *et al.* (2017) also acknowledged valence and defined cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement very similarly to Hollebeek and Chen (2014), although Hollebeek and Chen's definitions were more detailed.

The emotional dimension of engagement involves consumers' feelings, that are accumulated and lasting towards an engagement focal subject (Dessart *et al.*, 2015). It has been highlighted that those emotions are relatively enduring and not just instantaneous. To capture the valence within the emotional aspect of consumer engagement, Hollebeek and Chen (2014, p. 66) define 'passion' as "*the degree of a consumer's positively/negatively valenced brand-related affect*

exhibited in particular brand interactions". This also presents the extent of consumers' affective engagement, suggesting that there are varying levels or intensities.

The cognitive dimension in engagement reflects the thoughts and mental states experienced by consumers towards an engagement subject. Those mental states have been described as active and lasting (Dessart *et al.*, 2015; Hollebeek, 2013; Mollen and Wilson, 2010). In addressing the cognitive engagement dimension, Hollebeek and Chen (2014, p. 66) describe 'immersion' as "*the level of a consumer's positively/ negatively valenced brand-related thoughts, concentration and reflection in specific brand interactions*". This definition also reflects that there are different levels to consumers' cognitive engagement.

The behavioural aspect of consumer engagement is the most popular and has been presented in a multitude of studies (for example, Gummerus *et al.*, 2012; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Verhoef *et al.*, 2010). Behaviours can relatively be the most visible aspect of consumer engagement. Engagement behaviours manifest in several ways online and offline and are viewed as indicators of engagement (Dessart *et al.*, 2015). According to Hollebeek and Chen (2014, p. 66), the behavioural dimension of engagement is represented in the form of 'activation', which they define as "*consumer's positively/negatively valenced level of energy, effort and time spent on a brand in particular brand interactions*". However, this study argues that engagement behaviours also manifest in the form of actions and activities performed by consumers, which may be visible or invisible to the business. Some examples of online consumer engagement behaviours can be review writing, commenting on brand-related posts, liking posts and electronic word-of-mouth. Passive engagers who just read or 'lurk' without actively or visibly engaging are also considered behaviourally engaging but in an invisible non-interactive manner to the provider and others (Madupu and Cooley, 2010).

2.5 Online Consumer Engagement

Online consumer engagement is the way consumers interact with the provider or brand online, ranging from liking online material, viewing pages, sharing content, commenting, complaining, expressing thoughts and emotions, discussing products and brands to making online purchases and recommendations to others (Pletikosa

Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013). Going deeper into the consumer engagement research stream in the online context, it can be noticed that there is more emphasis on the term 'brand' (such as brand engagement and brand communities) as opposed to 'service' or 'service provider' in services marketing research. Service providers create their online presence using their brand names; therefore, in engagement research, especially online engagement, the term 'brand' is more often employed but is also used interchangeably with product, service and company.

The growth of the internet created new platforms for communication and provided access to a new level where marketers are not only able to have two-way communication with their consumers, but can even recreate the concept of branding and bring the concept of brand personality to life (Fournier and Avery, 2011). Consumers have become more participative with brands, their messages and experiences in the online context. They communicate with brands, enjoy being entertained by them and even socialise with them. In addition, they also contribute in content creation for brands online and engage in sharing information and content about it with each other. This may be due to marketers' and brand managers' new methods of marketing involving brands' online presence, which encouraged these kinds of responses from consumers (Gambetti *et al.*, 2012).

Brands managed to find the zone where consumers are most comfortable, expressive and free by invading the world of social networks and becoming part of consumers' social interactions. In the virtual world, brands have personalities and are highly interactive, just like humans. They have fan pages on Facebook, constantly tweet on Twitter, like and share pictures on Instagram and of course create YouTube videos if not channels (Fournier and Avery, 2011). This has changed the way consumers view brands and engage with them, as it allows for online consumer engagement. The widespread use of social networking sites has modified the way consumers and companies interact (Cantone *et al.*, 2013). It has also changed the terms of the relationship between providers and their consumers, which in turn has changed the direction of research from concepts like consumer satisfaction, buying behaviour and value to greater focus on concepts like consumer participation and engagement (Pletikosa Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013).

Research in consumer culture theory has examined the concept of co-creation in brand communities (Muñiz and Schau, 2007) as well as the processes that create value in these brand communities (Joy and Li, 2012). In their research, they emphasise the idea that consumers should be given more room to co-create products and have the power to modify and make changes to them. By that, they mean not only offering custom-made products, but also that companies should encourage a broad range of activities and practices that occur in brand communities online and take advantage of the available potential of creativity and innovation that their consumers have (Schau *et al.*, 2009).

Online consumer engagement has been examined in several studies (for example, Bowden *et al.*, 2017; Dessart *et al.*, 2015; 2016). Consumers engaging online with brands and other members of online brand communities usually engage to create value for themselves and others (Bowden *et al.*, 2017; Dessart *et al.*, 2015). In doing so, consumers are also engaging with others who might share similar interests. Consumers have an influential effect on each other through consumer-to-consumer online engagement activities (Azer and Alexander, 2018; 2020; Bowden *et al.*, 2017). The literature has shown that consumption and relationship value can be increased with consumer engagement activities that are positive (Van Eijk and Steen, 2014). More specifically, positive consumer engagement manifests through consumers online expressing and sharing their positive emotional states and consumption-related information among community members (Bowden *et al.*, 2017). According to their study, the outcome of these positive consumer engagements online is mutual support among community members which in turn improves consumer brand engagement experiences.

2.5.1 The Negative Side of Online Consumer Engagement

As much as entering the world of social networks seemed attractive and relatively inexpensive, brand managers and marketers learned that it is a double-edged weapon. Despite the benefits and opportunities mentioned above, there are also challenges to entering the consumers' sphere and using new communication methods through online presence on social networking sites and online brand communities (Merz *et al.*, 2009). This is because companies almost lost control

over their brand and everything related to its online presence came into the hands of consumers. This form of branding, where consumers hold the power, is called open source branding. Open source branding has become inevitable for marketers and brand managers as it is the price to be paid for online brand presence and no brand can afford not to be part of consumers' online community (Fournier and Avery, 2011).

Early research on consumer engagement failed to capture the negative aspect and focused extensively on conceptualising consumer engagement as positive. Although still implicit and relatively new, literature has recently begun examining negative consumer engagement activities that are directed towards brands or other consumers (Bowden *et al.*, 2017; Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). Negative online engagement that appears in the form of unpleasant brand-related cognitions, emotions and behaviours (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014) is of significance to research and practice due to its viral nature, making it potentially fast-growing among consumers (Bowden *et al.*, 2017).

The cognitive aspects are manifested in deep thoughts on reviewing, expression of opinions, evaluations, providing information and solutions to problems (Juric *et al.*, 2016). The emotional aspect represents the consumer's affective states in response to an event. Negative emotions act as motivations that drive consumers' restorative behaviours. The behavioural aspect appears in activities that consumers engage in such as blogging (Juric *et al.*, 2016). Negative consumer-to-consumer online engagement behaviour can manifest in the form of taking advantage of the medium to self-promote or provide misleading information within a brand community. It can also be in the form of venting negative emotions (Juric *et al.*, 2016), negative electronic word-of-mouth (Bachleda and Berrada-Fathi, 2016; Nam *et al.*, 2018), consumer retaliation (Huefner and Hunt, 2000) and negatively valenced influential behaviour (Azer and Alexander, 2018; 2020). This can potentially worsen consumer engagement experiences and have negative outcomes such as disengagement and boycott behaviours (Bowden *et al.*, 2017). The current study also argues that negative consumer engagement can result in value destruction.

Existing literature provides evidence that technology and social media facilitate

value creation and enhance the engagement experience. Consumer experience and value co-creation in the online context have been explored and conceptualised in more than one study, especially in the fields of tourism and banking (Schmidt-Rauch and Schwabe, 2013; See-To and Ho, 2014). However, the implication that technology could potentially destroy value remained relatively implicit in literature (Neuhofer, 2016). Consumer-to-consumer online interactions have grown and intensified since the introduction of social media and online communities to the Internet (Casaló *et al.*, 2010). Social media allows consumers to write reviews and post negative comments about their experiences with brands. Consumers believe that they are empowered by social media and think that it gives them a superior voice. Accordingly, surveys show that particularly when dealing with large organisations, consumers are remarkably using social media to express their frustration and complain (Hassan and Casaló Ariño, 2016)

In recent research, there has been an increasing recognition of social media as a tool facilitating consumers' complaining behaviour (Dolan *et al.*, 2019). There has been a recent change in the complaint behaviour of consumers, since consumer complaints were usually made in private between consumers and the organisation, but social media now enables consumers to transform their complaints into a public phenomenon. Social media has empowered consumers by allowing them the opportunity to share all their negative brand experiences with many people (Ward and Ostrom, 2006). This was found to have potential value-destructive implications where consumer complaint behaviour that becomes publicised over social media for others to see can destroy value (Dolan *et al.*, 2019).

Consumers that sometimes post about their negative experience with a service or product most likely do so because their experiences might have been poorer than or even unlike what they were expecting. Accordingly, consumers may recognise that there's a loss, or some damage has been done and will pursue compensation for their losses or damages (Sparks and Bradley, 2014). Seeking compensation can take different forms, in the sense that consumer actions may vary, ranging from just venting their negative emotions through airing their complaints and negative experience (Hassan, 2013) to revenge-seeking behaviour, where they will try to get even with a company by exposing them and letting others know what happened with them (Kähr *et al.*, 2016; Sparks and Bradley, 2014).

Electronic word-of-mouth (positive and negative) is considered a valuable source of information for consumers. Literature however suggested that negative electronic word-of-mouth can have a stronger impact on consumers compared to positive electronic word-of-mouth and was portrayed as more influential over consumer purchase decision (Nam *et al.*, 2018; Sparks and Browning, 2011). It was suggested that consumers engage in such behaviour due to unmet consumer expectations (Nam *et al.*, 2018) as well as consumer dissatisfaction, expression of emotions and obtaining redress (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; Wetzer *et al.*, 2007).

Value destructive implications were also examined in electronic word-of-mouth research where a connection was established between negative electronic word-of-mouth and value destruction (Nam *et al.*, 2018). It is therefore necessary for firms to try as much as possible to monitor the online behaviour of consumers on social media platforms, look out for any negative experience or story shared by consumers and provide them with a suitable response. The lack of response may have a more negative effect on the organisation (Van Laer and De Ruyter, 2010).

Online engagement activities by consumers can be value-destroying rather than value-creating. Consumers interact online, and it has been suggested that value can be destroyed through interactions or the misuse of resources, which in this case is technology (Neuhofer, 2016; Smith, 2013). Marketers therefore must thoroughly understand how to manage brands in this critical form of media as there is a fine line between consumers' acceptance of the brand's online presence and engaging with it, and rejecting the brand and avoiding it or even having a negative attitude towards it, which can be unpleasant for the company. The potential for online engagement activities to destroy value is central to the current study, particularly engagement activities that occur between consumers apart from consumer-provider dyadic interactions. This idea remains implicit in the literature and studies do not directly tackle it. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, recent research has tapped into very similar ideas that are conceptually related to the focus of this thesis.

2.6 Value and Dominant Logics

The nature of the creation of value has been examined from different perspectives or logics; each of these perspectives have given value a different meaning, or to be more specific, tackled a specific aspect of value (Grönroos, 2006; Prahalad, 2004; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Voima *et al.*, 2010). The progression of marketing has shifted perspective on value from a production orientation, based on provider value delivery, to a resource orientation, built on provider-consumer co-creation. This suggests that value is created in provider-consumer interactions, that shape consumers' experiences through resources, rather than being rooted in the production of products and their features (Heinonen *et al.*, 2013). Consumer engagement research represents the consumer inclusion in the value creation process.

It was later proposed that consumer value can extend beyond consumer-provider interactions by emerging in consumers' sphere (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). However, a greater focus was placed on the provider perspective in both the creation and destruction of value. Consumer value that is created and destroyed in consumers' sphere has received less attention so far. Services marketing literature has strongly advanced discussion and conceptualisation of consumer value under different dominant logics.

Dominant logic has been significant in both theory and practice. The expression "dominant logic" is reviewed in a strategic context, where it serves as a general assumption for managers as well as researchers, indirectly influencing their focus by filtering information for them (Bettis and Prahalad, 1995; Prahalad, 2004). According to theory, the perspectives presented in literature are considered the ultimate ways of tackling business and marketing issues (Brown, 2007). However, when it comes to practice, managers find themselves applying a mixture of methods in handling business and marketing issues (Strandvik *et al.*, 2014). Interpretations of events may differ according to the perspective that the business is following. Therefore, managers may sometimes base their decisions purely on a set of assumptions that they are unconsciously following, based on that adopted perspective (Pralhad, 2004).

On the other hand, consumers also employ their own mental methods when it comes to making choices between varieties of offerings (Christensen and Olson, 2002). This may result in inconsistencies between consumers' and businesses' expectations, as they may have different perspectives from each other. It is therefore important that businesses continuously develop and reconsider their main perspective to be able to accommodate consumers' views and stay competitive in the ever-changing business environment (Prahalad, 2004).

Each marketing perspective has its own foundation that is presented by a set of basic assumptions that are unique to it and in addition, it has its own concepts, methods and models. The main differences lie in what is highlighted and what is paid less attention. All marketing perspectives therefore have their pros and cons as well as different emphases and scopes (Strandvik *et al.*, 2014). Service-dominant logic, service-logic and consumer-dominant logic are all service perspectives that have appeared and been developed in the services marketing area (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014; Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). Each of these perspectives has a different focus, but they all reflect service characteristics in society and the current business world. The advocates of the new service-based logics termed the traditional existing perspective 'goods-dominant logic' or 'product-dominant logic'. These logics opposed the existing assumptions of goods-dominant logic in undermining the role of consumers in value creation (Anker *et al.*, 2015).

Goods-dominant logic assumes that value is solely created and delivered by the producer/manufacturer (Naumann, 1995; Slywotzky, 1996). This implies that value is in the form of a production output, resides in product features and is realised when the product is used by consumers correctly (Anker *et al.*, 2015). Under this perspective consumers passively receive the produced value they acquired in the exchange process and consumption is assumed to be value destruction (Vargo and Lusch, 2008b). For example, value creation for a car manufacturer under this perspective is in the car itself in terms of design, features and options that the company creates and consumers passively receive. Since value resides in the product itself, value is then destroyed with consumption, and as consumers use the car its value depreciates.

Service-dominant logic focuses on co-creation between different social players in a system (Lusch and Vargo, 2014; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Service-logic on the other hand concentrates on consumers' and service providers' interactions (Grönroos, 2006). Goods and service logics have a strong presence in the literature. Service-dominant logic has also had an impact on the development of marketing theory (Grönroos, 2011; Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2013). However, in more recent value creation research, attention has been moving towards consumer dominance (Anker *et al.*, 2015; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). Consumer-dominant logic emphasises the consumers' context, that involves a collection of activities, experiences and actors in addition to the role of the service providers in the consumers' sphere (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). It is important to highlight that service-dominant and consumer-dominant logics are not opposing marketing logics. They share many basic principles, but have different focus points. Consumer-dominant logic involves modifying the focus to be more towards consumers. In the following section, service-dominant logic and consumer-dominant logic are discussed in more detail.

2.6.1 Service-Dominant Logic

Vargo and Lusch's (2004) article triggered the discussion on service-dominant logic worldwide (Grönroos, 2008). Service was then viewed as a perspective on value creation rather than just an activity or a type of market offering (Edvardsson *et al.*, 2005). Under this perspective, value is co-created through the interactive experience through which consumers use the resources and offerings provided by the service provider (Grönroos, 2008; Heinonen, 2013). For example, when it comes to education, value is created through student-teacher interactions where the teacher (provider) offers the student resources and information in curriculum delivery. However, value creation will not be complete without the students' (consumer) dedication of time and effort (resources) to study and pass examinations. Hence, value is co-created through consumer-provider interactions.

Grönroos (2008) examined the core of the service-dominant logic, outlining the roles of consumers and companies in the process of value creation. According to that study, the company is said to be a value facilitator that encourages co-

creation of value; and consumers are claimed to be co-creators of value through value-creating processes, such as consumption and interactions.

According to service-dominant logic, the experiences that consumers have with a brand over time are important. This contrasts with goods-dominant logic, which suggests that the product itself is the most important aspect when it comes to the creation of opportunities (Grönroos, 2008). The shift towards service-dominant logic has been clearly reflected in the focus of organisations, which has changed, to be more targeted towards the creation or co-creation of consumers' experiences with the brand rather than focusing solely on product design (Payne *et al.*, 2008).

Value Co- Creation in Service-Dominant Logic

According to goods-dominant logic, value is gained during the process of exchange and has been referred to as value-in-exchange (Grönroos, 2008). The neoclassical economic outlook demonstrated the concept of value-in-exchange, where value is measured in monetary terms. In other words, value is created and distributed to the market in the form of goods by producers in exchange for money (Wieland *et al.*, 2015). On the other hand, service-dominant logic does not view value as being exchanged or entrenched within the goods in the form of units produced. Instead, according to this logic, value is co-created rather than being delivered.

Vargo and Lusch (2004) suggested that service providers offer value propositions to consumers that are fulfilled through the complex and dynamic process of consumer experiences. Value creation is a result of the mutual efforts of both the company and consumers, where each aim to create value for themselves. In other words, value is co-created when both consumers and organisations employ their “operand” resources (tangible resources that are physically available for use) and “operant” resources (intangible resources such as skills, knowledge, proficiencies and information over which the participants have the authority to put into use to gain results) (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Resources are therefore used mutually for the improvement of one's conditions (Vargo *et al.*, 2008).

Consumer interactions and intangible resources such as skills and knowledge therefore play an important role in value creation (Lusch *et al.*, 2007; Payne *et al.*, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; 2008). Consumers under this perspective are viewed as active participants who can take part in the process of value co-creation in the form of development as well as the customisation of their relationship with the brand. In addition, consumers can assume different roles within the relationship with the organisation, meaning that they will not only be consumers, but also co-marketers and co-producers (Storbacka and Lehtinen, 2001). To illustrate how companies can co-create value with consumers, LEGO adopted the idea of open-source product development with consumers. This involves consumers submitting creative ideas for new LEGO products via their exclusive platform <https://ideas.lego.com/>. The winning idea according to consumer votes gets developed and launched on the market. The consumer behind the idea provides final approval before product launch, gets a percentage of product sales and is recognised in all marketing communications of the product. With this initiative, LEGO created a consumer community that co-creates value with them through product innovation and development, increased sales with consumer-led ideas and innovations, and increased consumer engagement and fan-base through spiking interest to vote and rewarding winning ideas.

The service-dominant logic conceptualises value according to Holbrook's view of value, that suggests that value is made in the consumption experience and not in the product bought, the brand or object owned. According to this logic, value-in-use is the result of consumers' service experience and although this value is co-created through consumers' direct and indirect interactions with the service provider, it is determined by consumers, not the service provider (Vargo and Lusch 2004; 2008a). Under the perspective of value-in-use, value is not restricted to separate exchange occurrences (production and consumption), and arises over prolonged time periods (Vargo, 2009), where value develops in the context of consumers' lives as new resources are merged together from different sources within the context (Chandler and Vargo, 2011).

Therefore, service-dominant logic stresses value-in-use, where the main emphasis is that value cannot be evaluated adequately solely in monetary terms and is not embedded in the products produced by firms (Grönroos, 2008; Vargo and Lusch,

2008a). Value here is established throughout usage, where numerous resources are integrated from different sources (Wieland *et al.*, 2015). According to the service-dominant logic, value is always mutually created through interactions between consumers and providers during the exchange of services (Lusch and Vargo, 2014; Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

The idea Vargo and Lusch (2008a) later took into consideration is the importance of the context as well as the social nature of consumers and their research reconceptualised value. This is because the idea of value-in-use may not be sufficient in reflecting the contextual nature of value creation. To have a better contextual perspective on the creation of value, more recent advancements in service-dominant logic highlight the importance of the service ecosystem perspective (Lusch and Vargo, 2014; Vargo and Lusch, 2011).

Value-in-use extends to become value in context, which is a much broader view of value. Consumers under this perspective use their social resources when they engage in value co-creation. These social resources include family members, friends, communities and relationships (Arnould *et al.*, 2006), and they are all utilised by consumers to enhance their service experience and determine the value outcomes for them in a contextualised way (Baron and Harris, 2008).

2.6.2 Consumer-Dominant Logic

Customer-dominant logic (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010; Voima *et al.*, 2010) is a business and marketing viewpoint that is built on the supremacy of consumers. Embracing this perspective reflects that the emphasis changes from how providers engage consumers in their processes to how consumers engage multiple providers in their own ecosystem. In simpler terms, it is how a service is embedded in consumers' environment and processes rather than how the service is being provided by organisations (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). Consumer-dominant logic is in alignment with service-dominant logic on several aspects. Both logics acknowledge the importance of interactions in value creation, as well as the role of the provider, which is more central in service-dominant logic. Moreover, consumers' experiences are important in both logics, with consumer-dominant logic emphasising more the inclusion of experiences which are not provider-

related. Furthermore, both logics view consumers as active participants in value creation and acknowledge the role of consumers' social resources and experiences in value creation.

Customer-dominant logic shifts the concentration towards social practices and experiences between consumers rather than focusing on value creation within service-related processes. This viewpoint suggests that the service provider should try to further understand what happens in the consumers' sphere. Precisely, what is being done with the service in the consumers' life context and how the service helps them create value and achieve their objectives, rather than viewing consumers as business partners who co-create value (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010).

The conceptual development of customer-dominant logic and its fundamentals are set out in three main studies (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015; Heinonen *et al.*, 2010; Heinonen *et al.*, 2013). This logic has also appeared in other studies, some conceptual but mostly empirical. These studies involved consumer-to-consumer value creation (Rihova *et al.*, 2013), service brand relationship mapping (Strandvik and Heinonen, 2013), consumer activity in service (Mickelsson, 2013) and consumer-bank relationships (Medberg and Heinonen, 2014).

The first framework for customer-dominant logic characteristics was presented in the study by Heinonen *et al.* (2010). This was achieved through a comparison between the customer-dominant perspective and the provider-dominant perspectives (which include service-dominant logic and service logic). This comparison resulted in the revelation of five main challenges facing service marketers: the organisation's involvement, organisational control in co-creation, value creation visibility, consumer experience scope and character (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010).

The study highlighted that knowledge of customer-dominant logic will clarify for organisations the part that they should play in consumers' lives. It also emphasised that understanding customer-dominant logic is a basis for an organisation's marketing direction and business logic. In addition, since the study explored the consequences of implementing customer-dominant logic in research and practice, it provided a good foundation to begin with (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010).

According to Heinonen *et al.* (2010), a complete understanding of the experiences and practices within consumers' lives would be of great value to businesses. This is because in the consumers' life context, services are effortlessly and obviously embedded. Having such a holistic perspective on consumers' sphere and unravelling the relationship between consumers' experiences, practices and social activities will assist service providers in the facilitation and platform provision for the value-creation process between consumers (Grönroos and Voima, 2013).

In extension to value creation, Heinonen *et al.* (2013) conducted further conceptual investigation of the consumers' process of value creation from a customer-dominant viewpoint. The paper explains the value-creation process through addressing five questions: how value is created, when and where value is created, what value is based on and who determines value. The study highlighted the need to surpass the side of value creation that is visible to providers through consumer-provider interactions. Instead, it tackled the side that is considered invisible to the provider, which is the consumers' mental life and ecosystem.

By addressing the given questions, the study takes value formation into a more complex mental level where value is viewed as vibrant and multi-contextual. Value under this perspective is not only based on a single experience, it is viewed as something that is built over time with the accumulation of several experiences that occur in consumers' life sphere (Heinonen *et al.*, 2013). The paper also underlined the importance of understanding the details of consumers' value formation process, as it will assist service providers in strategy, innovation and service design.

Building upon the customer-dominant perspective, it was important for businesses to find ways of entering the consumers' sphere and becoming part of it (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). Accordingly, further conceptual developments of the foundation of customer-dominant logic were proposed in Heinonen and Strandvik's (2015) study. It investigated the theoretical and practical effects of embracing the customer-dominant logic of service by concentrating on firms' involvement in the context of consumers. Five foundations of customer-dominant logic were proposed: marketing as a business perspective, consumer logic as a dominant or

main concept, consumer view of the service, value formation and the primacy of consumers' ecosystems.

By providing theoretical and practical implications for each of the foundations identified, the study (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015) acts as a guide for practitioners on how to become involved profitably in a dynamic context that is dominated by empowered consumers. The proposed foundations also created a platform for further studies that can aim for further insights on the concept of consumer dominance, as there is room for additional development of the concept in research and practice.

The three conceptual papers focus on the notion of value and all involve the comparison of customer-dominant logic with predominant service perspectives (provider-dominant logics), with the aim of highlighting their differences. In the current study, the point of interest is not in differentiating between dominant logics, it is about understanding how shifting the perspective towards consumers can serve the purpose of the current research. All the papers mentioned proposed managerial or practical implications that were developed or suggested based on discussions and analysis of value creation. However, Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) had greater focus on the managerial and business implications and provided greater emphasis on more significant business issues.

Under the evolving perspective of customer-dominant logic, value is created through consumers' social experiences in their sphere beyond the organisation's control (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). The emphasis here is on consumers having a wide social context that they depend on in the creation and sharing of their experiences, meaning that value gets created through the acknowledgement of other members of their social circle (Rihova *et al.*, 2013). Consumer-dominant logic aligns with an outlook on the notion of value that was adopted by Grönroos (2008). According to this view, consumers are seen as the only creators of value and the company or service provider acts as a facilitator in the value-creation process by providing the platform for consumers to create value (Gummerus, 2013).

There has been a shift in consumer experience research, with the focus moving

from consumer-organisation interactions to consumer-to-consumer interactions. Relationships “among” consumers have been highlighted under the perspective of “a need for a relationship” rather than focusing solely on relationships “with” consumers (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009).

Consumer-dominant logic alters the scope of consumer experience through emphasising lived experience or “living” in the consumer’s reality. Consumer experience from the consumer-dominant perspective involves the events that occur in a consumer’s life context away from the service provider. Researchers in services marketing, especially in consumer-dominant logic, started integrating Husserl’s (1970) concept of the consumer’s lifeworld into their research perspective (Helkkula *et al.*, 2012; Rihova *et al.*, 2013; Voima *et al.*, 2010). The consumers’ “life-world” is the everyday lived experiences of consumers and that involves their surroundings and social context (Helkkula *et al.*, 2012; Husserl, 1970; Langdrige, 2007).

Value under this perspective is created in the context of living and not solely within the relationship or in the service provider’s sphere. Overall, the perspective of consumer-dominant logic highlights that value formation takes place in many places that can be visible or invisible (for example, physical, mental, social, virtual) through experience in consumers’ life scope that is beyond control. This perspective therefore expands the idea that value is limited to the resource of service providers and takes it further to consumers’ context (Voima *et al.*, 2010).

Adopting Consumer-Dominant Logic

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.2), the term consumer-dominant logic is preferred in this study (Anker *et al.*, 2015). Although both the assumptions of consumer and service-dominant logics align with the purpose and viewpoint of the current study, consumer-dominant logic is the theoretical perspective adopted for several reasons. First, the current study aims to capture consumers’ perspective on value destruction. It therefore adopts a consumer-dominant perspective because it focuses on how a service is embedded in consumers’ environment and processes rather than how the service is being provided by organisations (Heinonen

and Strandvik, 2015). Second, consumer-dominant logic encompasses more than just consumer-provider interactions as it shifts concentration towards social practices and experiences between consumers rather than viewing value creation as a service-related process (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). Third, since this study examines value destruction rather than co-destruction, it is more suitable to adopt consumer-dominant logic rather than service-dominant logic. According to service-dominant logic, value creation and destruction are based on provider-consumer interactions (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010), which is why they use “co” creation and destruction, and that may be misleading when it comes to destruction of value. This is particularly the case because value destruction does not have to be mutual all the time, and can be one-sided (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Finally, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, value destruction has not yet been examined from a consumer-dominant logic perspective. This idea is therefore worth exploring because it has been recognised that consumers can have direct or indirect influence over each other and their actions and interactions can affect each other’s experiences, whether in a physical or virtual social context (Azer and Alexander, 2018; 2020; Harris and Reynolds, 2003; Kozinets, 1999; Moschis and Cox, 1989; Wu, 2007).

2.6.3 Value in Consumer-Dominant Logic

With the introduction of ‘customer-dominant logic’ of service (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010), the perspective on value changed by going beyond the concept of co-creation, where value is co-created by interactions between providers and consumers. According to customer-dominant logic, value is developed in the consumers’ sphere rather than only being realised through interactions and consumption (Grönroos and Ravald, 2011; Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). For example, the value of a new trendy outfit is not only about the quality of the outfit or the interactive experience with the provider. Value in this case continues to be created in consumers’ sphere through receiving compliments from friends or expressing a certain social status or making a fashion statement. All these value-creating factors are outside the joint consumer-provider interactive sphere.

The consumer-dominant logic perspective on value takes an experiential direction compared to service or goods-dominant logics. In provider-dominant logic

literature, value is studied in an objective manner. However, there appears to be an alignment between consumer-dominant logic and consumer experiential research. This alignment is in the idea of consumers' experiences subjectivity. Consumer experiential research focuses on consumers' subjective experiences and acknowledges that value changes with individuals' personal and distinctive needs, that are constantly changing (McKnight, 1994).

Subjective consumer experiences are acknowledged in the experiential marketing approach. However, consumer-dominant logic goes beyond the experiential marketing approach in terms of scope, in that it not only considers unusual or exceptional experiences, it also considers consumers' routine, every day, ordinary experiences (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). The consumer-dominant logic expands Holbrook's (1996) notion of the relative and comparative nature of value. Value is always realised in comparison or relative to something else, like a product or a service that could be of greater, less or equal value (Heinonen and Strandvik 2009). Consumer-dominant logic on the other hand, assumes that value is associated with the multi-contextual and vibrant life and reality of consumers rather than being recognised only through the notion of relativity. Consumers are part of the personal and subjective value formation process. This process of value development is affected by the situation and the personal context of consumers. For example, from a consumer-dominant logic perspective, an individual's experience of having a pizza at a restaurant is subject to the internal and external context that is being personally and subjectively experienced by that individual (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, the consumer's past, present and future are what value realisation through experience is contingent upon (Heinonen *et al.*, 2013; Rihova *et al.*, 2013). Consumers' personal context includes several internal (biological, physical, mental, emotional and social) and external levels and has a timeframe. Experiences and the possible value that comes out of them develop in consumers' personal context (Voima *et al.*, 2010).

Value in the Experience

Value in the experience is one of the forms of value that has been under-researched to date compared to other types of value. This outlook on value takes the broadest perspective of consumer value, where value is recognised as

something that consumers experience. This broad perspective has emerged with the recent focus on consumers' experience. Value-in-experience is a relatively new concept that looks at the value that consumers perceive over the whole consumption experience (Turnbull, 2009; Tynan *et al.*, 2014).

The perspective of value-in-experience provides a more comprehensive understanding of value that goes beyond value-in-exchange (Zeithaml, 1988), value-in-possession (Richins, 1994) and value-in-use (Woodruff, 1997), which are relatively limited perspectives on consumer value. Value-in-use was, though, revised and extended to accommodate consumers' value creation in their independent sphere apart from provider interactions (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014; Grönroos and Voima, 2013). Under the new conceptualisation, the process of value creation occurs in provider, joint and consumer spheres successively. This brings it closer to the concept of consumer value-in-the-experience. According to the perspective of value-in-the-experience, consumers may gain or lose value at any point throughout their experience.

Earlier conceptualisations of consumer value included value-in-exchange, value-in-possession and value-in-use. These perspectives on value were the most dominant in the literature. The problem with these perspectives is that none of them captured the complete consumer experience. Since value can be created or destroyed at any point in time within the consumer experience (Tynan *et al.*, 2014), these conceptualisations will not be comprehensive enough when trying to capture a holistic view of value. These perspectives disregard value perceived by consumers before and after their consumption experience, in other words, the anticipated and remembered experiences (Arnould *et al.*, 2004; Helkkula *et al.*, 2012; Tynan and McKechnie, 2009, Tynan *et al.*, 2014). Turnbull (2009) proposed a definition for consumer value-in-experience which is "*the customer's perception of value over an entire course of the customer experience*" (p. 4).

Consumers' experience therefore is extended beyond the processes of exchange and consumption to include some pre-consumption experiences, such as anticipation of consumption, planning and exploring and post-consumption experiences like remembering, review writing, recommendation, nostalgia and storytelling (Arnould *et al.*, 2004; Shaw and Ivens, 2002). This is also supported by

Tynan and McKechnie (2009), who suggested in their theoretical model that the consumption of an experience consists of three stages: pre-experience, core consumer experience and post-experience. Other researchers have also acknowledged consumption-related experiences occurring with families, friends and communities. They have also emphasised that consumers' experience extends to these consumption-related experiences that surpass the core service experience (Carù and Cova, 2003).

A highly relevant study for this research is the one conducted by Tynan *et al.* (2014) which investigated consumer value-in-the-experience from the consumer-dominant logic perspective. Consumers' experience from a consumer-dominant logic perspective is viewed as a connection to their "life-world" where experience and perception of value occurs in their daily lived experiences. Although this study was conducted only within the context of consumers' luxury driving experience, it revealed several interesting and relevant findings that concurred with previous literature.

Consumer value-in-the-experience was presented as multidimensional, with different types of values: hedonic, symbolic and functional (Holbrook, 1999; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; O'Cass and Mcewen, 2004). Consumer value-in-the-experience is guided by consumers' past, present and future experiences, making it time-based or temporal in nature (Gummesson, 2000; Heinonen, 2004; Helkkula *et al.*, 2012; Koenig-Lewis and Palmer, 2008). Consumer value-in-the-experience can also be lived or imaginary experiences (Helkkula *et al.*, 2012; Shankar and Patterson, 2001; Tynan *et al.*, 2014).

Finally, Tynan *et al.* (2014) stated that consumers' experiences could create value, fail to create value or destroy value (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Smith, 2013). Although most of the studies addressing the area of value-in-the-experience did not focus on the destruction of value-in-the-experience, it is very important to highlight that consumers' experiences can be a source of value destruction. Evidence of that was highlighted in some studies, where unequal levels of value were provided, in the sense that what was being experienced was not what the consumers wanted (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Smith, 2013); or the service provider and the consumers had different

perspectives on value-creating elements (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011); or the experience was not enjoyable for consumers (Tynan *et al.*, 2014).

This outlook on value fits with the current study's scope of examination. Specifically, this study does not examine value destruction during consumer-provider interactions, but it does examine online value-destroying behaviours that consumers engage in with other consumers rather than with providers. These are therefore considered to be post-provider interactions for one user and may be pre-provider interactions for the other, who might be a potential consumer. Additionally, value-in-the-experience also acknowledges that there are parts of the experience that do not involve the provider, and this is the point of interest in the current study. Consumer-to-consumer interactions form parts of the experience apart from the provider.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced two of the three research streams that this thesis brings together. It has demonstrated consumer-dominant logic as the theoretical perspective and outlook on value adopted and critically reviewed value definitions and conceptualisation in the extant literature. It has also demonstrated the central concept of consumer engagement in this research by offering a critical review of its conceptualisation, that is fragmented in literature. Upon critical review of definitions, this chapter has also presented a working definition for consumer engagement that is formulated to suit the focus of the current study, addressing the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of consumer engagement which are fundamental to the current study. Additionally, the nascent notion of negative online consumer engagement is addressed while drawing upon literature implying its potential link to value destruction. The following chapter presents the second part of this study's literature review. It introduces and critically reviews literature on the focal and third research stream in this thesis, which is value destruction.

Chapter 3 Literature Review: Value Destruction

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the second part of the literature review and discusses the central concept of this thesis, which is value destruction. It introduces the concept and provides a critical review of extant literature on value destruction in marketing and services literature. In addition, this chapter undertakes a critical review of the definitions and conceptualisations of value destruction and provides a working definition of it. The antecedents of value destruction in literature are also addressed here, as is the nature of value destruction in terms of temporality and intentionality. The destruction of value within the different marketing logics is discussed and the gaps in the literature that this thesis aims to address are identified.

3.2 Value Destruction in Marketing Literature

Value destruction is conceptualised as an opposing concept to value creation, that appeared recently in commercial marketing literature (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2017). As mentioned in the previous chapter, research has examined the concept of co-creation in brand communities (Muñiz and Schau, 2007) as well as the processes that create value in those communities (Joy and Li, 2012). Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010) were among the first to argue that researchers in service-dominant logic had taken an overly optimistic perspective on value. For example, Vargo *et al.* (2008, p. 149) define value as “*an improvement in a system’s well-being*”. The argument is that this positive outlook on the value process implicitly emphasises value creation and overlooks the possibility of value destruction.

Accordingly, they suggested that not all consumer engagement activities are positive and result in value creation. Some consumer engagements, such as complaints and negative word-of-mouth, can be negative and lead to the loss or destruction of value rather than its creation. Recent studies in service-dominant logic indicate that resources could be utilised to create value as well as destroy it (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010).

Echeverri and Skålén (2011) also criticised the idea of focusing solely on the creation of value and the positive outcomes of value-creating activities. They argued that in practical terms it is unrealistic and accordingly, they examined the possible negative outcomes of value creation attempts under the term “value-co-destruction”. Value destruction studies suggest that factors such as incompatibility between providers’ and users’ practices, the reduction of resources or benefits for one party so that the other can gain (Marcos-Cuevas *et al.*, 2015) and resource misuse, whether intentional or unintentional, could destroy value (Lefebvre and Plé, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010).

As the above literature suggests, it can be concluded that there is ongoing debate in service-dominant logic literature regarding the emerging concept of value co-destruction. Hence, value co-destruction recognises that not all value-creating activities result in the creation of value, and that value may be destroyed through interactions and the misuse of resources by both the organisation and consumers (Smith, 2013). For example, when Ramadan Sobhi (an Egyptian football player) joined Stoke City (a UK football club), the Egyptian fans expressed their happiness by posting countless comments (mostly in Arabic) on Stoke City’s official Facebook fan page. Although the comments were positive and were considered to be a form of positive engagement (a value-creating activity), they were in fact destroying value for the original English-speaking Stoke City fans, who do not understand Arabic, because they were unable to engage with each other and the community in an understandable manner.

3.3 Value Destruction and Value Co-destruction

An important aspect highlighted in some studies is the attachment of the prefix ‘co’ to indicate that destruction is mutual. Authors on the subject have suggested that the use of ‘co’ in the context of creation is more acceptable because in that case, both parties would be willing to engage in mutual value creation (Hilton *et al.*, 2012). On the other hand, when it comes to destruction, where only one party in the relationship is misusing the resources resulting in the uneven distribution of value or the loss of value for the other, it is argued that referring to it as co-destruction can be misleading (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016).

Another way to differentiate between value destruction and value co-destruction can be based on the difference the service provides. A simple classification of services suggests that services can be of two types: functional and utilitarian (such as telecommunications, banking, transportation etc.) or participative and co-creative (such as personal trainers, consultancy and education) (Bowden *et al.*, 2014; Lindgreen and Pels, 2002). The difference between those two types lies in the amount of consumer contribution required needed for the creation of the service. Participative and co-creative services, as the name suggests, demand more consumer involvement with the firm and more contribution to the creation of value compared to functional and utilitarian services (Morosan and DeFranco, 2016; Vargo and Lusch, 2008b). For example, a student needs to study, read required material and attend classes for the education service value to be created. Therefore, it is argued here that if something goes wrong in service co-creation, consumers and service providers are more likely to experience value co-destruction rather than value destruction. On the other hand, value destruction may be experienced more in functional or utilitarian services when the service provider fails to deliver the service (since customers do not need to participate much).

The current study argues however that the type of service provided (functional or participative) is more relevant when examining value destruction or co-destruction that occurs during consumer-provider interactions, whereas this study is examining value destruction in consumer-to-consumer interactions. Such consumer-to-consumer interactions may occur before or after consumer-provider interactions and hence, the creation or destruction of value may also occur before or after the consumer-service provider encounter takes place. Since this is the current study's interest, it is more accurate to differentiate between value destruction and co-destruction based on whether value was collaboratively destroyed. Hence, the term "co-destruction" emphasises collaboration, where the interacting parties both play an important role in the destruction of value (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). However, this is not always the case, especially in consumer-to-consumer interactions where one party can destroy value for others. The term value destruction here refers to the act of value being destroyed, whether by one party or collaboratively. If the current study adopts the term value co-destruction, it is only limited to collaborative

value destruction.

It is also important to highlight that this study's notion of value destruction differs from value destruction under the exchange view of value creation (Alderson, 1957; Bagozzi, 1975). According to this view, value is created in the production process in the provider's sphere and the customer is relatively uninvolved in the process. This perspective argues that value is destroyed in consumption. For example, the value of a mobile phone diminishes with usage, meaning that a used phone is cheaper than a new one (Ramírez, 1999). On the other hand, the interactive value formation perspective (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Ramírez, 1999; Vargo and Lusch, 2004) suggest that value is jointly created through interactions between customers and service providers.

Echeverri and Skålén (2011) additionally proposed that value can be destroyed during consumer and service provider interactions. The exchange view therefore assumes that value creation and destruction happen at different points in time, while this study argues, in line with Echeverri and Skålén (2011) and Smith (2013), that value from an interactive perspective can be simultaneously created or destroyed during interactions. This study differs however by focusing on consumer-to-consumer interactions rather than consumer-provider interactions.

Finally, the accuracy of the word "destruction" has been questioned in the literature as some consider it to be an exaggerated description of what is happening (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Destruction usually implies irreversible damage, and to use that word as a comprehensive description of a decline in value or its uneven distribution can be viewed as an exaggeration (Smith, 2013; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Not all value-diminishing activities are destructive, and based on that idea, Vafeas *et al.* (2016) adopted the term value "diminution" instead, arguing that value diminution is a more precise term than value destruction. Their argument is that although value can be lost forever or destroyed, some of the promised value may still be gained through interaction and resource integration. In other words, a consumer may experience decline in value by not receiving the promised value, but that value is not completely destroyed. Nevertheless, the current study adopts the term "value destruction" because the word "diminution" understates the potential destruction of value among consumers, particularly because online value destruction outside consumer-provider dyadic interactions has the potential to spread and go viral. The current study acknowledges that there can be levels of

destruction and not all value destruction is irreversible. To address this, other studies have identified value reduction and value recovery to describe practices and situations where the damage in value can be recovered (Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011).

3.4 Value Destruction and Well-being

The literature has portrayed a decline in well-being as an integral aspect of value destruction that is grounded in most value destruction definitions and conceptualisations. Subjective well-being is consumers' perception of the state and quality of their life. Consumers engage in activities and interactions with other actors within their sphere to improve their well-being. Value has been described in service-dominant logic literature as an improvement in well-being (Vargo *et al.*, 2008). This notion of value was adopted to describe value destruction as a loss or decline in well-being (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). The concept of well-being shares some commonalities with value in the sense that it is defined by the focal actor (for example, the consumer), and that makes it a subjective, individualistic evaluation or perception of an individual's satisfaction with their own life status (Diener *et al.*, 1999; Lusch and Vargo, 2014).

According to well-being research, consumers' or individuals' life evaluations are rooted in six domains of well-being (Diener *et al.*, 1999): emotional, professional, leisure, financial, health and safety and social (Laud *et al.*, 2019). Individuals evaluate their state of well-being based on the resources that are available to deal with events or challenges they face within their different life domains. Any perceived decline in any of those domains due to deficiency or misalignment of resources reflects a decline in an individual's subjective well-being (Lee *et al.*, 2002).

Consumers engage in interactions, exchanges and resource integration to increase well-being rather than reduce it. This outcome is however not always assured, because resource misalignment can occur either from one or both interacting actors, thus destroying value (Laud *et al.*, 2019). However, a decline in consumers' well-being is viewed as a relatively temporary state because eventually consumers adopt restorative strategies to improve and bring well-being

back to equilibrium. Laud *et al.* (2019) and Smith (2013) draw upon two connected theories that explain how consumers achieve this in the context of value destruction. First, consumers may engage in coping strategies which can involve reactive or proactive and confrontational coping behaviours to restore or deal with reduced well-being. Second, conservation of resource theory states that individuals try to protect, maintain and improve resources to reduce the risks of resource loss (Hobfoll, 2011; Smith, 2013). Conservation of resource theory also suggests that when experiencing a decline in well-being, consumers engage in coping strategies in order to improve that decline through resource restoration (Smith, 2013).

Drawing upon these theories, the current study suggests that they may be relevant in the context of consumer-to-consumer online interactions. For instance, consumers who are destroying value online may be doing so in order to cope with reduced well-being by using the resources they have. In this case that means using technology or social media to restore well-being by complaining, venting emotions or retaliating about a problem with the provider that led to the decline in their subjective well-being. Concurrently, potential consumers may also use the resources they have (for example, technology and time) and engage with consumer-created content and reviews to protect and conserve their resources by gathering information to avoid a bad purchase or make the best one possible and hence improve well-being.

3.5 Accidental and Intentional Value Destruction

Value destruction may sometimes happen intentionally or accidentally through the misuse of resources or misalignment of processes (Lefebvre and Plé, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). The result, however, the loss of value, is the same (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). Intentional value destruction may seem unlikely because usually consumers and organisations collaborate with the intention of creating value not destroying it, and if value destruction occurs, it is most likely to be unintended (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Lefebvre and Plé, 2011). However, it is argued that value may also be intentionally destroyed (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Harris and Ogbonna, 2002; 2006; Lefebvre and Plé, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010).

Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010) proposed that value can be destroyed during consumer-provider interactions through accidental or intentional misuse of resources. Leferbvre and Plé (2011) added the concept of accidental or intentional misalignment of processes. The current study argues that in consumer-to-consumer online interactions, misalignment of processes does not really fit. Some studies (for example, Neuhofer, 2016) suggest that in the digital context, consumers can misuse technology to destroy value. This study argues however, that when consumers use technology to communicate about something, it does not necessarily mean that they are misusing it, even if the content was negative. If technology facilitates communication (which is not restricted to positive communication or value creation), then negative or value-destroying communication is using technology not necessarily misusing it.

The current study acknowledges the ideas of accidental and intentional value destruction in the context of online consumer-to-consumer interactions. For example, a consumer who had an unpleasant experience with a business may write a negatively charged review about that disappointing experience, discouraging others from using the products or services with the intention of getting back at the business and causing them harm. On the contrary, a consumer may accidentally destroy value when he/she for instance writes a review for a movie with a spoiler or a negative review with the intention of simply sharing their opinion and expressing themselves rather than causing harm.

3.6 Defining Value Destruction

Most of the limited empirical studies that have addressed the notion of value destruction (such as Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Leo and Zainuddin, 2016; Neuhofer, 2016; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Smith, 2013) appeared in services literature with a service-centric approach towards examining value destruction (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2017). The focus of these studies was on how value is destroyed by resource incongruity or misuse within one part of the consumption experience, which is the interaction or the service exchange between organisations and customers (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2016).

The conceptualisation of value destruction in the literature however, remains relatively implicit and there are few definitions of it. Authors in the field employ different terminology when addressing the notion of value destruction, most of them referring to it as value co-destruction (Neuhofer, 2016; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Smith, 2013), others calling it value destruction (Bowman and Ambrosini, 2010; Farquhar and Robson, 2016) or more recently value diminution (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016).

Before proceeding to providing a definition for value destruction for the context of this study, a critical examination of previous definitions and conceptualisations of value destruction was conducted. Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010, p. 431) defined value co-destruction as “*an interactional process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the systems’ well-being*”. This definition was one of the earliest given and was adopted later by most of the studies on value co-destruction that followed (for example, Smith, 2013; Neuhofer, 2016; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016).

In this definition, the reference to the interactions between service systems implies an emphasis on the value destruction that occurs within the dyadic exchange aspect of the overall consumption experience. This therefore reflects a service-centric approach towards value destruction (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2017). Another indication that this definition takes a provider perspective is that there is reliance on previously constructed definitions of services and value from service-centric research. The researchers also explain that they adopted the perspective of Vargo *et al.* (2008) on value but use the term “decline” instead of “improvement” to reflect destruction rather than creation.

In their study, Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010) elaborate further on their definition of value destruction by explaining that interactions can occur directly (between persons) or indirectly (through appliances like goods). These interactions involve integration of the resources of the firm and its consumers. In addition, they suggested that the level of co-destroyed value is not always equal for both the service provider and consumers. This proposal is borrowed from Woodruff and Flint’s (2006) suggestion that the amount of co-created value is not always equal between consumers and service providers, meaning that one party

might benefit more than the other or at the expense of the other. Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010) argue that if this is the case with value co-creation, then it could be the same with value co-destruction as well.

The argument here is that in their definition, “service systems” are limited to service providers and customers’ interactions and ignore other possible sources of value destruction. This study adopts a different perspective on value destruction by taking the consumer-dominant logic viewpoint. It places more emphasis on consumers’ sphere and interactions between consumers and less emphasis on the service provider, without fully ignoring it.

Echeverri and Skålén (2011) also describe value co-destruction as the collaborative destruction or diminishment of value by providers and consumers. Their paper disagrees with earlier research in interactive value formation when it comes to the idea that value destruction takes place solely in exchange-based settings (Ramírez, 1999). They also argue that the significance of value destruction was undervalued earlier, with destruction of value being viewed as just a minor drawback of value co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Accordingly, the authors agree with Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010) and argue that recognising value co-destruction is an important part of the consumer-provider interaction process, just like value co-creation when consuming the service. However, unlike Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010), Echeverri and Skålén’s (2011) study takes another approach towards value creation and destruction in the sense that it is informed by practice theory.

Echeverri and Skålén (2011) concentrate on face-to-face encounters between consumers and service providers and highlight the possible value-creating/destroying interactional practices. The authors also highlight that there are known practices of interaction between consumers and service providers in the context of public transportation. According to them, during interactive value formation, value can be co-created and co-destroyed. Value is co-created when there is congruence in consumers’ and service providers’ elements of interaction practices in terms of engagements, understandings and procedures. Conversely, value is co-destroyed when consumers’ and service providers’ elements of interaction practices are incongruent. Value co-destruction is recognised in this study as being a consequence of interactive value formation between consumers

and service providers.

The current study disagrees with Echeverri and Skålén (2011) on the idea that value-creating or destroying interactions only occur between service providers and consumers. This outlook is a little limited compared to what happens and thus, this study intends to examine value destruction beyond this service-centric outlook. The growing literature in value creation recognises the presence of consumers' sphere and not just the service sphere (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). Hence, it is argued that if value can be created beyond dyadic exchanges (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2016), then there is a possibility of value destruction beyond those dyadic exchanges as well (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2017). For example, consumers may interact with other consumers and those interactions can also create or destroy value.

In Smith's (2013) research, value co-destruction was described as the unanticipated loss of resources due to the organisation's inability to achieve their value proposition (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Smith (2013) explored consumers' viewpoint on the loss of resource. The author highlighted that firms can sometimes misuse their own resources as well as consumers' resources, which results in consumers losing resources, those resources being identified as self-related resources, material resources, energy, social resources and hope. Smith (2013) also highlighted the consequences of that resource loss, which involved negative emotions such as anxiety, anger and disappointment and negative behaviours like complaints, negative word-of-mouth and brand switching. The difference between Smith's (2013) interpretation of value co-destruction and Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres's (2010) is in the meaning they accord to value. Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010) linked value to well-being, which is destroyed when resources are misused, while Smith (2013) portrayed value as a resource and the loss of that resource reflects a loss in value.

Another definition found in recent literature comes from Vafeas *et al.* (2016), who defined value diminution as "*the perceived suboptimal value realization that occurs as a consequence of resource deficiencies in, or resource misuse by, one or more interacting actors.*" The value they refer to in this definition is "the improvement in well-being" adopted from Vargo *et al.* (2008). They also highlight

that all actors are not always victims of value diminution, and sometimes diminution affects only one actor and not the other. In addition to that, the authors also emphasise that not all actors are equally affected by value diminution. This definition is not very different from the previously developed ones in terms of resource misuse. However, resource deficiency is another highlighted issue that might have been overlooked in other definitions, although some researchers (for example Smith, 2013) have emphasised the idea of the loss of resources from consumers' perspective. This definition is in a way a combination of Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres's (2010) perspective on value and Smith's (2013) perspective on value co-destruction.

Finally, Corsaro's (2020) definition of value co-destruction offers a more generalizable outlook on value destruction by identifying the actors as relational parties rather than service systems. This puts less emphasis on value destruction in consumer-provider, service-dominant interactions. The definition also accounts for the idea that value can be created and destroyed simultaneously and that they are not mutually exclusive. Additionally, the idea that the process can be initiated by internal or external events to the relational interaction allows for integrating value-destroying aspects that are uncontrollable by the interacting parties. However, the idea that the destroyed value was initially co-created by the interacting or relational parties does not quite fit with the assumptions of the current study for two reasons. First, the current study argues that value is not necessarily "co-" destroyed because, as explained earlier (Section 3.3), in the case of consumer-to-consumer interactions, one consumer may be destroying value while others are not. Second, the current study also argues that the value that is destroyed does not necessarily have to be originally created by the same relational parties. Going back to the example of consumer-to-consumer interactions, when potential consumers read a negative consumer-created review, it can destroy value that was originally created by the provider through an advertisement or by another consumer in a positive review. In this case, the value that is destroyed was not initially created by the same interacting parties who destroyed value.

Table 3: Overview of Value Destruction Definitions

Authors	Term Defined	Definition	Value Destroying Aspect
Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010, p.431)	Value Co-destruction	<i>“an interactional process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the systems’ well-being”</i>	Well-being
Echeverri and Skålén (2011, p.8)	Value Co-destruction	<i>“the collaborative destruction or diminishment of value by providers and customers”</i>	Collaboration
Lefebvre and Plé (2011, p.10)	Value Co-destruction	<i>“a relationship process between focal actors and their networks that results in a decline in at least one of the focal actors and / or their networks’ well-being.”</i>	Well-being
Smith (2013, p.1890)	Value Co-destruction	<i>“the unanticipated loss of resources as a result of the organization’s inability to achieve their value proposition”</i>	Loss of resource/unachieved value propositions
Vafeas <i>et al.</i> , (2016, p.2)	Value Diminution	<i>“the perceived suboptimal value realization that occurs as a consequence of resource deficiencies in, or resource misuse by, one or more interacting actors.”</i>	Resource deficiencies/misuse
Corsaro (2020, p.100)	Value Co-destruction	<i>“the process through which relational parties co-destroy the value they previously co-created, generating a diminution in the value actors appropriated. The process can be initiated by events which are both internal and external to the relational interaction.”</i>	Loss of co-created value/ Internal or external events to relational interactions

Value destruction may differ when acknowledged in different contexts, and since this study is exploring value destruction in consumers’ online engagement experiences from the consumer-dominant logic perspective, value destruction is defined as ***the damage or decline in consumer value due to negative brand-related experiences in any given context.*** This definition emphasises the ‘consumer’ and the loss of value that occurs in consumers’ sphere during their lived engagement experiences. The use of the terms damage or decline reflects that there could be different levels of value destruction without reducing the strength of the term destruction, meaning that it could range from a small decline in value to permanent damage of value. This definition suggests that destruction

is the extent of damage to value that consumers previously perceived in a certain object or brand. The definition does not limit itself to certain value-damaging factors such as misuse of resources and interactions because negative brand-related experiences could encompass a wide range of value-destroying aspects.

The context here is not limited to provider-consumer interactions, and can also extend to consumers' sphere, which is the scope of this study. This is in line with Zainuddin *et al.* (2017) who argue that value can be destroyed beyond consumer-provider interactions. In addition to that, this definition also accommodates both online and offline contexts. Overall, the main edge that this definition holds compared to previous ones is that it is a more generalizable definition that explains the concept of value destruction regardless of the viewpoint or the perspective of the study.

The current study acknowledges that value destruction is not the lack of value creation. Value destruction is recognised as a noticeable devaluation of consumers' experiences that have a negative effect on their value judgements (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2017). This diminishment occurs when consumers' perceptions of value are more negative than positive and with depreciated product/service features (Woodruff and Flint, 2006). Value destruction represents a negative effect or outcome on value creation rather than an insignificant or positive one (Grönroos, 2011).

3.7 Value Destruction Antecedents

As Table 3 shows, it can be concluded that value destruction research is usually either behaviour-oriented or resource-oriented. Echeverri and Skålen's (2011) approach for example, is behavioural, given that they suggest that value destruction is a result of certain behaviours or practices and interactions. On the other hand, the resource-oriented approach suggests that value is destroyed due to loss or misuse of resources (Smith, 2013; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Although not explicit, with this perspective, there seems to be a hint towards cognitive and emotional aspects along with the behavioural. Resource misuse can mostly comprise negative behaviours or actions, while resource loss can involve loss of cognitive and emotional resources such as mental effort and emotional stress and

drainage. However, there are other studies that argue that it is not a question of one or the other, and that both perspectives are connected, meaning that value destruction includes characteristics of the two perspectives (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2016; Kashif and Zarkada, 2015; Stieler *et al.*, 2014). It is argued that resource misuse can take the form of behaviour; in other words, value-destroying behaviours can also be the result of resource misuse or loss.

Accordingly, the destruction of value has two aspects, the interaction process and the consequence of it (decline in well-being). Loss of a resource for one or both actors during interaction can result in the destruction of value. For example, a consumer feels that going to a certain movie was a waste of their time and money because he/she didn't enjoy it. In this example, the consumer perceived the movie experience as something that resulted in a loss in resources, which in this case are time and money. According to some scholars (for example, Lefebvre and Plé, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010) this loss of resource leads to a decline in well-being.

Various antecedents of value destruction have been identified in business-to-business interactions and these antecedents are what causes the interaction process between the service provider and client to be unsuccessful. Some of these antecedents are trust, communication, coordination and human capital (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016) also identified goal prevention and net deficit to be ways in which actors perceive value destruction. Järvi *et al.* (2018) also classified value destruction antecedents into provider-based, joint and consumer-based antecedents and added blame, inappropriate behaviour and excessive expectations on the consumers' side. Although the current study aims to look at value destruction in consumer-to-consumer interactions, it is important to discuss these antecedents even though some of them may not fit consumer-to-consumer interactions and make it possible to differentiate between the two contexts.

Lack of trust between a client and an agency can be destructive to value in terms of perceived risk. It is suggested that if there is trust between the service provider and client, decisions or advice will be perceived as less risky because of that trust. For example, a client is more likely to accept and adopt a bold creative idea from

an agency they trust but may not do so with an agency they do not trust. Lack of trust adds rigidity to the interaction between the client and agency and makes the client less open to ideas and advice. This in turn will make the agency more conservative in its creativity, which may result in it not meeting the client's expectations (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Linking this to the study at hand, in consumer-to-consumer interactions, trust can make a value-destroying interaction even more destructive and vice versa. For example, if a consumer sees a negative post or a review from one of their friends whose opinion they trust regarding a certain product/brand, they may be affected more by this compared to a post by some random person they do not know or trust.

Miscommunication is another identified antecedent to value destruction. Communication and adequate information sharing are fundamental for the interaction process between the client and service provider to be successful and result in the creation of value. Their lack is said to hinder the service provider's ability to deliver the desired outcome for the client (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). For example, if a client does not adequately inform the agency about the details of their desired creative objectives, or an agency does not extract the required information to provide the desired output from the client, then it will probably be more challenging to deliver the work as expected. In the context of consumer-to-consumer interactions, lack of adequate communication may destroy value due to incomplete or missing information. For example, if a consumer saw that a movie got a low rating without knowing why and accordingly decided not to watch it, then there is a chance that the reviewers gave it a low rating for reasons that did not matter to that person and he/she might have enjoyed the movie if that consumer was not discouraged by the misleading rating.

Another important factor is *expectations* (Smith, 2013) since consumers may experience value destruction when their expectations are not met. Failing to meet the expectations regarding an encounter or interaction between consumers and service providers is considered destructive to value as it prevents one or both actors from achieving their goals (Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). *Service failure* or inability to serve has been identified as a value-destruction antecedent in several studies (Järvi *et al.*, 2018; Skourtis *et al.*, 2016). This can be because of the consumer's inability to state their expectations clearly or the service

provider's inability to meet their value proposition (Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Smith, 2013). Sometimes consumers' expectations are unrealistic or exaggerated, making it hard for them to be met by the provider, and leading to disappointment (Smith, 2013). Another situation is when there is a conflict between actors' goals and expectations (Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). In this case, value might be created for one party and destroyed for the other, that is, simultaneous creation and destruction of value occurs (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2016).

Consumer misbehaviour is another interesting antecedent to value destruction suggested in the literature (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Kashif and Zarkada, 2015). Misbehaving consumers during a service interaction can cause value destruction as that can put front-line employees under mental pressure (Echeverri *et al.*, 2012; Kashif and Zarkada, 2015). Consumers also have the power to destroy value at times other than during the service encounter. With third-party websites, like social media and review aggregators, transferring power to consumers with the ability to review and share their positive and negative experiences with the world, firms are left with less control (Hassan and Casaló Ariño, 2016; Ward and Ostrom, 2006). Before social media consumer experiences were limited to their friends and family, with whom they orally shared opinions (Pee, 2016). Consumers now share their experiences with anyone anywhere through reviews and posts that can be easily accessed and are beyond firms' control (Ahmad and Laroche, 2017; Pee, 2016). Angry or disappointed consumers sometimes directly turn to social media to share and vent their negative experiences with adverse posts blaming the provider without prior sharing of the problem with the firm. In this case, it is argued that consumers did not give the firm a chance to fix the problem before publicising it (Järvi *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, consumers' purchase decisions are influenced by word-of-mouth and hence, such posts on social media may negatively impact the firm in terms of reputation, loss of sales and consumers (So *et al.*, 2016).

However, the current study argues that writing a negative review or post does not always have to be considered consumer misbehaviour or misuse of a resource (technology). It is true that sometimes consumers can abuse the power of social media to get back at a business; but at other times, negative reviews are the result of an inadequate service and the consumers are just sharing their opinions to help others. In both cases however, value can still be destroyed.

3.8 Value Destruction Temporality

According to Chowdhury *et al.* (2016), there is a link between value destruction and value creation, and it is suggested that they can occur simultaneously. It is suggested that the process of value creation includes the providers' process, the joint process and the consumers' process (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014; Payne *et al.*, 2008). The provider process involves the provider's activities that happen in the provider sphere to deliver a valuable output for consumers to use in their value-creating process (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). These activities include managing business and its relationship with consumers by employing the available resources, practices and processes (Pyne *et al.*, 2008). Grönroos and Gummerus (2014) proposed that, within their sphere, consumers can create value independently or socially by interacting with other members of their ecosystem. Hence, the creation of value within this sphere considers the consumers to be the sole or independent value creators (Grönroos, 2011). In the joint sphere, it is assumed that value is created (or co-created) from consumers' interactions with the providers, that is they engage in value co-creation (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014; Payne *et al.*, 2008).

Looking at the three processes above, it can be concluded that there are three different points in time: the pre-interaction, during interaction and post-interaction. The pre-interaction period involves actors' preparations for the encounter in their separate spheres, and they then interact or engage in an encounter, followed by post-interaction actions in their separate spheres (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). For example, the provider's preparation for an encounter with consumers can involve preparing or training staff, providing suitable space and getting the required materials or products to perform a service (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Payne *et al.*, 2008). In the meantime, consumers also perform activities before the encounter such as research and gathering information about the provider, such as their products and location, (Andreu *et al.*, 2010; Payne *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, when consumers experience a problem during the service encounter, such as a bad meal at a restaurant or an unpleasant hotel stay, they are expected to inform the provider about their disappointment or negative experience either during or after the service encounter (Celuch *et al.*, 2015).

In line with the idea of simultaneous value creation and destruction (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2016), it can be suggested that if value can be created at different points in time, then value destruction can also occur before, during and after consumer-provider interaction. For example, in the consumers' sphere, reading negative online reviews on a hotel or a memory of a previous unpleasant experience with them may destroy value for consumers before they interact with that hotel, as it may cause them to book at another hotel or go to them with low expectations. Pre-interaction value destruction can also be initiated in the providers' sphere; for example, by failing to provide sufficient information about the service provided (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). The previous section highlighted how value can be destroyed during a service encounter and concluded that during the service interaction some behaviours as well as misuse of resources from one or both actors can destroy value at that time. Most studies of value destruction and creation have focused on the interaction phase as a point in time. In the post-interaction phase in the consumers' sphere (Grönroos, 2008; Payne *et al.*, 2008), consumers may destroy value by writing negative reviews online or not following the providers' instructions on maintaining the product/service. Post-interaction value destruction may also occur from the providers' sphere; for instance, if a firm did not respond to clients' post-purchase enquiries, feedback and complaints, or did not meet a warranty promise.

Building on the idea that value can be destroyed prior, during and after a consumer-provider encounter, this study acknowledges the idea of the time factor in value destruction and adopts a temporal lens on value destruction (Järvi *et al.*, 2018), by focusing on the pre- and post-interaction value destruction that happens in the consumers' sphere, because the interest here is in what goes on in the consumers' processes beyond the firm's control.

3.9 Value Destruction in Dominant Logics

This section examines the appearance of value destruction in dominant logic literature. The term value destruction may not always have been used exactly in the same way, but the concept or similar concepts have been addressed in previous literature about provider-dominant and consumer-dominant logics without being labelled as value destruction. The next section outlines value destruction in each of the dominant logics.

3.9.1 Value Destruction in Goods-Dominant Logic

The destruction of value can take many forms depending on the perspective from which it is being looked at. First, this section addresses value destruction in goods-dominant logic. As mentioned in the previous chapter, goods-dominant logic assumes that value is created by producers, while consumers are passive receivers of the delivered value. The term ‘value destruction’ in this perspective is different from the current study’s idea of it. According to goods-dominant logic, value is destroyed through consumption (Vargo and Lusch, 2008b).

The economist Joseph Schumpeter in his book ‘Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy’ (1942) gave a good illustration of value destruction in the goods-dominant logic. Schumpeter established the concept of creative destruction, which is a process through which something new replaces something old by making it obsolete. He describes creative destruction as a “*process of industrial mutation-if I may use that biological term-that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one.*” (Schumpeter, 1950, p. 83). He highlights the importance of innovation and its impact on the economy and the economic system.

Schumpeter presented a distinctive outlook on competition when he criticised economists’ view of competition as a price-based competition and the dominance of price was lost to sales efforts and quality standards. He described that kind of competition as “rigid” because it occurred under similar industrial boundaries with similar production methods and conditions. The kind of competition that he thought counts more is competition arising from innovation, new technologies, new products and new types of business; in other words, the form of competition that threatens the very existence of the business or an industry (Schumpeter, 1942). Business innovation also involves utilising scale and resource allocation for creating or increasing value through economies of scale. Likewise, on social media, scale is utilised to create value through content and higher reach and exposure, but this can also mean more reach and exposure for value-destroying content.

Linking the concept of creative destruction to value destruction, it can be noticed that consumers have no input in the destruction process. It can therefore be assumed that the behavioural aspect from the consumers' point of view is not part of the value destruction process. It is a new industry or innovation wiping out or destroying an old one. Accordingly, there seems to be a cognitive factor when innovations drive consumers' interest and direct them towards the new industry and away from the existing one. Creative destruction as a concept can be used in other contexts related to economics such as business, marketing (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006), economic culture (Coyne and Williamson, 2012) and human resources (Neumann, 2015). An example of creative destruction in marketing might be an advertising campaign that is targeted at a new profitable market and threatening the existing one.

3.9.2 Value Destruction in Service-Dominant Logic

Most of the studies in value destruction have examined it through the lens of service-dominant logic (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Kashif and Zarkada, 2015; Neuhofer, 2016; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Smith, 2013; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Several studies that examined the consumers' perspective on value destruction (for example, Smith, 2013; Järvi *et al.*, 2018) adopted service-dominant logic mostly because the focus was still on consumer-provider interactions. In addition, even a recent study examining consumer-to-consumer value creation and destruction (Kim *et al.*, 2019) in the sports sector also adopted service-dominant logic. Although service-dominant logic mainly focused on the co-creation of value, it was important to highlight that value can also be destroyed under this perspective. The first study to introduce the idea of value co-destruction in service-dominant logic's conceptual framework was by Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010). In service-dominant logic, value is destroyed through interactions between service providers and consumers. The misuse of resources was also identified as a source of value destruction intentionally or accidentally (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010).

Another study tackled consumers' misbehaviour towards front-line employees during incidents in banking where both parties blamed each other for the destruction of value. Employees viewed the consumers to be abusive of their

empowerment and consumers accused the employees of being ignorant (Kashif and Zarkada, 2015). This occurs not only in the banking industry, as some research regarding value destruction in service-dominant logic was also conducted in the tourism sector (for example, Neuhofer, 2016). In that paper, the use of technology during tourists' experiences, was examined as a tool of co-creation and co-destruction of value. It identifies three value-creating and three value-destroying aspects of the use of technology during a tourist experience. The value-destroying aspects included the inability to escape everyday life, the distraction from living current experiences and feeling pressured and addicted to the use of technology.

Reflecting on engagement dimensions within value destruction in service-dominant literature, there appear to be implicit indications of cognitive, behavioural and emotional aspects within value destruction in the extant research. However, they are fragmented and scattered over different studies, with each group focusing on one aspect more than the other. For example, studies that employ practice theory (for example, Cabiddu *et al.*, 2019; Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011) are more oriented towards the behavioural aspects of value destruction, such as misalignment and conflicting social interactions between actors. Those studies focus more on consumer-provider practices that are potentially destructive to value. The cognitive and emotional aspects can be seen in studies that emphasise resource theory (for example, Smith, 2013; Quach and Thaichon, 2017). Cognitive, emotional and behavioural resources are implicitly evident in Quach and Thaichon's (2017) study as they identified love (emotional), status, information (cognitive) and services (behaviours) as resources for value creation and destruction.

However, one of the studies that more explicitly draws upon the emotional and behavioural aspects of the value destruction process from the consumers' perspective was that of Smith (2013). The process involved consumers' unexpected resource loss, and a failure by the company to create expected value. In Smith's process, loss of consumer resources leads to emotional and behavioural reactions from consumers. Consumers' loss of resources leads to experiencing unpleasant emotions (including anger, disappointment and regret). Those emotions then trigger consumers' coping behaviour for resource restoration (including complaint, and negative word-of-mouth). The process ends with the

emotional and behavioural aspects leading up to loss of consumers' well-being, which is an indicator of value destruction. The behavioural aspect leads to an increase in well-being for consumers and a loss in well-being for the company. Smith's (2013) approach of integrating engagement dimensions to understand and explain value destruction from the consumer perspective makes it the closest to that of the current study.

3.9.3 Value Destruction in Consumer-Dominant Logic

The concept of value destruction remains vague when it comes to consumer-dominant logic. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there are very few studies examining value destruction from a consumer-dominant perspective. However, similar concepts of negative consumer behaviour have been studied in previous literature that can relate to value destruction between consumers, even though the term value destruction does not appear. Literature in the areas of negative word-of-mouth, electronic word-of-mouth, product-harm crisis, customer brand sabotage and negative consumer-generated brand stories may be informative for this study. This is because they involve negative brand information and that could be destructive to value.

Negative electronic word-of-mouth literature captured online brand evaluations created by consumers in the form of online reviews and blogs (Bachleda and Berrada-Fathi, 2016; Nam *et al.*, 2018). Regarding product harm crisis research, it can be of relevance in this study because product-harm crisis involves negative information about brands that can be circulated and spread between consumers. In addition to that, consumer-generated brand stories can be negative and may involve negative events, and that makes this stream of research relevant to value destruction research. Negative consumer-generated brand stories differ from product harm crisis, because negative consumer-generated brand stories usually involve one or few consumers. On the other hand, product-harm crisis affects many of the brand's consumers (Gensler *et al.*, 2013).

Although the above-mentioned research streams focus on consumer-to-consumer interactions, they still examine them from the service providers' perspective. Most of them aim to provide a framework for businesses to follow when dealing

with issues created and spread by consumers over social media platforms, such as complaints, negative brand stories, negative word-of-mouth and consumers' reactions during product-harm crises. The argument here is that none of these studies tries to deeply understand what is happening in the consumers' sphere, how and why these issues occur. In addition to that, none of these studies taps into the concept of value destruction.

A highly significant concept related to value destruction is consumer brand sabotage, introduced by Kähr *et al.* (2016). This is a recently introduced concept regarding the intentional harm consumers bring to brands. They define consumer brand sabotage as “*deliberate behaviour by customers or non-customers who have the dominant objective of causing harm to a brand through the impairment of the brand-related associations of other consumers*”. Consumer brand sabotage can be online or offline or both and can be carried out by consumers and non-consumers as well (Kähr *et al.*, 2016, p. 26). The main difference between consumer brand sabotage and the other constructs mentioned above lies in the intention behind the behaviour. The main intention of consumer brand sabotage is to harm the brand, while the others (boycotts, negative word-of-mouth, consumer retaliation and negative consumer-generated brand stories) are done mainly to achieve equity, seek revenge, or vent negative emotions (Kähr *et al.*, 2016).

Compared to other constructs of negative consumer behaviour consumer brand sabotage is also unique in other aspects. Engagement dimensions can be used to compare these two types of behaviours between consumers. A point of interest in the current study is in understanding the role of engagement dimensions in online value destruction between consumers. Regarding emotional and cognitive aspects, the thoughts and emotions that are prior to consumer brand sabotage behaviours or actions are usually very intense and strong. Emotions such as anger, hate and high level frustrations usually precede the sabotage behaviour (Anderson and Bushman, 2002). These emotions are usually accompanied by negative cognitions that may involve a perceived threat to one's identity (Graham *et al.*, 2013) as well as thoughts of harming the brand and imagining punishing it (Anderson and Bushman, 2002).

Concerning the behavioural aspect, during customer brand sabotage, consumers are highly aware and conscious of what they are doing, and the behaviour is well planned with a significant amount of effort invested by consumers (Kähr *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, regarding relationships, consumers engaging in consumer brand sabotage are not willing to fix or have any kind of relationship with the brand. In other words, the relationship is completely destroyed with no intention of fixing it. Consumers are not aiming for compensation or an apology or any other relationship-restoring activity. On the other hand, in the other examples of negative consumer behaviours, consumers are willing to restore equity and resume the relationship with the brand (Kähr *et al.*, 2016).

In conclusion, there is plenty of work on negative consumer behaviour in consumer-dominant logic literature. However, none explicitly taps into the concept of value destruction even though most of those forms of negative consumer behaviour can be potentially destructive to value. Accordingly, consumer-dominant value destruction remains highly implicit within the relevant literature. From the perspective of this research, value destruction is a much broader notion that can include all the above-mentioned constructs. This is because in the current study, value destruction can range from negative activities that can harm the brand, to brand sabotaging activities that can cause damage or destruction to the brand that is worth millions of dollars. It therefore seeks to conceptualise value destruction in consumer-dominant logic.

3.10 The Gap

This study's approach merges different research streams of consumer online engagement, value destruction and consumer-dominant logic. Through examining and linking all the above research streams, several research gaps have been identified. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, value destruction between digitally engaged consumers from a consumer-dominant perspective has not been examined. More specifically, consumer-to-consumer brand-related, value-destroying interactions online have not been fully acknowledged to date.

With evidence from literature in the areas of consumer engagement, service-dominant logic and more importantly consumer-dominant logic, it can be

concluded that the concept of value destruction in the online context remains vague (Plé, 2017). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the notion of value destruction has not yet been examined from a consumer-dominant logic perspective, and most the studies on value destruction have tackled it from the viewpoint of service-dominant logic. As mentioned in the previous chapter, taking a service-dominant outlook on value destruction offers significant insights. However, the current study argues that there are value-related aspects that occur in the consumers' sphere beyond the scope of service-dominant logic, which can be revealed by adopting consumer-dominant logic.

By contributing to bridging this gap in the literature, the current study attempts to generate a more holistic understanding of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction process. This can reveal consumer-centric insights and nuances on the online value destruction that occurs between consumers, apart from provider involvement. This is important for understanding the depth of value destruction as a concept that can extend deeper into the consumers' sphere and is not limited by providers' direct or indirect involvement. Meaning that there can be value destruction implications in the consumers' sphere that need illumination due to its potential invisibility to business.

Generally, this is important for businesses because it sheds light on the potential of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction, and the damage that those interactions in the consumer sphere can possibly do to the business. Not understanding the nature of this business-threatening phenomenon and its possibility to extend outside consumer-provider interaction can be dangerous for businesses, precisely because the business is sometimes not part of the conversation and cannot control the consumer sphere. However, understanding the consumer-to-consumer value destruction process can help businesses to potentially influence what consumers take into their sphere from their experience with the business.

In addition, active advocates of consumer groups can also be interested in understanding the potential power they possess with social media and how to harness it for their benefit. Illuminating the destructive potential of the online context can also have an impact on consumers' and practitioners' ways of thinking

and acting in this context. Practitioners may think twice before upsetting consumers or leaving things on a negative note with them. Consumers may be more conscious about the way they engage in such behaviour and consider the potential harm they may cause for the business and perhaps think whether it is necessary to engage in destructive online behaviour.

Zainuddin *et al.* (2017) argued that value destruction empirical studies (such as Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Leo and Zainuddin, 2016; Smith, 2013) adopted a service-centric approach to value destruction and focused on value destruction in dyadic exchanges in the fields of transport, general and support services. In line with this, the current study suggests that consumer-provider interactions are only one aspect of the consumption experience (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2016; 2017). This study seeks to investigate the destruction of value beyond consumer-provider interactions (Grönroos and Voima, 2013) by focusing on value destruction in the consumers' sphere, precisely, consumer-to-consumer interactions. This outlook is in line with the idea that value can be created beyond dyadic exchanges (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2016). Zainuddin *et al.* (2017) suggested that some elements within and around the consumption experience can be value-destroying. Hence, following Zainuddin *et al.* (2017), this study proposes that value can also be destroyed outside dyadic exchanges and addresses value destruction in the consumers' sphere.

Many of the fundamental value destruction discussions have been conceptual (for example, French and Gordon, 2015; Grönroos, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Robertson *et al.*, 2014). Echeverri and Skålén (2011), Leo and Zainuddin (2016), Smith (2013) and Zainuddin *et al.* (2017) represent the growing empirical works on value destruction. Still, more empirical research is called for to investigate how and why devaluing occurs (Plé, 2017; Woodruff and Flint, 2006). In addition, value destruction has been empirically examined in relatively narrow contexts. Most of the studies undertaking value co-destruction also included value co-creation with the aim of providing a complete picture of the notion of value (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014; Neuhofer, 2016). Although this is insightful, it limits the depth of examination and the conceptualisation of value destruction, into being an opposing concept to value creation. More recent research is moving towards focusing on value destruction. Likewise, the present study proposes that

examining value destruction as an independent concept of value creation is an interesting gap to address, because it will allow for a more creative and less limited conceptualisation of value destruction.

In addition, the literature has shown that value destruction definitions are fragmented. Most of the definitions are context-specific and do not suit the digital context. The current study proposes a working definition in this chapter (Section 3.6) that is more general and attempts to define online value destruction between consumers. This is important because value destruction between consumers in the digital context needs to be distinguished from other similar notions like offline value co-destruction and consumer-provider value co-destruction. This is because it may have distinctive characteristics and implications that managers and practitioners need to be aware of in order to understand it better and accordingly deal more effectively with it as a unique phenomenon.

Overall, value destruction still needs more attention in terms of definition, antecedents and consequences, specifically in the digital context (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Neuhofer, 2016; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). Research on value destruction has identified several antecedents of value co-destruction in B2C and B2B contexts (Järvi *et al.*, 2018). However, what drives consumers to engage in online value destruction remains unclear. Thus, there is still more to be discovered regarding the antecedents of value destruction. This is important because it can help managers in developing practices for mitigating or preventing the occurrence of online value destruction. The current study therefore attempts to explore the possibility that the antecedents of online value destruction may differ from the antecedents of value co-destruction in the literature. Hence, the first research question of the current study is:

RQ1: What are the antecedents of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction?

Moreover, the existing literature provides evidence and positions technology and social media as tools facilitating value creation and enhancing the engagement experience. Consumer experience and value co-creation in the online context have been explored and conceptualised in more than one study, especially in the field of tourism (Schmidt-Rauch and Schwabe, 2013; See-To and Ho, 2014). The

implication that technology could potentially be used to destroy consumer value remained relatively implicit in literature (Neuhofer, 2016). Studies in service-dominant logic indicated that resources could create value as well as destroy it (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). Research also portrayed several practices in consumer-provider interactions that could create or destroy value (Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017). In addition, research on negative consumer behaviour portrayed different forms of consumer online engagement behaviours like negative electronic word-of-mouth and negatively valenced influential behaviour. However, consumer-to-consumer practices or forms of online value destruction remain neglected. Identifying forms of online value destruction between consumers can guide practitioners to what to look for when examining online platforms and accordingly spot the potentially destructive content. Thus, the second research question is:

RQ2: What are the forms of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction?

Moreover, the dimensionality of consumer engagement in value-destroying activities online needs empirical investigation. Because understanding consumers' cognitions, emotions and behaviours when engaging in online value destruction can provide a better and more detailed consumer-based understanding of the notion. More specifically, to better understand consumer engagement in online value-destroying behaviour, it is necessary to understand the engagement dimensions that apply to value destruction online. This can illuminate the similarities and differences between online value destruction engagement and consumer engagement online. Moreover, it can offer a deeper understanding of the consumer logic of how and why they engage in online value-destroying behaviour. Understanding the cognitions, emotions and behaviours consumers experience when engaging in online value destruction can be important for businesses to be able to handle those consumers in more adequate ways by better connecting with them. Therefore, the third research question is:

RQ3: Which engagement dimensions (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) are active when consumers engage in online value destruction?

Finally, the consequences of value destruction are generally lacking in the present literature. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, research to date has portrayed value destruction as a negative outcome to loss of resources and/or

well-being. More needs to be known about the consequences of value destruction from the consumer perspective to identify consumer-based consequences. Understanding the impact that engaging in online value destruction has on consumers will help shed light on business-related implications and offer a more comprehensive understanding of the nascent notion of online value destruction between consumers. Understanding consumer-based consequences can help managers try to mitigate the impact of online value destruction on consumers. Additionally, by understanding business-related implications, managers can identify areas of potential harm, and know where to look for damage in addressing online value destruction. Therefore, the fourth and last research question is:
 RQ4: What are the consequences of online value destruction?

The following table presents a summary of the research gaps identified by this study, the related research questions that address those gaps, the equivalent research streams and professional practice that the study contributes to by closing or addressing the gaps. The table is followed by Figure 1, which is a visual representation of how the current study merges the three research streams and their associated gaps.

Table 4: Summary of Gaps, Research Streams, Contributions and Practical Relevance

Research Gap and Questions	Research Stream	Importance/ Expected Contribution	Relevance to Professional Practise
Online value destruction needs more understanding in terms of definition, forms, antecedents and consequences. Research questions: 1, 2 and 4	Addressing this gap contributes to value destruction literature.	A better and a deeper understanding and conceptualisation of the concept of value destruction in the online context.	Understanding the unique phenomenon of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction, how to spot its occurrence online and how to mitigate its occurrence and impact on the consumers and accordingly the business.
Online value destruction in the context of consumer-to-consumer interactions has not been examined from a	Addressing this gap contributes to both, value destruction and consumer-dominant logic research streams.	Extending and using the assumptions of consumer-dominant logic as a novel perspective to explore the phenomenon of online value destruction between consumers to reveal	Understanding potentially invisible consumer-to-consumer online value destroying engagements, and the damages that those interactions in the

consumer-dominant logic perspective. Research question: 2		consumer-oriented insights for a more holistic overall view.	consumer sphere can possibly cause for the business.
The dimensionality of consumer engagement in online value destruction needs to be examined. Research question:3	Addressing this gap contributes to consumer online engagement literature and value destruction literature.	Examining and revealing the active consumer engagement dimensions (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) within consumer-to-consumer online value destruction for a deeper understanding of consumers' logic of why and how they engage in online value destruction.	Understanding the cognitions, emotions and behaviours of value-destroying consumers can aid businesses in handling those consumers in more adequate ways by better connecting with them on those aspects.

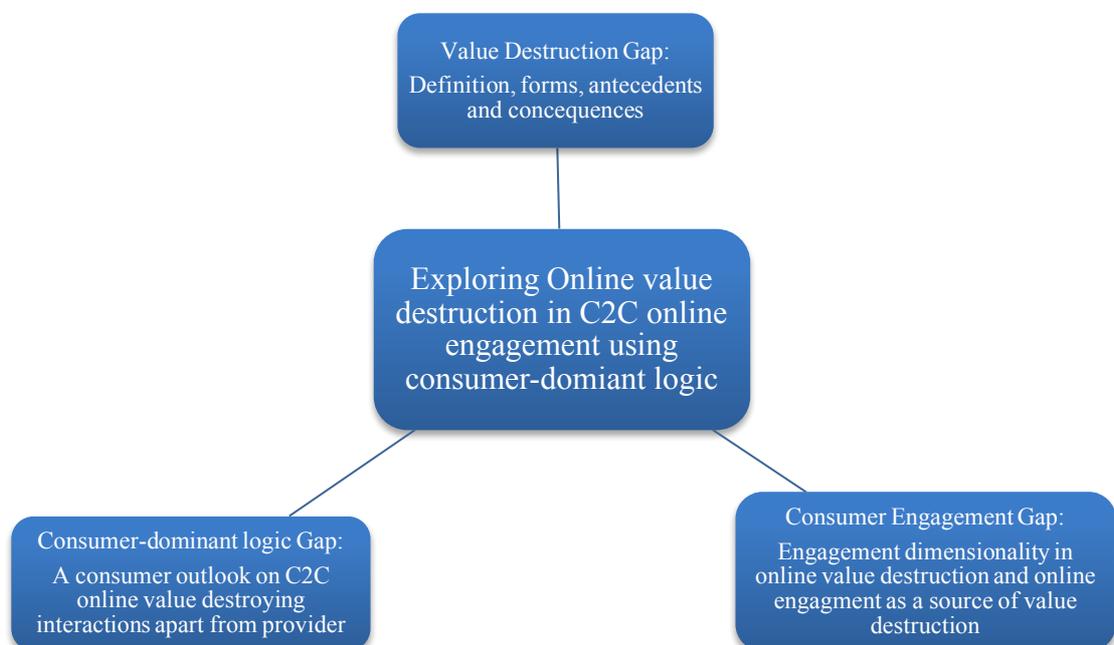


Figure 1: Convergence of the Three Research Streams

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a thorough review of the literature on value destruction in terms of its nature, conceptualisation, antecedents and definitions. This review revealed that the concept of online value destruction remains lacking in the literature in terms of definition, antecedents, consequences and nature. Furthermore, connections between online engagement dimensions and value destruction are implicit. The current study's objectives are therefore in line with

the current demands in knowledge and tackle existing gaps. Therefore, a working definition of value destruction that suits the current study has been provided. This chapter has also brought together the concepts presented in the previous chapter by demonstrating how they relate to value destruction to form the unique outlook on value destruction that the current study adopts. It has also presented the gaps found in the literature that will be addressed. The next chapter offers a detailed description of the research methodology adopted by this study to address and achieve the research objectives.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The examination of the relevant literature in the previous chapter identified several gaps and this helped clarify the research objectives and the development of more refined research questions for this study. When conducting academic research, it is important for the researcher to provide proper justifications for the methodological choices made. It is also essential to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the different academic stances in the research methodology literature to explain and justify the methods used. This chapter highlights the research approach that has guided this study's procedures and methods of carrying out the research to answer the research questions. The chapter begins by discussing the philosophical assumptions that inform the choice of research approach and then proceeds to discuss the choice of specific data collection methods and analysis.

4.2 Research Philosophy

Research design consists of ontology, epistemology and methodology, and the research paradigm is what guides all of those. Researchers' philosophical beliefs and assumptions guide and influence the methods and approaches that they decide to use in conducting their research (Creswell, 2014). Philosophical orientations have been referred to using different terms, such as paradigms (Kuhn, 1962; Lincoln *et al.*, 2011; Mertens, 2010), and worldviews (Creswell, 2014). Guba (1990, p. 17) described them as "*a basic set of beliefs that guide action*". Here, the researcher brings into the research the suitable philosophical approach and its assumptions about nature, reality and the world (Creswell, 2014).

According to Morgan (2007, p. 58) researchers that "*operate within one set of metaphysical assumptions inherently rejected the principles that guided researchers who operated within other paradigms*". However, it is important for the researcher to understand both sides of the debate in order to determine and

justify which stance better suits the research problem (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015).

An important debate that is ongoing among social scientists concerns whether the methods used in natural sciences research can be adopted by the social sciences. Philosophical assumptions or worldviews have been highly debated, and the two main ones are positivist and constructivist (Creswell, 2014; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015). These two worldviews are treated as the extreme ends of a hypothetical or theoretical spectrum (Morgan, 2007). Guba and Lincoln (1994) were recognised as having formed a system to compare the different philosophical stances, with the use of the concepts of epistemology, ontology and methodology. Ontology is the researcher's views or assumptions about reality. Epistemology is concerned with assumptions regarding which knowledge theory will assist in the examination of the nature of the world (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015) and deals with the nature of knowledge (Crotty, 1998). In other words, ontology is the study of what comprises reality and epistemology is about what counts as acceptable knowledge in a certain area of investigation (Saunders *et al.*, 2012) and the ways of knowing about and enquiring into the social and physical worlds (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015).

Debates among social scientists on ontological and epistemological views have been going on for a very long time. In the field of social science, positivist and constructivist paradigms are the most discussed research approaches. Positivists claim that there is one objective truth to be discovered and advocate the use of natural sciences methods when investigating social reality. Constructivists claim that social reality should be approached with different methods of inquiry and assume that there are multiple realities that are socially constructed. Both notions (positivism and constructivism) are presented in a way that implies that they are incommensurable, along with their respective associated methodologies (quantitative and qualitative). Lincoln and Guba (2000) for example, suggest that positivism, being associated with realism, assumes that reality is testable and independent from the theories made about it, while constructivism on the other hand assumes that meanings are constructed by individuals and groups.

Moreover, it is important to highlight that not all researchers that are in favour of a certain orientation completely agree on all its aspects; sometimes researchers who are in favour of a certain orientation can also agree with the other orientation on some matters or assumptions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015). Crotty (1998) for example, argued that accepting that the world (or reality) exists externally to the researcher's consciousness does not necessarily mean that meanings also exist externally and independently from our consciousness. In other words, worlds can exist outside the mind, but meanings cannot. Hence, realism and constructivism can be compatible. In the next section, positivism and constructivism are discussed in further detail.

4.2.1 Positivism

The first and older worldview is positivism, which was first developed and summarised by Comte (a French philosopher) in the 19th century (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015) and then writers like Emile Durkheim (Smith, 1983). Positivism assumes that social research can be done using the methods of natural science (Bryman, 2008). Positivists believe in "*the absolute conception of knowledge*", meaning that it is possible to gain complete knowledge of a social phenomenon (Durkheim, 1982).

Positivism assumes objectivity and that there is only one truth out there to be discovered, so reality is solid, external to us and measured using objective methods. Positivists also believe that facts are available and can be discovered (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015). In the application of positivism to social sciences, social facts are viewed as realities and treated as "things" that possess characteristics of their own that are separate from their subjective meaning to humans (Durkheim, 1982). Those "social facts" can only be examined and known by adopting external observations with indicators (such as statistics and measurements) in their most fixed, objective and permanently available form to any observer at any point in time or context, ensuring independence from individuals' manifestations and subjective opinions (Durkheim, 1982). A phenomenon is therefore defined in terms of its elements or observable characteristics rather than what it stands for in an individual's mind (Durkheim, 1982).

Ontologically, positivism assumes realism, where reality is objective and external. In terms of epistemology, knowledge is only significant when it is observed from reality (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008; Gill and Johnson, 2010; Jankowicz, 2005). Hence, positivistic researchers assume that law-like generalities can be made about human behaviours. Moreover, positivists believe that it is possible to objectively study human beings without the interference of the researchers' viewpoints or values (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Saunders *et al.*, 2012). This paradigm (or its close variations) was the dominant paradigm in social science research for a long time during the 20th century (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

Positivists therefore, seek theory testing and make observations and measurements to predict and perhaps control surrounding phenomena (O'Leary, 2004). The worldview allows for generalisations that are not bound by time or context (Nagel, 1986). Following this paradigm, researchers must remain detached from the subjects of study and preserve an objective research process by avoiding any personal or subjective biases they may have (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Positivism has been referred to using several terms, including positivist/post-positivist and post-positivism. This worldview reflects the traditional way of conducting research, and it has been referred to as the scientific method. Its assumptions are more relevant to quantitative research than qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). The term post-positivism characterises the way of thinking that appeared after positivism, which challenged the conventional idea of the absolute truth of knowledge (Phillips and Burbules, 2000). Therefore, it represents a shift from and abandoning of pure positivism (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). According to post-positivism, when studying human beings' actions and behaviours, we cannot be absolute or confident about the knowledge claims we make (Creswell, 2003).

The philosophy of post-positivism is deterministic and aims to show causality; hence, such studies require the examination of causes that determine or influence certain outcomes, like those tested in experiments (Creswell, 2009). Creswell, (2009, p. 7) also described post-positivism as “*reductionistic*” in the sense that

broad ideas are reduced into several separate smaller ideas to be tested, such as when research questions and hypotheses are minimised into research variables. Under this paradigm, knowledge development is still based on thorough observation and measurement of the objective reality existing in the world. Hence, it is essential for post-positivists to obtain numerical measurements of their observations when examining the behaviour of people (Creswell, 2009). Those measurements are still independent from theory, but they are neutral intermediaries that are used to connect reality with that theory. To understand the world from a post-positivist perspective, theories and laws that govern the world need to be proven and justified. This happens through a research process where the researcher begins with a theory, tests it through hypotheses creation, data collection and statistical analysis to either prove or disprove it and finally make the required adjustments before retesting (Creswell, 2003; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

4.2.2 Constructivism

As a response to the application of positivism/post-positivism in social sciences research, an alternative worldview appeared in the second half of the 20th century (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008; Gill and Johnson, 2010). It came from Mannheim as well as others like Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality (1967), and Lincoln and Guba in their *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985) as well as Habermas (1987). It was later encapsulated by more recent writers such as Crotty (1998), Lincoln and Guba (2000), Neuman (2000) and many more. Researchers taking the constructivist approach are critical of the positivists/post-positivists when they apply law-like generalisations to human subjects. They believe that humans are more complex than objects and that deeper insights can be made about the complex world if rigid law-like generalisations are reduced (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). It is argued that unlike natural phenomena that are stable over time and context, human subjects are more complex, and their ideas, perceptions and interpretations develop and change over time and across different contexts and situations. Despite their similarities, differences are significant between human subjects; in other words, people are different and may not always react similarly to the same phenomenon. For example, in the context of the current study, a consumer's opinion about a brand may change from week to week or month to month or reading a negative review might provoke different responses among

consumers. Accordingly, critics have highlighted that social science researchers should search for insights and complex meanings rather than aim for the prediction and control that scientific methods may generate.

Constructivism is built on the philosophical assumptions of relativism, which assumes that there is no objective or absolute truth. Accordingly, reality is assumed to be relative and depends on how individuals perceive the world or the investigated object. In other words, it is subjective. Therefore, unlike positivism, constructivism has a different ontological assumption. Ontologically, strong constructivism suggests that there are multiple realities mentally constructed. The existence of multiple realities means that there can be several interpretations for the same phenomenon that exists externally, and all are equally valid, even though they may contradict each other. These multiple constructed realities are mental constructions based on social interactions and individual experiences; hence, their content and manifestations are a result of each individual's perception and interpretation of the world around them and in which they live and work (Anderson, 1986; Creswell, 2009; Guba and Lincoln, 1998; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Sarantakos, 2005). Both constructivists and positivists can agree on sharing the same external reality that is prior to them and both may acknowledge the existence of a social phenomenon independent of them. The difference is in the way each one attempts to explain and analyse it (Cupchik, 2001).

Constructivists usually tackle the interaction processes between individuals. They seek to uncover and understand the meanings that people make about the world that they live in, and generate a theory from what they have interpreted, rather than trying to test a hypothetical theory as positivists do (Creswell, 2009; Gill and Johnson, 2010; Jankowicz, 2005). The current study is in line with constructivist assumptions in that it proposes that value destruction can be based on consumer social interactions through available digital media. In this study, the existence of an external reality is acknowledged, but the meanings and interpretations of a certain phenomenon are relative, meaning that they may vary across individuals and contexts. Hence, the current study's position acknowledges ontological realism and epistemic relativism.

In terms of epistemology, constructivism suggests that researchers have an interactive relation with the object or the phenomenon under study. The creation

of knowledge occurs with the progress in interaction and investigation and is based on participants' intersubjective views about a phenomenon being investigated (Anderson, 1986; Creswell, 2009; Guba and Lincoln, 1998; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Sarantakos, 2005).

Different interpretations of social phenomena occur through interactions between social players. It is often linked to social constructivism, which assumes that reality is created socially (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). When conducting research, constructivists ask broad open-ended questions about the idea being researched and allow participants to form their own meanings that come from social interactions. The researcher then carefully listens to participants' descriptions. Individuals' subjective meanings are not just present inside their minds, they are constructed by social interactions, hence the use of the term social constructivism (Creswell, 2014).

On the methodological level, constructivism uses a hermeneutical and dialectical approach with all types of qualitative methods. Mental constructions about reality can be extracted using dialectical interactions between the researcher and participants. Hermeneutics can then be used to interpret the constructions extracted to then form an agreed upon and more informed reconstruction. Strong constructivists oppose the use of any quantitative techniques, but constructivists do sometimes view the use of descriptive statistics as an illustration of one of the multiple realities' interpretations of a phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 2009).

Constructivism grew to be an acceptable alternative that is now being used in a considerable amount of research (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). According to constructivist researchers, people try to understand the world around them, where they live and work, through developing various meanings subjectively out of their experiences (Creswell, 2014). This means that different individuals give different meanings to their experiences, resulting in multiple meanings being constructed. This perspective fosters complexity and differences in views rather than generalisations of smaller and less complex notions in post-positivism (Creswell, 2009; 2014).

Authors have used different terms interchangeably to describe this philosophical paradigm opposed to the positivistic worldview. These terms include

constructionism, social constructionism, constructivism, social constructivism and interpretivism (Easterby- Smith *et al.*, 2015). However, Crotty (1998) clarified the difference between them. According to Crotty (1998) every research should have an epistemology that is embedded in and informs its theoretical perspective. The theoretical perspective (the philosophical position that guides methodology) that is related to social constructivism is interpretivism (Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2013). Interpretivism assumes that studying human beings should be different from studying objects in natural sciences (Easterby- Smith *et al.*, 2015). This study adopts the social constructionism (or social constructivism) approach and hence reflects an interpretivist research orientation.

Some authors have highlighted the difference between constructivism and social constructionism. The former stresses the idea of the constructions of meanings within an individual's mind and the latter proposes that meanings are collectively created and constructed in a social world (Schwandt, 1994). Accordingly, meanings are socially constructed and are viewed as a social product (Bryman, 2008). Consumer engagement experiences and value destruction are subjective, meaning that different consumers can perceive engagement experiences and value-destroying behaviours differently (Makkonen and Olkkonen, 2017; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). In the context of the current study, consumer-to-consumer engagement activities and the destruction of value are socially constructed by consumers as they interact and share their experiences with others on third-party websites. Those interactions may sometimes be value-destroying.

Crotty (1998) suggests that when the epistemological considerations focus solely on the activity of creating meanings in the individual mind, then it is preferable to use the term constructivism and reserve constructionism to studies where the emphasis is on the collective construction of meaning. Thus, constructivist research aims to focus as much as possible on individuals' interpretations of the situation investigated. Social constructivism assumes that meanings associated with experiences are subjectively constructed in individuals' minds through social interactions.

In line with this, Burr (2003) acknowledges that in constructivism, the agent controlling the construction of meaning is the individual, whereas social forces are in control in social constructionism. All the theories from the three research streams that the current study is built upon are centred around social interactions.

Consumer-dominant logic is a consumer-centric outlook emphasising value construction in consumers' sphere through interactions with actors from within and outside that sphere. Consumer engagement is built upon consumer interaction and engagement in brand-related content, especially since businesses utilise social media to create value through online consumer engagement. Likewise, in value destruction, interactions between actors are central for the destruction of value to occur.

The current study focuses on value destruction in consumers' social interactions rather than consumer-provider dyadic interactions. It proposes that by engaging with each other online, consumers build knowledge and gather information about a company or a brand by looking at the shared experiences of multiple other consumers online. Their perceptions of created or destroyed value are mostly based on the aggregation of all relevant reviews and posts that they read and interact with. This implies social construction of knowledge through social interactions between consumers. Social interaction is therefore of high importance to social constructionists because knowledge is created between people through their daily interactions with each other in the social context. Gergen (1985) also suggested that one of the principal assumptions of social constructionism is the idea that social processes are what sustains knowledge.

4.2.3 Choosing Social Constructionism

When conducting research, the researcher takes a lot of decisions that are guided by the ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological assumptions of the researcher (Reason, 1998). In this research, interacting with humans and extracting knowledge from their experiences is highly valued. In this research, what is being valued is originality and novelty of the perspective and context in inquiring about value destruction.

The researcher values the complexity of the lived experiences that many people can relate to; however, the interesting part is the different ways that people feel, think and behave towards lived experiences. Social media allowed individuals to be more expressive, free and genuine in communicating their emotions and thoughts; and that spiked the interest in understanding those individuals and in working with them on sharing and describing their genuine value destroying

experiences. In the meantime, ensuring their identities will remain anonymous, so that research can benefit from them and understand them for the education of others and through the development of knowledge that will bring theory and practice closer.

This research adopts social constructionism approach because it examines engagement experiences where value is being destroyed among consumers and therefore, destructive to the companies too. The aim is to enter the world of consumers and understand value destruction in online consumer engagement experiences from the perspective of the consumers. Specifically, the research examines consumers' interactions with other consumers and potential consumers to analyse the nature of value destruction in online engagement experiences from the perspective of the consumers. Hence, this study focuses on the consumer-to-consumer interactions during negative online engagement experiences and the socially constructed interpretation of value destruction that occurs during those interactive experiences.

Given the very nature of third-party websites (such as social networking sites and review aggregators), adopting social constructionism as an approach for this study appears to serve best when it comes to answering the research questions and attaining the aims and objectives of this research. As discussed in chapter 2, those third-party websites enable users to create and share content. Consumers interactions online on third-party websites created the concept of value creating online engagement experiences. In this study, the chief idea tackles the possibility of value destruction as another opposing social phenomenon being developed from those online engagement interactions and the creation and sharing of user-generated content between consumers. Such user-generated content may be differently interpreted among users and may produce different perceptions; hence, different "realities". In addition to that, this shared content may also trigger further interaction between consumers.

In the online context, social media creates a social setting where the perception of reality about products, services or brand-related objects (such as a movie, a travel destination, accommodation place, food, clothes, electronic gadgets, etc.) in the consumers' minds is constructed within. Therefore, this study recognizes

that consumers in the online context socially construct meanings about the focal object (such as a brand, a service provider, or a product). This social construction of meanings occurs through the interaction with other users and their different interpretations and meanings that are shared on social media; and accordingly, knowledge about reality is socially constructed. However, this study acknowledges that once this socially constructed content is created on third-party websites, they will exist objectively and will continue to serve the same purpose for other users visiting the site. Given the discussion above, this study therefore adopts a social constructionism approach.

Currently, there is no clear existing theory for the online value destruction between consumers to be tested or verified. This study takes a relatively new outlook on the notion of value destruction that has the potential to result in the development of theory. In addition to that, it explores the notion of online value destruction in terms of its nature and how individuals characterise it. This therefore requires the researcher to take a social constructionist approach.

The adopted approach will help develop a more holistic understanding of online value destruction from multiple perspectives to be able to clarify and bring more and deeper insights and understanding into the concept (Kashif and Zarkada, 2015). Researchers in this area who were in favour of this orientation when it comes to studying the phenomenon of value destruction wanted to benefit from more unstructured and flexible methods that allowed deep insights into the detailed experiences of consumers and this is what this study intends to achieve.

All choices have their benefits and limitations, and conducting research is all about making choices. It is therefore important for the researcher to justify their choices and account for the limitations of those choices. The main advantage of adopting social constructionism is that it is most suitable when examining experiences and meanings. Moreover, this orientation accounts for changes that may occur over time and this is suitable because the digital context is dynamic and fast changing. Furthermore, it allows for the generation of theories rather than the testing of existing theories. Flexibility of this orientation gives room to accommodate new concepts and matters that appear and helps in the understanding of the points of views of the people in their social context. Finally, the data that is collected under this is considered more natural (Easterby-Smith

et al., 2015).

However, there are some limitations that are associated with adopting a social constructionist research orientation. A lot of the weight of interpreting the data is based on the researcher's abilities and implicit knowledge. The researcher familiarised herself with the context and has undergone research trainings. Flexibility in these studies makes them more unstructured, which makes it difficult to have control over their pace and advancement. The researcher therefore followed some research guidelines and procedures in data collection (Kozinets, 2010; 2019) and analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These studies are built on the subjective views of the researchers and their subjects and that gives room for questioning the credibility of these studies (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015). Accordingly, the researcher followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) guidelines for trustworthiness (see section 4.7 Research Rigor). Finally, researchers argue that findings from constructivist research are impossible to generalise (Williams, 2000). Accordingly, the findings of the current study seek understanding a specific context rather than making context-free generalisations.

4.3 Research Design

Based on the philosophical assumptions explained in the previous section, a suitable research design needs to be created to proceed with the research. The research design is the researcher's general strategy for addressing the research problem and answering the research questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). This section begins with the reasoning logic of this research. Every research reasoning will have a research process that it is more likely to follow. Research methods vary between qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. Although very different from each other, both qualitative and quantitative research methods have distinctively and valuably contributed to the practice of social research (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

4.3.1 Reasoning Logic

There are three types of reasoning logics: inductive, deductive and abductive. The present study adopts a qualitative method with an abductive approach. This study

is not following a deductive direction as it does not aim to test a certain theory. It attempts to explore the phenomenon of value destruction with a wide lens with the aim of contributing to theory generation through interpreting and describing the experiences of participants.

In the deductive approach, research is driven by theory and begins with existing concepts or theories (Gummesson, 2000) and tests those theories throughout. Therefore, theory is the preliminary source of knowledge (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Inductive reasoning on the contrary, involves a theory-building process that commences with real-life data (Gummesson, 2000) and seek to produce knowledge about a certain phenomenon through empirical observations of specific instances (Hyde, 2000). It aims to explain why things occur and work the way they do (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

Abductive reasoning has recently been referred to as “*Inference to the best explanation*”. There is agreement among many philosophers that the abductive type of inferences is used both in daily life and scientific reasoning (Douven, 2017). Abductive reasoning can combine aspects of both inductive and deductive reasoning. It can begin with real-world observations or with theoretical preconceptions contingent upon the phenomenon being investigated. Abductive reasoning research has a creative process involving iteration between theory and data, which allows shifts from theory to data and vice versa (Kovács and Spens, 2005). Hence, the processes of collecting data and building theory occur simultaneously (Creswell, 2013) in the form of a back and forth movement between them (Kovács and Spens, 2005). This iteration process helps the researcher compare literature and results and use their previous experiences to distinguish generalizable and non-generalizable aspects (Kovács and Spens, 2005).

The current study adopts abductive reasoning logic, which is considered effective when the research aims to discover new insights into the phenomenon under study (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). It is therefore a suitable reasoning logic for this study because the concept of value destruction in engagement experiences has been examined before in terms of antecedents and definition. Although this study takes a different and novel outlook on value destruction, a current understanding of the phenomenon exists in literature. In line with this, abduction is also fruitful when it comes to exploring understudied phenomena in a different context because it

involves understanding a phenomenon in a novel manner (Dubois and Gadde, 2002; Kovács and Spens, 2005). Hence, the existence of a prior understanding of these concepts allows for comparing the emerging results with the literature, making abductive reasoning a suitable approach.

4.3.2 The Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research origins can be traced back to anthropology and American sociology (Kirk and Miller, 1986; O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015). According to Holloway and Galvin (2017, p. 3) "*Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live*". The main interest of qualitative researchers is to make sense of a social phenomenon in terms of a situation, a group, an interaction or an event (Locke *et al.*, 1987). The researcher attempts to understand a social phenomenon by going through a highly explorative and analytical process (Miles and Huberman, 1984). This requires high involvement of the researcher in the context under study where greater understanding is being sought. Researchers therefore become immersed in the subjects' world to capture their meanings and perspectives (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015) summarised ten main aspects or characteristics of qualitative research that differentiate it from quantitative research. There are no attempts to change or influence the research setting and the researcher examines the individuals' world as it is (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Locke *et al.*, 1987; O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015). Research does not need to be built on a pre-existing theory that is being tested and theory is formulated as a result of interpreting the data collected (Creswell, 2014; Locke *et al.*, 1987; O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015). It is the researcher in this approach who is considered the main research tool, due to the high level of involvement and iteration of the process (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

4.3.3 Adopting Qualitative Approach

Some kinds of social research problems require certain research approaches and this study follows a qualitative research process, which is useful when exploring and trying to understand a phenomenon. Since this study aims to explore and

understand the destruction of value in consumer-to-consumer online engagement experiences, the qualitative approach best suits its purpose. Qualitative research is also preferable when limited research has been done on the research phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2014). The concept of value destruction is not new to literature. It is however, necessary to highlight that the idea of value destruction during consumer-to-consumer interactions in the digital context is still vague in the literature.

Another reason for adopting the qualitative research approach is that there are not yet any relevant variables and relationship claims to test in online value destruction between consumers. More needs to be known about value destruction in the digital context in terms of its definition, nature, antecedents and consequences. In addition, qualitative approach is relatively more suitable because, as mentioned before, there is no research to date examining value destruction through a consumer-dominant logic lens. Hence, the novelty of the research problem calls for a qualitative research approach to explore and provide better explanations of value destruction in the digital context from a consumer-dominant logic perspective, and this will also allow for the creation of a theoretical framework that could be tested in future research projects.

Finally, most of the studies in value destruction have adopted qualitative research methodologies (Corsaro, 2020; Kähr *et al.*, 2016; Kashif and Zarkada, 2015; Kirova, 2020; Neuhofer, 2016; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Smith, 2013; Tynan *et al.*, 2014; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). This goes back to the fact that little is known on the notion of value destruction and qualitative research is still needed for the development of a theory and for the conceptualisation of value destruction.

The purpose of this study is exploratory, because not enough research has been conducted in the specific area under investigation. Exploratory research is needed when only a few facts are known about a particular phenomenon and more information is needed to become more familiar with that phenomenon, and this is the case with value destruction in online consumer engagement. In addition, this research will be a foundation for further or more conclusive research based on the insights that it provides (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013).

4.4 Research Methods

Research methods are the tools and techniques that the researcher uses to collect data. These tools are also chosen to suit the research strategy adopted. This study is considered a multi-method qualitative study because qualitative data will be collected using two qualitative data collection methods. According to Shagrir (2017), the two primary ethnographic data collection methods are observations and interviews.

To explore the evolving and complex phenomenon of value destruction in the digital context, this study employs netnography as a methodology to examine consumers' online value-destroying behaviour in its natural context. Netnography in this study combines two data collection methods (Kozinets, 2010) over two phases: the netnographic phase and semi-structured interviews. Netnography is the term used to describe ethnographic techniques used to examine communities online (Kozinets, 2002; 2010); it is therefore close to ethnography but in the online context (Brodie *et al.*, 2011) and follows a specific set of procedures (Kozinets, 2020). Netnography was followed by interviews with consumers to gain more insight into their online value destruction as well as to help the interpretation and reasoning of the observed behaviour.

Netnography was adopted because it enables the researcher to examine the context in its natural form by looking at the genuine and organic consumer interactions. It also enables the researcher to gain deeper insights and verify the interpretations by interacting with consumers. Netnography was also appealing to the researcher because it involves a set of clearly defined procedures. It is also appropriate when there is a specific aspect of the context that is of interest to the researcher because it involves a targeted dive into a research context, which in this study is negative consumer created content. More reasons for netnography are explained later (Section 4.4.3).

The purpose of integrating netnography with interviews in the current study is to gain comprehensive understanding and descriptions. The objective of combining those two methods is that each helps address different aspects of the research objectives at hand. Specifically, the netnographic phase aims to examine online value-destroying behaviours of consumers, gain insight into the nature of online

value-destroying behaviours and engage the researcher more deeply in the research context. The interview phase reflects direct participation and interaction with users. The aims of this phase involve capturing details of the consumers' subjective experiences with online value destruction, gain deeper insights into consumers' perspective and offer consumer insights into the interpretation of the observed phenomenon.

4.4.1 Netnography

Researchers in the field of marketing started to apply market-oriented ethnographic research methods to the digital context during the late 1990s. Kozinets (1997; 1998; 2001; 2002; 2010; 2015; 2018) was the first to introduce what he termed "netnography" as a marketing research method of data collection. He adopted this method in the fields of marketing and consumer behaviour and defined netnography as "*a specific set of related data collection, analysis, ethical and representational research practices, where a significant amount of the data collected and participant-observational research conducted originates in and manifests through the data shared freely on the internet*" (Kozinets, 2015, p. 79).

Netnography is based on adapting and using ethnographic research techniques to examine publicly available online interactions and experiences on digital platforms from a human viewpoint (Kozinets, 2018). Those interactions may occur through internet-based communications, such as blogs, brand communities, review websites and social networking sites. Netnography is not however, synonymous with online ethnography. Although it may have been simplistically described and perceived that way, netnography is not a general term that can be used to describe any study conducted in the online context. Kozinets (2018) clarified that it can be considered a specific type of online ethnography. Netnography employs specific processes with a set of analytical approaches that can be applied over a range of online involvement levels and clearly differentiates between participant and non-participant observations (Kozinets, 1998; 2002; 2010; 2015). It necessitates the immersion and engagement of the researcher in the setting for a period long enough to become familiar with the setting and the views of those who populate it (Kozinets, 2006; Muñiz and Schau, 2007). What counts as immersion has been continuously debated, but Kozinets (2018) explained

that netnography does not necessarily entail researcher interaction and posting in the focal online page or group. Immersion and participation here mean an understanding developed by interactions over time, which can involve thoroughly interviewing participants, engaging with text, informational websites and many other forms (Kozinets, 2018).

Netnography can be an unobtrusive and a naturalistic method devised to derive rich consumer insights from data available on online social networks (Kozinets, 2010; 2018) and as a method, netnography plays a significant part in research in a world where consumers are increasingly connected to each other without being bound by geographical or temporal aspects. In addition, various researchers have adopted and supported netnography in examining online consumer-created content such as reviews about brands and organisations (Azer and Alexander, 2018; Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Costello *et al.*, 2017; Heinonen and Medberg, 2018). Consumer-created content is usually visible by other users, including potential consumers. Netnography was adopted in several consumer engagement and services marketing studies where for example, cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects in positive and negative consumer engagement were examined in online communities (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). It has also been employed in examining value creation and destruction in consumer-provider online social practices and consumer reviews (Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Kirova, 2020).

The research objectives that are addressed in the first phase of data collection (netnography) are 1) to explore the forms of online value-destroying behaviours in consumer-to-consumer interactions on third-party websites 2) to examine the forms of consumers' expression of and responses to value-destroying online content 3) to explore consumers' expressions of reasons for engaging in online value-destroying behaviour 4) to explore the observable consequences of online value-destroying behaviour. The following section provides detailed steps for the netnographic procedure followed.

4.4.2 Netnographic Procedure

Kozinets (2002; 2010), highlighted five main strategies to be followed for conducting proper netnography. However, with the dynamic nature of the digital context, that process is continuously evolving. In his latest book, Kozinets (2020)

highlighted three broad categories of data collection, data analysis and data interpretation. The data collection phase involves investigation, interaction and immersion, while data analysis and interpretation include breaking down and then reintegrating the data collected (discussed in Section 4.8). The following section discusses the netnographic data collection procedure. Investigation involves exploring the context and identifying the online setting being examined. Interaction includes engaging and getting involved within the selected context, while immersion encompasses reflecting and making personal records of observations from the context (Kozinets, 2020).

Investigation

This is the first step in the procedure, it involves identifying online platforms or communities that are the most suitable for the study and finding out as much as possible about them. It is preferable if the identified online communities have certain unique characteristics; for example, the highest number of participants, the most active in terms of posts and traffic, a high level of member interaction, the provision of rich and detailed information or discussion of topics that are relevant to the research question (Kozinets, 2002).

This study aims to understand value destruction in online engagement activities between consumers. Most of the studies that examined online engagement were limited to social media online brand communities (Dessart *et al.*, 2015). However, this study argues that online engagement activities go beyond social media platforms. The researcher began by conducting preliminary online observations (see Appendix 9) over eight weeks to identify the online platforms with the highest potential for value destruction. According to those observations, the researcher identified three types of third-party websites where a high level of engagement between consumers takes place: 1) review aggregators 2) social networking sites 3) file-sharing websites.

Review sites are third-party websites that collect user-generated reviews from different sources (consumers and experts) about a certain product or service. For example, tripadvisor.com for hotels, rottentomatoes.com or imdb.com for movies, yelp.com for restaurants, amazon.com for household goods, goodreads.com for books and healthgrades.com for doctors. Review sites allow consumers and experts to post positive or negative reviews about products and

services so that others can use them as a guide when making product/service choices and decisions (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Many negative reviews may have the potential to destroy value for consumers (Sparks and Bradley, 2014). Some may be intending to buy a product or a service, but change their minds about it because a review is seen as credible and trustworthy (Akehurst, 2009; Flanagin and Metzger, 2013).

Social networks, as a part of Web 2.0 technology, provide a technological platform for individuals to connect, produce and share content online (Boyd and Ellison, 2008; Pletikosa Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013). Boyd and Ellison (2008, p. 211) defined social networking sites as “*web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system*”. The largest and most visited social networking site is Facebook (Statista, 2020).

Observation of social networks showed that user-generated content was shared through brand pages, consumer-created pages and groups, third-party pages and personal consumer profile posts. In this phase, the focus was on public consumer-created brand pages, anti-brand pages and third-party pages. Consumer personal profiles and groups were addressed using the interviews in the second phase for two reasons. First, personal profile posts are difficult for the researcher to track. Second, to mitigate privacy concerns and consent issues from the members within groups.

Finally, file-sharing websites allow the sharing of files between consumers. From a value-destroying perspective, file-sharing websites may be misused in some cases by consumers. For example, in music and movie sharing sites consumers can upload and share with each other the latest movies, series and music without having to pay for it. Although these websites are continuously being shut down and these activities are punished, consumers continue to use them, which threatens those industries more. This type of third-party websites will not be examined in this study because they are considered illegal and can eventually be shut down by organisations if reported. In this study, the researcher is more concerned with the legal destruction of value that consumers engage in beyond the control of organisations.

Site Selection

Upon identification of the platforms that will be observed, the researcher began to identify and collect the required data. This phase mainly involves observing two types of third-party websites. As mentioned above, the first type is review sites (websites that collect consumer reviews), the second is social networking sites. The selected data collection platforms were Amazon.com and Facebook public pages, which match Kozinets's (2010) guidelines for site selection since all of them are active, with recent posts and activity during the data collection period. These pages also contain rich data that have detailed consumer descriptions. They are also interactive, involving communication between users (which is a necessary criterion for this study). Additionally, all the pages offer heterogeneity in the sense that these are popular pages with a very large number of users from multiple places all over the world. Below, is a more detailed description of the selection rationale behind each data source and demonstrates how Kozinets's (2010) selection guidelines apply to each platform selected.

Review Site Selection

The researcher examined consumer reviews on Amazon.com because it is one of the largest and most active review sites. Amazon is one of the top online retail companies in the world, as it was ranked second after Google in the top-10 list of review sites (Abramyk, 2020) and ranked sixth on Forbes's top-100 digital companies list of 2019 (Forbes, 2019). However, another important reason Amazon.com was the review site of choice in this study was that the platform allows other users to comment on reviews. Many popular review sites, like Google reviews and TripAdvisor do not allow other users to comment on reviews and only the focal business can reply to reviews. It was necessary in the current study to observe the responses to reviews to understand their value-destroying effect on consumers and to examine the observable consequences of negative content that can be value-destroying. Reviews and responses from ten popular items on Amazon from different categories were collected. The selected products were kept confidential to protect the identity of the reviewers and responders.

Facebook Public Pages Selection

Second, Facebook was selected as the social media platform because it is the most used platform of all social networking sites (Dolan *et al.*, 2019), with an estimated

2.6 billion active users a month (Statista, 2020). Additionally, this platform is highly used for sharing consumer experiences (Dolan *et al.*, 2019; Logan, 2014; Mei *et al.*, 2019). As mentioned above, the focus in this phase was on consumer-created brand pages, anti-brand pages and third-party created pages. One page of each type was selected and observed. The pages were 'Apple', 'Apple Sucks' and 'IMDB'.

Apple's brand page on Facebook was selected because it is a consumer-created brand page and was not officially created by Apple as some mistakenly think. In addition, this page is highly popular with around 12.7 million followers. The page is also active with posts and user interactions with those posts and other users as well. There is no verified sign on this page which shows it is not an official brand page for Apple. 'Apple Sucks' was selected because it is one of the relatively popular anti-brand Facebook pages and was used in Hollebeek and Chen's (2014) netnographic study to examine negative brand engagement. The page is less active compared to 'Apple', but all the activity is negative rather than a combination of negative and positive. Finally, "IMDB" was chosen as a third-party created page because it is not the movie producer or movie's official page, it is the movie review-site's page. IMDB.com is also one of the top movie review sites and their official Facebook page "IMDB" is highly popular with around 7.5 million followers compared to 2 million for the "Rotten Tomatoes" Facebook page. Amazon's Facebook page was not selected in this category because most of the negative content on the page concerned Amazon's delivery problems and consumer service rather than the vendors' product-related issues. This means the content is related to "Amazon" as a company not as a third-party created page for vendors. Airbnb and TripAdvisor Facebook pages had the same disadvantage as Amazon and were accordingly excluded.

Review Selection Criteria

All collected reviews and posts are considered public (for anyone to access and read). Only negative reviews about regular products or services are observed as the study examines value destruction. The main observation unit is negative comments or reviews. In other words, the criteria are in the content itself and not in the participants' characteristics. Some inclusion and exclusion criteria were set

for selecting the posts, guided by Rageh *et al.* (2013) and Camilleri and Neuhofer (2017):

- The reviewed object should have at least ten negative reviews.
- Reviews should preferably be rich in text and fully describe the details of the consumer's unpleasant experience.
- Reviews must have responses or comments in text from other users.
- Reviews that are one or two words are excluded.
- Responses or posts by the service provider and irrelevant off-topic posts such as advertisements are excluded.

Interaction and Immersion

Based on the set criteria, the researcher went into the field and began the netnographic process. For Amazon reviews, the researcher first filtered the reviews by choosing to view only the negative ones for the selected item (rated 1-3). The researcher then went through all the negative posts and selected the ones that met the criteria. For Facebook pages, the researcher went through all the posts on the page, starting with the recent ones, and searched for the negative content that met the criteria. In adopting what Kozinets termed engaged data collection (Kozinets, 2019) over eight months the researcher: 1) visited the selected pages throughout the data collection period to find more layers and new content, 2) continuously engaged with the dataset of Amazon and Facebook posts and replies, 3) kept an immersion notebook where all thoughts, reflections and impressions during the netnographic phase were recorded, 4) did not post or comment on any of the selected pages, but is a reviewer and posted several reviews on other platforms such as google reviews. Engagement with data in this context does not entail active engagement and posting on the chosen platform. The researcher continuously engaged with the content, not the users. In doing so, immersion notes were taken and the researcher's reflections were read before the next field visit. The researcher constantly engaged with the content by reading and reflecting on the content and the immersion notes. In addition, a higher level of interaction is achieved in the second phase of the data collection process in semi-structured interviews. Therefore, according to Kozinets *et al.* (2010) and Kozinets (2019; 2020) the researcher is considered to have met the acceptable criteria for immersion and the interactive components of netnography.

The relevant posts, reviews and their comments are copied and pasted into a Microsoft Word document to create a transcript of the data. In this document, all the unnecessary user information is removed and each review and comment is given a code. The researcher also took screenshots of all the selected items. The researcher continued to collect data using the technique described until the new data became redundant to the data already collected and the researcher was looking at repetitive information in the reviews, posts and responses (Saunders *et al.*, 2017). The table below shows the total number of reviews and responses collected from each source of data.

Table 5: Netnographic Sample

Source	Reviews/Posts	Comments/Responses
Amazon.com	533	1722
Facebook	57	477
Total	610	2199

4.4.3 Benefits and Limitations of Netnography

Costello *et al.* (2017) highlighted the various benefits and limitations of adopting netnography. Netnography can be done unobtrusively (Kozinets, 2002; 2010) and that gives it an advantage over several traditional qualitative methods such as interviews, ethnography and focus groups, where the researcher needs to interrupt the participants to collect data. Being immersed in the research setting does not mean that the researcher will interrupt people's ongoing activities all the time, and it may involve some interactions with them, but those interactions will not be the only or main source of data. According to de Valck *et al.* (2009) and Kozinets (2018), netnographic techniques are more cost-efficient and less time-consuming when it comes to examining online communities.

Moreover, Kozinets (2002) pointed out that netnography was the best way to study consumers' experiences. This is mainly because consumers communicate their positive or negative experiences online after and not during the experience and hence, they will not be affected by the presence of the researcher (Rageh *et al.*,

2013). Netnography allowed the researcher in the present study to capture the social and collective aspect of online value destruction, which is an element that may not be accurately extracted from individuals in face-to-face encounters.

Despite the significant advantages of adopting netnography, there are some limitations that the researcher needs to acknowledge and account for. Netnography might sometimes be time-consuming as it may take the researcher time to identify and join an appropriate online platform. After spending some time observing a forum and taking field notes, a researcher may discover that the information on this forum is not rich enough and that may require looking for a more suitable online forum (Loanzon *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, the researcher conducted a pilot that involved eight weeks of preliminary online observations to identify suitable sources of online value destruction between consumers. In addition to that, ethics in netnographic research is still a controversial topic. There are arguments about what content is considered public and can be observed (Langer and Beckman, 2005; Loanzon *et al.*, 2013). This can sometimes be a problem, because many users reject the presence of the researcher. In trying to mitigate this challenge, the researcher ensured that the chosen platforms and pages were public, can be seen by anyone and did not require permission to be accessed. Researchers should also consider the credibility and trustworthiness of the observed online platform (Loanzon *et al.*, 2013) and to do so, Kozinets's (2010) guidelines for choosing websites were adopted.

4.5 Interviews

This research employed interviews as a second phase in the data collection process. Interviews served two purposes, the first was to complement the netnographic phase by examining the areas that are hard to observe such as personal profile posts and private groups posts. The second was to verify and deepen the understanding and the interpretation of the observed behaviour in the first stage. Interviews have also been used as part of many netnographic studies to allow the researcher gain deeper insights into the observed phenomenon (Costello *et al.*, 2017). Brodie *et al.* (2013), Cherif and Miled (2013) and de Valck *et al.* (2009) presented their netnographic studies as a combination of both observing online community communications and in-depth interviews with the members.

Interviewing is regarded as a powerful and highly common tool adopted by qualitative researchers for understanding people and their experiences (Bryman, 2004; Fontana and Frey, 2003). Interviews are used in qualitative research to collect detailed information about a certain topic (Gruber *et al.*, 2008) and has been typically recognised as a key element in research design (Weiss, 1994). Interviews are a socially acceptable way of obtaining information naturally about numerous situations and topics. They are intentional conversations that are prearranged and governed by sets of rules and procedures (Leonard, 2003).

According to Kvale (1996), meanings that come out of individuals and events in their natural context are not always observable; hence, interviewing consumers can be a highly effective way to provide insights into those unobservable constructs. To capture consumers' emotions and cognitions during online value destruction, interviews can be more insightful and deepen understanding of the phenomenon investigated. Interviews can help extract participants' opinions, experiences, interpretations, emotions and information in the form of precise quotations from individuals.

Being a highly interactive method of data collection, several researchers (for example, Bell, 1987; Berg, 2007; Kvale, 1996) recommend interviews when explanations for human behaviours are required. In line with that, Gray (2004, p. 214) suggested that interviews are appropriate when highly personalised data is required, there are opportunities for probing, a good return rate is important or when respondents are not native speakers or have a problem with expressing themselves in writing.

Interviews are a widely used and recognised method for data collection in value destruction and engagement research (Dessart *et al.*, 2015; Kähr *et al.*, 2016; Neuhofer, 2016; Tynan *et al.*, 2014; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). This study employs semi-structured interviews with social media users as a second phase of data collection. Semi-structured interviews are common in qualitative research. This type of interview is suitable when the researcher is not aiming to test specific hypotheses (David and Sutton, 2004). Semi-structured interviews give the researcher more freedom compared to structured interviews, where the researcher must commit

to a pre-set interview guide (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The researcher has a group of questions, topics or issues to be discussed. Those key themes, questions or sub-questions give the researcher direction in covering the questions needed in the way they see fit (David and Sutton, 2004). Thus, they are more customised in the sense that the interviewer has the freedom to change the order and wording of the questions according to the interview direction (Corbetta, 2003). If necessary, the researcher may ask additional questions that were not planned beforehand.

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher is encouraged to explore and probe with questions that can help clarify and reveal more about the researched topic. Running the interview in the form of a conversation with spontaneous wording of the pre-set questions or themes that fit within the conversation is also recommended (Patton, 2002). Gray (2004) added that this type of interviewing allows for probing for additional insights and interpretations from interviewees. Probing discovers directions that were not originally considered. It is the main strength of semi-structured interviews and requires an experienced interviewer to make the most of it.

The research objectives tackled in the second phase of data collection (semi-structured interviews) in this study are 1) to gain deep understanding of the reasons that drive consumers to engage in online value-destroying behaviour, 2) identify consumers' cognitive, emotional and behavioural states when engaging in online value-destroying behaviour, 3) to explore the consumer-based consequences of engaging with online value-destroying content 4) to gain deeper consumer insights into the online value-destruction process from their perspective.

4.5.1 Limitations of Interviews

Semi-structured interviews also have some limitations, just like any other method. The data collected are based on interactions between the researcher and informants and hence, they lack objectivity and neutrality because they are based on the researcher's interpretations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The researcher in this case tries to maintain objectivity as much as possible by sticking to the data and choosing a diverse sample. In addition to that, there is a risk that informants' answers may be inaccurate, and they may try to give answers that are more

socially acceptable or exclude some useful information (Bradburn, 1983). In attempting to mitigate this risk, the researcher approached a heterogeneous sample (see Table 6) and asked probing questions to gain as much data as possible out of the interview. Interviews also rely heavily on the participant's memory and that means that participants may forget things or details (Malhotra, 2010). The researcher asked participants to tell the details of the focal issue or incident to help retrieve the events accurately and the interviewees were also sometimes asked to retrieve their value-destroying post when possible to enhance their memory of it and its surrounding circumstances. In addition to that, the interviewees were asked to talk about the problem that was either most recent or most significant to them. Overall, interviews require a set of skills from the interviewer such as interpersonal and observational skills and intellectual judgement (Gorden, 1992).

4.5.2 Interview Procedure

The interviews that were conducted began with the researcher introducing herself and explaining to the participants that they were being invited to participate in a PhD study. To understand the research purpose, the details from the participant information sheet were slowly read to the interviewees and verbally translated when needed on the spot. Verbal consent was obtained for participation and recording of the interview. The interview began by asking the interviewee to talk about a recent negative experience that they communicated about on a social media platform. Interviewees were then left to explain in their own time, words and preferred language (Arabic or English) the details of the incident or issue. The second part of the interview involved further questions about value destruction on social media. In the third part of the interview, the researcher briefly explained the meaning of review aggregators in the context of this research and then began asking the interviewee about their experiences with value destruction on review sites. The details of the interview guide are present in the appendices (see Appendix 1).

Notes were taken by the researcher during the interview and probing questions were asked when necessary to clarify, gain further details and better understand the participant's perspective. The duration of the interview depended on the interviewee's ability to articulate ideas and interviews ended when interviewees

had expressed their full answers to the researcher's questions in their own time. Interviews lasted an average of 21 minutes depending on each interviewee.

4.5.3 Interview Sampling Description and Justification

The study adopts a social media user-oriented approach (Dessart *et al.*, 2015) to examine the evolving phenomenon of value destruction. Social media allows consumers to create and share user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media provides a rich context demonstrating engagement activities with high levels of consumer-to-consumer interactivity (Gummerus *et al.*, 2012). Based on the idea that online engagement activities of consumers can be value-destroying rather than value-creating (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010), social media platforms serve as a suitable context for this phase of data collection. It was difficult to contact candidates from review aggregators for interviews because most of the names used by reviewers are pennames (Langer and Beckman, 2005). It was decided not to specify or impose certain social media platforms or specific brand categories because it is still unclear which types of brand categories or communities are more likely to generate engagement with value-destroying content (Dessart *et al.*, 2015; Vivek *et al.*, 2014).

The current study adopted purposive sampling which is the most common sampling choice (Bryman, 2008; Marshall, 1996; Patton, 2002). In this method, participants who are of relevance to the research questions are selected. Specific criteria are set, and only those individuals who meet them are considered relevant participants (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). Those criteria may involve possessing certain features or characteristics or even specific experiences or behaviours that facilitate exploring and understanding the idea under investigation (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, with the purpose of seeking quality data and high credibility among respondents, the current study employs the purposive sampling method.

In this research, adopting purposive sampling means that social media users who engaged in any form of value-destroying activity online (such as giving a negative review or posting something negative about a business on their own accounts) were approached. In recruiting interview participants, this study based selection on three criteria. The first is that they had to be active members of an online

community (preferably a community aimed at destroying a certain brand, for example, 'Apple sucks'). The second criterion is that they must have engaged in value-destroying behaviour on social media at least once. This can involve creating a negative post on their profile, sharing a negative experience on a page, a group or an online community or writing a negative review on a review site. Interviewing highly engaged users is common in engagement research (Bowden *et al.*, 2017; Cova *et al.*, 2007; Dessart *et al.*, 2015; Muñiz and Schau, 2005). The third criterion is that the participant must be aged 18 years or above.

Following the given criteria, the researcher intended to contact participants via a private message through the social media platform they used to engage in value destruction. However, the response rate was unsatisfactory. Therefore, to approach participants that fit the required criteria, the researcher followed a **snowball approach**, where contact was made with individuals known to the researcher, who then linked the researcher with others in their network who also fit the criteria. By following this approach, the researcher ensures that the identified participants meet the criteria and are insightful regarding the research question (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

However, critiques of this approach include selection bias and generalisability issues due to lack of sample diversity (McCormack, 2014; Woodley and Lockard, 2016) and representativeness (Cohen and Arieli, 2011). Despite this, the researcher attempted to mitigate the problems by doing three things. First the researcher contacted participants who engaged on at least one of the observed platforms from the netnographic phase. Several participants reviewed on Amazon.com, one was on Apple's Facebook page, one engaged on IMDB and others followed those pages. Each of those participants generated a different snowball thread, where the researcher was referred to others. The advantage here is that the researcher recruited Amazon.com reviewers, which was not guaranteed using the social media approach. Second, the researcher used the preliminary data analysis from the first phase of data collection to identify forms of online value destruction behaviour and verified that the participants engaged in the range of identified behaviours. Third, regarding diversity, the researcher acknowledges that the sample may not be as diverse as intended in terms of demographics. However, the diversity that the researcher was more interested in was diversity

in terms of brand categories that the participants talked about, and this was achieved (see Table 6). Data were collected from interviewees until saturation point was reached, that is until information gathered was no longer new (Creswell, 2014).

4.5.4 Study Sample

According to Baker and Edwards (2012), interview sample size can range from 12 to 60 interviews. It has also been suggested that saturation can be reached after 12 interviews (Guest *et al.*, 2006). In addition to that, Mason (2010) proposed an average of 31 interviews based on data from PhD theses. Drawing from consumer engagement and value destruction literature, Bowden *et al.* (2017) conducted 16 interviews with online brand community members, Järvi *et al.* (2020) conducted 12, while Neuhofer (2016) relied on 15. Saturation in this study was achieved when the information became redundant (Francis *et al.*, 2010; Saunders *et al.*, 2017) and the researcher kept on hearing the same answers and comments from the interviewees. A reasonable level of data saturation in this study was achieved at 14 interviews. Four more interviews were conducted for confirmation that saturation had been reached and no new information was revealed (Baker and Edwards, 2012), leaving a total of 18. The sample comprised of mainly young adults, and out of the 18 participants, 10 were female and 8 were male. The table below presents the sample details, the interview language, the mode of the interview, the media used for value destruction and the focal brand category.

Table 6: Interview Sample Summary

Participant	Age	Gender	Language	Mode	Media Used	Brand Category
Int1	22	Female	English	Face-to-face	Facebook comment on brand ad/ Cinema website review	Telecommunication/ Entertainment
Int2	29	Female	English	Face-to-face	Facebook profile post/ Google Reviews	Electronics/ Restaurants
Int3	23	Female	Arabic	Face-to-face	Facebook review on official brand page	Restaurants

Int4	29	Male	Arabic	Face-to-face	Facebook profile post/ TripAdvisor review	Automotive/ Hotel
Int5	56	Female	Arabic	Face-to-face	Facebook reviews on official brand pages	Biscuits/ Transport network company
Int6	40	Female	English	Face-to-face	Facebook post on unofficial brand page/ Hotel website review	Electronics/ Hotel
Int7	28	Female	English	Face-to-face	Facebook profile post/ Official Facebook brand page/ TripAdvisor review/ Instagram comment	Banking/ Restaurants/ Hotels/ Planners
Int8	30	Male	English	Face-to-face	Amazon Review	Retail product
Int9	29	Male	English	Face-to-face	Facebook profile post	Airlines
Int10	22	Female	English	Face-to-face	Facebook profile post/ Official Facebook brand page/ TripAdvisor review	Restaurants
Int11	33	Male	English	Face-to-face	Facebook profile post	Transport network company
Int12	32	Female	English	Phone	TripAdvisor/ Booking.com/ Facebook travel groups/ Facebook profile post/ Amazon review	Hotel/ Beauty and body modification
Int13	32	Female	English	Phone	Facebook profile post	Fashion and Clothing
Int14	31	Male	Arabic	Face-to-face	Facebook group post/ Booking.com review	Telecommunication/ Hotel
Int15	39	Male	English	Phone	Facebook profile post	Telecommunication
Int16	35	Male	English	Face-to-face	Facebook profile post/ Review on delivery service site	Household electronics/ Delivery services

Int17	32	Male	English	Phone	Facebook profile post/ Google review	Delivery service/ Restaurant
Int18	31	Female	English	Face-to-face	Twitter tweet	Baby stroller

4.6 Research Ethics

In both data collection methods used in this study, the researcher was not interested in the personal data of the participants. No personal data were collected that can identify the participant, only age and gender were collected from the interviews, and this is not information that can reveal identity. The University of Glasgow Ethical Committee reviewed and approved the data collection process (see Appendix 4: Ethical Approval Letter).

Ethical issues in online research are still debated and remain unresolved (Rageh *et al.*, 2013; Haggerty, 2004). According to Kozinets (2002), there are three basic ethical guidelines for conducting netnography: the researcher declaring their presence and intentions to the observed community, ensuring the members' anonymity and getting feedback from the observed members (Kozinets, 2002). Some researchers consider online data to be public and can be treated like letters to the editor, meaning the information is open to being observed and analysed by researchers without requiring members' consent (Haggerty, 2004). Others have argued that the guidelines created by Kozinets should be revised (Langer and Beckman, 2005; Rageh *et al.*, 2013), since they apply to pages with restricted access, that is requiring permission to be accessed. However, in his most recent work, Kozinets (2019) adopted more flexible ethical guidelines in examining comments and replies on YouTube videos.

In this study, the researcher is not interested in sensitive topics. Therefore, following Kozinets (2019), the researcher did not declare her presence, since she did not post comments or interact directly with users. In addition, informed consent was unnecessary because the chosen platforms are considered public with unlimited access and participation for anyone without requesting permission. It is almost impossible to contact Amazon reviewers because they do not usually use their real identities and leave no contact information. For Facebook public pages, the researcher observed pages accessible to anyone at any time without

permission. Unlike closed groups, these are open pages and there is no control over the members. In addition, this research has no interest in the identities of reviewers.

For research use, the identities (even the aliases) of reviewers on Amazon and Facebook were not used and they remain completely anonymous. The time and date of the review were not mentioned and even the quotations do not use the full review (just the relevant parts), to ensure that the reviewer cannot be identified through the quotation. Several researchers other than Kozinets (2019) have also taken this approach (for example, Langer and Beckman, 2005; Rageh *et al.*, 2013; Xun and Reynolds, 2010). To ensure the anonymity of Amazon and Facebook users, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to all the posts, reviews and responses to avoid user identification (Kozinets, 2019). The identities of the participants remain completely anonymous, no names, genders or dates of birth were mentioned, and the time and date of the post/comment was not disclosed (Xun and Reynolds, 2010).

For the interviews, respondents were informed of the purpose of this research in writing or verbally. They were presented with a participant information sheet (see Appendix 2) and the interviewer explained verbally to them the purpose of the research. They were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 3) and their consent was also audio-recorded. It was clearly communicated to them that they may refrain from answering the questions and stop the interview at any time, and that their identity would remain completely anonymous. Their names would not be disclosed, just their gender and age. Their permission was requested before recording the interview. In addition to that, all the data and recordings were kept safe with access restricted to the researcher. To ensure the anonymity of all the interview participants the researcher assigned them all pseudonyms for the interviewees.

4.7 Research Rigour

To ensure research rigour, the current study adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness outline to evaluate this study. Regarding credibility, the current study employed *triangulation* of data sources and methods, where netnographic observations were collected from two sources, followed by semi-structured

interviews. The researcher also adopted *prolonged engagement* by engaging in preliminary observations over a period of eight weeks before data collection, to familiarise herself with the context and decide on the focal context of the study. The data collection period also involved regular visits to the platforms being examined and content engagement for eight months. In addition to that, *member checks* were employed, where some interviewees were contacted to assess the accuracy of the transcripts and the researcher's interpretation.

Regarding transferability, qualitative research does not aim to generalise findings. *Thick descriptions* were however used in this study for readers or other researchers to make judgements about the degree of suitability of findings for adoption in other contexts. More specifically, the findings were organised, presented and explained (See Chapter 5) with detailed insights and description. In addition, quotations from the data were used to justify and illustrate the findings. Finally, dependability and confirmability were achieved through the implementation of a double supervisory system for the thesis, where a first and second supervisor *audit* and assess the researcher's adopted processes, findings and conclusions.

4.8 Data Analysis

The data collected from both methods were analysed using qualitative thematic analysis. This study followed the guidelines suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), which were also followed by several qualitative studies in online engagement and value destruction (for example, Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Dessart *et al.*, 2015; Neuhofer, 2016). For the netnography, screen shots and immersion notes of the relevant comments, reviews and posts were taken, noted down and manually coded and analysed (Langer and Beckman, 2005), in addition to the use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, Nvivo12 (Kozinets, 2002). For the interviews, recordings were personally transcribed by the researcher and the participants' answers were noted and coded both manually (Kashif and Zarkada, 2015) and with the use of Nvivo12 software.

4.8.1 Data Analysis Method

The current study adopts **qualitative thematic analysis**, which is one of the most

commonly used methods of analysing data in qualitative research (Bryman 2008). Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 78) define thematic analysis as “*a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data*”. According to Boyatzis (1998), a theme represents a pattern that can be identified in the data. Themes can be obvious and easy to identify or may sometimes be hidden or latent in the meaning of the text. Thematic analysis is considered flexible because it is not associated with certain theoretical and epistemological approaches, and can be used in research applying a realist or constructionist approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis also allows iteration between theory and data when searching for themes or patterns to ensure the thoroughness and strength of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

4.8.2 Data Management and Analysis Process

It is suggested that steps towards analysis should begin during data collection (Miles and Huberman, 1994). There are no specific rules that govern qualitative data analysis. It is however, suggested that a general guideline be followed and the analysis process be made relatively systematic and organised to help in the production and documentation of stronger and more rigorous results. Several researchers have suggested guidelines for qualitative data analysis (for example, Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2013; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2013) that were popular in engagement and value creation and destruction research. Those guidelines usually overlap in their processes and steps. Miles and Huberman (1994) for example, suggest a three-step process (data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions) while Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest a six-step process. It is important however to highlight that when following a framework for qualitative analysis, the researcher goes back and forth between the steps or phases even though they are presented in a sequence. It is therefore more of a recursive process rather than a linear one (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This is in line with the abductive reasoning logic of the current study.

The analysis process in the current study aimed to identify the emerging themes that were obvious and explicitly mentioned in the data, as well as latent themes that are implicit and require more interpretation. The analysis process in the current study began while collecting the netnographic data where preliminary analysis helped recruit interviewees. Interview data analysis also began by

transcribing the audio recordings of interviews which is also during data collection. Transcription took place during data collection and interviews were immediately transcribed after they were conducted. A few of the interviews were conducted in Arabic because some of the participants were more comfortable and better able to express themselves in their native language. Those interviews were translated by the researcher while transcribing, given that the researcher is a fluent English speaker and a native Arabic speaker. Screenshot text and immersion notes from the netnographic phase were also organised into a text-based document (MS Word).

At this point, the researcher becomes more familiar with the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) by reading the texts and transcripts several times (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007) to become immersed in the data and begin generating initial codes and look for themes and patterns. Following an abductive approach allowed the researcher to create categories from raw data and then use the insights from established theory to reflect on and create empirical findings (Järvi *et al.*, 2018). The interesting ideas, key phrases and relevant points in the transcripts were identified and highlighted. This process reflects breaking down chunks of data into small units (codes). Then, the data were organised into meaningful groups (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Labels were given to the highlighted bits of text. Those labels were grouped into categories that are broader, creating a theme. More specifically, data were organised into first order codes, followed by second order codes, which were grouped into aggregate theoretical dimensions. This process enhances qualitative rigour by presenting how the researcher progressed from raw data to theoretical dimensions (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016; Järvi *et al.*, 2018).

Constant iteration between data and theory occurred along the coding cycles of raw data where the raw data and established theory in literature helped obtain and refine the findings (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). The researcher went back and forth between data and the literature to achieve more refined themes and categories. Each data source (interviews and netnography) was separately analysed and then merged later through triangulation. The triangulation process involved two things in merging the outcomes from data sources. The first was that the data from the interviews was used to verify and confirm some of the observed behaviours and the second was that it complemented the data from netnography by illuminating some themes that were

unobservable, such as emotions and perception.

4.8.3 Coding

The first stage of the data analysis process was guided by an initial coding list created from prior themes that appeared in the literature. Coding of the transcribed material employed both a start list of codes (see Appendix 5) and an **open/initial coding** process in the first cycle. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a start list of codes can be built upon research questions, conceptual framework, hypothesis or phenomenon that the researcher is examining in the study. The start list in this research was partially based on the identified antecedents of value destruction of Echeverri and Skålén, (2011), which was also later adopted by Camilleri and Neuhofer (2017). The rest of the codes are based on the identified research questions. This start list of codes was loosely applied to the data while keeping an open mind to identify new patterns and codes that emerge (Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017). This initial framework was therefore not considered final, the researcher kept it aside to allow for new themes and subthemes to emerge. Newly emerging themes were then compared to the initial frame, hence, going back to the literature. During the first cycle coding, when generating codes from the data, the researcher followed a line-by-line coding approach (microanalysis) to examine the text and look for patterns (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This is the initial phase of coding where chunks of data are transformed into codes, involved breaking down the data, analysing, comparing and describing its overall features (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). For example, the code “anger” was identified when the terms angry or anger emerged in several interviewee responses and online reviews, for instance, an interviewee mentioned “*It makes me very angry. During the incident, I’m usually furious.*” (Int12).

The second cycle of coding adopts **pattern coding**. This coding method is appropriate for generating themes and creating theoretical constructs (Saldaña, 2009). Pattern codes are described as meta-codes that give more explanations and meaning to the data. It is a way of integrating and grouping the codes generated during first cycle coding into broader themes, which are fewer (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Iteration between data and the literature was repeated to be able to compare and regroup themes and subthemes into higher-order themes on

a theoretical basis. The refinement of themes through iteration kept on going until no further themes were identified. For example, anger, disappointment, gratitude and happiness were grouped as the emotional consequences for online value destruction (see table 9), while doubt and negative brand image were grouped into cognitive consequences, also, purchase behaviour, usage and sharing were grouped as the behavioural consequences for online value destruction.

In the third coding cycle, **axial coding** was implemented to propose links between developed categories and their sub-categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This resulted in the formation of aggregate theoretical dimensions in addition to identifying and proposing potential links between those aggregate theoretical dimensions to create a process consisting of three phases. For example, perceived negative experience, emotions and seeking well-being (themes) were grouped into online value destruction drivers (theoretical dimension). Five main themes (theoretical dimensions) were extracted from the coding process: online value destruction drivers, forms, potential intervening factors and consequences. The first phase of the online value destruction process included online value destruction drivers, the second phase included the forms, responses and intervening factors and the third phase included the consequences of online value destruction. Tables (7, 8 and 9, see next chapter) illustrate the coding structure of the current study's findings. Each table demonstrates how the researcher extracted the codes from the data quoted into three levels of coding to arrive at the aggregate theoretical dimensions. Those findings are thoroughly discussed in the next chapter.

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the research philosophy and the research design of the current study. The two phases of data collection that were employed to explore online value destruction have been addressed, justified and explained. Specifically, the netnographic procedure and the semi-structured interviews procedure. Additionally, the research sampling technique, sample size and structure have been addressed. The chapter also demonstrated the ethical considerations of this research and how the researcher mitigated ethical concerns about data collection and participant information. Finally, the chapter discussed

the data analysis process, and the system of coding adopted with three coding cycles. The following chapter reveals the findings of the current study based on the analysis conducted.

Chapter 5 Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the current study based on the analysis and triangulation of data from netnography and interviews. The adopted data collection methods generated fruitful data that revealed rich insights about the examined context. Most interviews, reviews and responses revolved around the same level of moderation and were confirmatory and complementary to each other with very few outliers where answers, reviews or responses were on more extreme ends. The analysis identified five major themes, reflecting the full process of online value destruction: online value destruction drivers, online value destruction forms, online value destruction responses, online value destruction intervening factors, and online value destruction consequences. These themes can be classified into three phases to reflect the process of online value destruction and this chapter is therefore divided into three parts to explain what happens in each of those phases.

The first phase, which the researcher termed pre-online value destruction, involves what happens before online value destruction takes place. Since they are the triggers of online value destruction, these drivers are classified in this phase because they occur before online value destruction takes place. The second phase that the researcher termed online value destruction engagement describes what online value destruction looks like, what factors affect its impact and how others respond to and interact with it. It includes three themes, which are online value destruction forms, intervening factors and responses. Post-online value destruction, involving consequences, is the third and last phase of the process, and it is what happens after online value destruction has taken place.

Phase 1: Pre-Online Value Destruction

This phase is built mainly on one theme (online value destruction drivers). The events in this phase occur before the consumer engages in the digital context, and then lead to it.

5.2 Online Value Destruction Drivers

Drivers are the factors that trigger consumers to engage in online value destruction. The current study identifies three main drivers of online value destruction: perceived negative experience, emotions and seeking well-being. An interesting observation is that these drivers occur in that order. They reflect the cognitive and emotional process that consumers go through from the moment they experience a negative event and leading up to online value-destroying behaviour.

5.2.1 Perceived Negative Experience

The main driver of online value destruction is perceived negative experience where consumers believe they have had a negative experience with the brand, and this may eventually lead to other triggers. A typical negative consumer experience can be either due to a problem with a product or an unpleasant company interaction. Consumers who experience a problem with the product or service provided may perceive the experience with the brand as a negative one. In this case, consumers begin to share the experience they have had with the brand online with others. Product issues involve experiencing a problem with the product or service itself. Some consumers posted about a defect in the unit received or a problem with a service, such as skin burn from laser treatments; others talked about things like their inability to use the product and many complained about the durability of products by mentioning they only lasted a month or broke after being used a few times, for example,

“I was generally wanting to say that this product had an issue so, it was not just about complaining, and I think just instantly when it happened so, I started to hear the clicking sound again in the wheels and I think two or three days maximum and then I tweeted” (Int18).

“After little under a month of use, I pressed the button to open and saw one rib is broken. Seems to be a common problem. I've had cheaper umbrellas that lasted longer” (AP1R3).

Consumers' interaction with the company is another factor that plays an important role in shaping their experience, especially in services that are highly dependent

on consumer-provider interaction. Company interaction in this study involves an unpleasant experience while interacting with the company's staff or consumer service representatives, causing the consumer to perceive the experience with the brand as negative. Consumers mention in their negative posts things such as the staff being rude or unfriendly to them while in a hotel or a restaurant for example. Others reported that the consumer service representatives were being unhelpful with their reported problem and were unable to provide the required assistance. Sensing that the consumer service representative is ignoring consumer complaints may also provoke the consumer to seek problem resolution by taking their problem into the online domain, for example,

"100% of the time it's a bad response or no response at all from the person I'm complaining to" (Int12).

"I just called the Company to report what had happened and the rude woman on the phone told me that there was NO WAY the Collar caused any of the symptoms. Almost like she was shaming me for blaming the collar" (AP2R3).

5.2.2 Emotional Drivers

Generally, negative emotions are unpleasant feelings that consumers may experience as a response to a negative experience or event. Three emotions emerged from the data as consumers expressed feeling disappointed, angry and frustrated during their negative experiences with companies or brands. Hence, consumers may be driven by their emotions and engage in online value destruction based on disappointment, anger or frustration.

Disappointment is a negative emotion experienced due to unmet previously held expectations. In the current study, consumers expressed feeling disappointed when the product or service failed to meet their expectations. Disappointment can sometimes be a strong driver for consumers to engage in online value destruction by sharing their negative experience; some consumers even mentioned that feeling disappointed made them write their first review,

"This is the first review I have ever written, and I am writing it because I am so disappointed in this product and that I cannot return" (AP1R6).

The value-creating activities that consumers are exposed to before their experience, such as advertisements and positive reviews from satisfied consumers, may create exaggerated expectations in their minds, leading to disappointment. Consumers mentioned during interviews that they get disappointed with the things that they were most excited about. Many reviews and consumers also expressed their confidence in the brand and how excited they were about it before their disappointing experience, for example,

“I like movies and it was a big disappointment because I thought it was a good movie. It was the only time that I didn’t read reviews because I was very convinced that it was going to be amazing. I watched the film, I got disappointed and then decided that I will write a review” (Int1).

Interviewees also expressed feeling angry because of the negative experience they had with the brand, and mentioned being furious about a given situation. Anger reflects a strong feeling of annoyance or hostility that people get when something unpleasant or unfair happens, which may cause them to want to hurt someone (ANGER | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d.). Anger is associated with the feeling of lost value. Consumers who expressed feeling angry further explain that they are angry about their time and money being wasted and spent on something that was not of use to them. Others also mention things like having to put effort into dealing with customer service to resolve their problem, for example,

“I felt very mad because it was a waste of time and the product wasn’t cheap, so I was so mad, and I felt like the value for money was wasted” (Int13).

“These are expensive collars, and I am furious for the shady service, the expense, and my dogs’ discomfort” (AP2R34).

Many consumers stated that they felt frustrated because they were unable to solve their problem with the company, or the product or service did not satisfy their need. Frustration is the unpleasant feeling consumers get when they are unable to achieve what they want (FRUSTRATION | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d.). Consumers expressed frustration in situations where the product broke or stopped working right after the return date or warranty period, leaving them unable to do anything about it, for example,

*“I bought this in Jan and I just used it for the first time, and it broke on me and will not shut. **This is frustrating** and wish I could get a new one sent but it is past the return date” (AP1R2).*

Consumers also mentioned feeling frustrated when the company did not deliver the service it was supposed and they were unable to do anything about it. Frustration here is experienced by the consumer who is somehow stuck with the provider for the time being (for example, a prepaid service) and waiting for the problem to be handled from the provider’s side. This feeling of being helpless and anticipating the response of the other party creates a feeling of frustration for consumers, causing them to potentially share the experience online and create value-destroying content. The consumer below for example, expresses feeling frustrated about having to wait for a service that is taking longer than it should:

*“**It was very frustrating** because I had paid for my hardware and the regular procedure was to call the company and schedule a meeting and there was nothing exceptional, I didn’t ask for an extra service or anything so, finding it that hard to be delivered was **very frustrating and very unnerving** because you would expect things to go as smooth as paying the money and getting the service and that was it, (...)” (Int16).*

5.2.3 Seeking Well-being

Upon experiencing negative emotions consumers may begin to think about well-being. They may seek their own or others’ well-being, so they take their experiences to the digital platform by sharing them on third-party websites such as review sites and social networking sites. Consumers try to solve their problem and look for ways to ease their negative emotions. They seek their own well-being in several ways getting the provider’s attention, venting their negative emotions or hurting the business for revenge. Consumers who felt that their problem was being ignored by the company or who were unable to reach them or find a solution, may seek their own well-being by focusing on getting the company’s attention to either solve the problem or compensate them for it. Many consumers mentioned that they tag or mention the provider in their negative post, hoping that someone

from the company would see it and attend to their issue or contact them about it. Consumers in such cases sometimes aim not only for a solution to their problem, but also compensation, for example,

“I expected one of two things, either they solve my problem and compensate me on what happened so, not just solve my problem” (Int14).

“I hope someone from support looks at this and makes an attempt to reach out” (AP3R5).

Another way consumers seek their own well-being is by finding a way to rid themselves of the negative feelings developed during an unpleasant experience. Consumers mentioned that they wanted to vent all their negative emotions, so they turned to social media to share their problems with others by creating value-destroying content. Most of the respondents said that they felt better after posting about their problem, mentioning things like feeling relieved, happy or feeling like they had won. Therefore, in such a case, consumers seek their own well-being by trying to make themselves feel better through venting on social media, for example,

“It’s just that sometimes venting makes you feel much better, so you just needed to vent to tell people I’m going through this with this company” (Int6).

“just getting my anger out kind of it was just like ok, it’s good for my anger” (Int10).

In other situations, consumers seek their own well-being by trying to get back at the business and get even with them. Consumers who believe they were unfairly treated by the company or who are convinced that the business caused them inconvenience, in wasting their time, money and effort for example, may get vengeful thoughts towards that business. So, they turn to the digital domain and create a value-destroying post to hurt the business because they believe it hurt them first. Consumers mentioned that they engaged in online value destruction to show the business that they have the power to negatively affect it by scaring potential consumers away, hence, potentially affecting its sales growth and reputation. Many interviewees also mentioned that they engaged in online value-

destroying behaviours towards businesses because they believe that those businesses had not earned the right to operate and should not continue in the market if they will not serve consumers fairly and adequately, for example,

“To let her feel that one unsatisfied customer can have an effect on her sales or on her image whatsoever. If you have good experience or bad experience, but mainly more when you have bad experience, you would like to share it with everyone so you can find an effect on the entity that didn’t help you enough or that you had bad experience with, so the more people you share this experience with, maybe the more they will share it with others so the power of sharing it with more people will have like a complex effect on the seller” (Int13).

“I just really wanted to hurt them because I believe in those days those brands do not conceive the right to survive at all.” (Int15).

It is however not always about the consumers’ own well-being. In most cases, consumers are also concerned about others’ well-being. They seek others’ well-being by trying to spread awareness about their problem and informing people about it. Consumers who have had an unpleasant experience with a company or a brand may not want others to go through a similar negative experience and somehow may feel that it is their duty to spread the word about it. Consumers mentioned that in those situations, they mean well and do not intend to be destructive to the business, but are more focused on the positive side of what they are doing, which is protecting others. This also happens in situations when consumers feel that the brand is not functioning as advertised, has exaggerated positive reviews or in extreme situations has behaved fraudulently. Therefore, consumers post about their experience to inform as many other potential consumers as possible to save them from experiencing something similar or wasting their time and money on that brand, for example,

“Please please save your money! (...) I have never written a review before, but I am so disgusted by this product I was compelled to warn people not to fall into the same trap as I did. Hope this helps” (AP9R62).

“I wanted to inform my friends base or the people I know about this issue because I wouldn’t want anyone to experience that as well.” (Int16).

5.2.4 Summary of Online Value Destruction Drivers

As shown in table 7 below, the current study identified perceived negative experience, emotions and seeking well-being as the drivers of online value destroying behaviour. Those drivers seem to occur in that order and demonstrate the iteration between consumer cognitions and emotions that precede online value destroying behaviour. This theme represents the pre-online online value destruction (the first phase of the process). Table 7 below presents the details of the coding structure for phase 1. The next phase (online value destruction engagement) shows what occurs between consumers in the digital context.

Table 7: Phase 1 Coding Structure

Quotations	1 st Order Codes	2 nd Order Themes	Aggregate Theoretical Dimension
<p>“This was a bad purchase and now I am stuck with something that doesn’t work and I do not trust.” (AP3R7)</p> <p>“I would avoid (brand). Their product was defective and unreliable.” (AP5R56)</p> <p>“When I went, the room was not clean at all, the toilet was not clean at all, zero hospitality.” (Int4)</p> <p>“Service was unpleasing, food was beyond horrible, you can’t eat it basically.” (Int10)</p>	Product Issue	Perceived negative experience	Online Value Destruction Drivers
<p>“The minute that girl from customer service hung up on me, this minute I wrote the post while I was very frustrated” (Int2)</p> <p>“The customer agent that was absolutely rude and left the conversation without waiting to at least say can I help you with anything else?” (Int17)</p> <p>“I also contacted (the company), but to no avail. The rep acted like it was my fault!! Really?!?!” (AP2R50)</p> <p>“Time-consuming customer service with poor attitude at manufacturing company. Arrogant with all the great feedback they have received it seems” (AP3R129)</p>	Company Interaction		

<p>“I watched the film, I got disappointed and then decided that I will write a review.” (Int1)</p> <p>“Just totally disappointed. I paid a lot of money, apparently, this is a very good brand, people are using it, people are happy and I’m just so you know dissatisfied.” (Int18)</p> <p>“Very disappointed because the headset when ordering it had good reviews” (AP6R148)</p> <p>“Extremely disappointing and this is the last time I will ever Pre-order any game. I should’ve waited until the release date and read some reviews first” (AP11R12)</p>	Disappointment	Emotional Drivers		
<p>“I’m not this person that shares much of their experience on Facebook but it just happened because I was very furious at the end.” (Int11)</p> <p>“It makes me very angry. During the incident, I’m usually furious.” (Int12)</p> <p>“Mostly I was angry because when I resorted to social media, it was an attempt after talking for several days with employees with no response.” (Int16)</p> <p>“I was just very angry, I was very angry at the bank and very angry at the country. So, I was angry overall.” (Int7)</p>	Anger			
<p>“At first, I was frustrated in an unimaginable/unnatural way.” (Int4)</p> <p>“I wrote the post while I was very frustrated” (Int2)</p> <p>“I bought these for my son to use with his Xbox One and they didn’t work. So now I have to return them which is frustrating.” (AP6R193)</p> <p>“This product simply does not work as it’s supposed to. It’s been very frustrating” (AP3R63)</p>	Frustration			
<p>“I would greatly appreciate if the manufacturer can replace it since I bought it really excited with reviews and usage!” (AP3R57)</p> <p>“I think it’s a way for people to communicate their frustration, it’s an easier approach now since everyone has their access to social media.” (Int16)</p> <p>“I wanted them to have like a bad reputation for what they were doing. Therefore, I wanted to post.” (Int7)</p> <p>“I wanted to draw attention that there’s an issue and I wanted to see how they reimburse me this time.” (Int18)</p>	Own Well-being		Seeking Well-being	

<p>“So, to prevent other people from having a bad experience, I wrote this review.” (Int4)</p> <p>“I feel good, I try to help, my perspective is helping people that’s why I feel positive” (int8)</p> <p>“I just wanted to share it with other people so, the logic behind it was just tell other people about it” (int7)</p> <p>“I really feel like I must be honest and update this review to reflect the long-term results so you won’t make the mistake I did.” (AP9R58)</p>	<p>Others’ Well-being</p>		
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Phase 2: Online Value Destruction Engagement

This phase consists of three themes which are online value destruction forms, responses and potential intervening factors. In this phase of the process, the focus is on consumer value destroying interactions in the digital context.

5.3 Online Value Destruction Forms

From the data, it was observed that value-destroying posts are not all the same. This study reveals four forms that such a post may take: warning, recommending, exposing and evaluating. It was observed that evaluating posts were the most common while exposing posts were the least common. However, posts are not one form or the other, as some posts may include more than one form at the same time. There are posts for example, warning consumers about buying the brand and at the same time recommending an alternative. Warning was the form that was found in combination with all the other three, while exposing was only combined with warning. There were posts that even included warning, evaluating and recommending altogether. However, one form is usually the dominant form.

5.3.1 Warning

Consumers sometimes engage in online value destruction by trying to warn others against buying or using a certain product or service that they have had a negative experience with. The content here is usually direct and straight to the point, using strong expressions. The review is characterised by having a short heading or

opening, usually in capital letters and with exclamation marks to grab the readers' attention, followed by some justifications from the reviewer's experience. The warning statement is sometimes in the form of just simple words like "be warned" or "be careful". Content with warnings like this, implies the reviewers' concern for others and shows that their review is written with other consumers' well-being as a priority that drives the rest of the review. For example, the reviewer below is apparently warning others who, like him or her, may find the problem with the product unacceptable:

"BE WARNED!! The rubber ring that seals the pot picks up cooking smells that transfer to your next dish. If you think cumin from a lentil curry ruins pea soup (it does) this product is not for you." (AP3R35).

In other instances, the warning statement can take the form of a strong and more persuasive statement like for example, explicitly asking readers not to purchase the focal brand. Such statements can be multipurpose, where the warning is obvious and explicit, while at the same time the reviewer is attacking the business by directly telling others in capital letters not to buy the focal brand. Although any kind of warning can be considered negative to the brand, it is not necessarily a direct attack on sales. In other words, asking consumers to be careful of some problem with the brand does not necessarily mean they should not buy it, while explicitly telling others not to buy, is more than just a warning. For example, the review below, unlike the previous one, starts with a more aggressive warning against the brand and the review ends with the reviewer clearly showing care and concern for others' well-being, hoping the review would save them from a bad purchase.

"DO NOT DO NOT DO NOT BUY THIS GAME!!!! I didn't even want to buy this game myself but out of pure boredom I had to. And it is not worth it. It seems like (the company) put zero effort into this game (...) But you're an average joe not looking to get too competitive do not buy this game believe the one star reviews! (...) Hope I can help save you from buying this garbage." (AP11R10)

5.3.2 *Recommending*

This involves consumers trying to steer others away from the reviewed item. When consumers believe that they have had a negative experience with a company, they will not stand behind it and will probably not recommend it for others. Sometimes consumers directly and explicitly recommend against the reviewed item by stating that they do not recommend it. It is often accompanied by some explanation of why the reviewer does not recommend the brand. This statement of recommendation against the brand could, on rare occasions, be at the beginning of the review, where the reviewer begins with statements like “I don’t recommend” and then explains the reasons. However, most of the time, the reviewer begins by stating and explaining the problems faced and sharing the negative experience, and then ends the review by recommending against the brand. The following statement appeared at the end of a review, it was preceded by some details about the reviewer’s negative experience, and it is an example of directly recommending against the brand:

“I DO NOT RECOMMEND THIS PRODUCT. It may work great for some, but this is not something you should risk rolling the dice on.” (AP2R19).

Another interesting observation was that reviewers can sometimes be indirect about recommendation, where instead of directly recommending against the brand, they may recommend something else, such as an alternative or a competing brand. This of course happens when consumers have had better experiences with other brands. In those reviews, reviewers sometimes state that they will go back to using the brand they used before the focal brand, and they may also describe their positive experience with an alternative brand that they tried and liked and hence recommend it, for example,

“I started using (alternative brand) & wanted to share that it actually works for those disappointed & still looking! My lashes are back to how long I had them when I used (alternative brand). I found the (alternative brand) on Instagram” (AP8R13).

It is also noteworthy that whether the reviewer is recommending against the brand or recommending an alternative, the review, or at least that part of the review,

is directed towards the reader and it is the part where the reviewer is showing consideration for readers' well-being by directly addressing them and advising against the focal brand and informing them about the reasons why.

5.3.3 Exposing

In instances where consumers want to harm the business, their posts may sometimes involve sharing details that could hurt the company in terms of image and reputation. These posts usually contain harsh words, sarcasm and accusations that present the company as being untrustworthy, fraudulent or shady. Exposing the company may involve reviews accusing the company of sponsoring fake positive reviews by offering free products for consumers in exchange for a positive review, for example,

“About the fake reviews on this serum -70% of these reviews are bias. Either seller gave away 1 free product or sell it for 5 cents to people to get an “honest” verified review. I wish Amazon added - " this product have sponsored reviews" in the headline. It would save me the time to read through hundreds of reviews before deciding the product pays reviewers with free stuff and to stay away!” (AP10R3)

Consumers can also sometimes write reviews that expose the company's misconduct regarding a product-related problem, such as false advertising or deliberately ignoring a product issue or communication issue. For example, the reviewer below is concerned about the way the instructions are laid out in the product's manual and explains the details of the problem and the potential danger it poses for consumers. Towards the end of the long and detailed review she/he accuses the company of knowing about the problem and ignoring it:

“(The Company) ADMITS TO KNOWING ALL THIS AND DOING NOTHING TO CHANGE THE INSTRUCTIONS OR RECALL. It's only a mistake as long as they don't know about it. Now its deliberate and with total disregard for your wellbeing. The PDF instructions on their website are still wrong - AND THEY KNOW IT - AND THEY ADMIT TO KNOWING IT WHILE DOING NOTHING ABOUT IT. I know this is hard to believe. Call (the company) and see for yourself. Their number is on the instructions. This is exactly the stuff that class action lawsuits are made of. Do

you really want to own the products of a company that behaves like this??" (AP5R41).

This consumer is clearly trying to expose the company to other and potential consumers and the reviewer uses capital letters to grab readers' attention concerning the accusations being made. This does not necessarily confirm that the reviewer is only looking for his or her own well-being by trying to hurt the business by getting back at it as they seem concerned about others' well-being and are try to inform them and save them. Hurting the business in this example becomes obvious when the reviewer mentions a class action against the company and ends the review with a question that plays on morals to discourage the reader from buying the product. Overall, consumers sometimes directly attack the business in their reviews to try to get their attention or get back at them. This makes the reviewer's own well-being the primary purpose of the review. In other instances, the reviewer mainly wants to expose the business to other potential consumers by directly addressing them in the review to inform and protect them. In those instances, others' well-being appears to be the main driver.

5.3.4 Evaluating

Consumers sometimes share the details of their negative experience and their posts can include evaluations of their overall experience with the brand or a more detailed evaluation of the brand itself. Such evaluations can sometimes focus on the functional aspects of products like ease of use, durability and practicality. Evaluative posts can also revolve around the service aspects of dealing with the company's consumer service representatives, such as helpfulness, responsiveness and timeliness. These posts are usually long and detailed. Some of them even include the pros and cons of the whole experience, usually with very few pros and many cons. Consumers creating those types of post invest a lot of time and effort in mentioning all the details and in giving an accurate and thorough evaluation of the focal brand for others to see and benefit from. For example, the videogame review below starts with a positive statement about the game but then the reviewer mentions that there are also some problems with it. The reviewer then explains the many cons from her/his perspective and ends the review with fewer pros:

“The game itself is fun, but I do have a few gripes about (the game) that I do not like (...). First of all, you can Not play the game with a pro controller! Nowhere in the advertising was this ever mentioned (...) This leads me to my second gripe where you can Not play the game in handheld mode! This I do not like at all considering if I was traveling (...) My last complaint about the game is how small the boards are when playing party mode (...) The pros of (the game) are the mini games are all fun, no two games are exactly alike giving it a more diverse feeling...” (AP7R2).

An interesting observation here is that from the beginning the reviewer directs the post to the reader by using the word “you”. This reflects the reviewer’s primary focus in the review, which in this case is the reader. The reviewer here is more eager to provide sufficient and detailed information for other readers to keep them informed rather than looking for revenge or compensation. The reviewer showed no clear signs of anger, venting, revenge or vengefulness, making others’ well-being appear primary and the reviewer’s own well-being relatively secondary. This does not mean that the reviewer’s own well-being is not a concern for them, just that it is rather less evident compared to others’ well-being in those cases.

However, there are some instances where reviewers give the focal brand a purely negative evaluation. Those posts are relatively less balanced compared to the typical evaluative posts with pros and cons. They often seem like a complaint about the focal brand. The reviewer describes the negative experience and all the problems that the brand caused for them, without mentioning any positives. The focus here is on the reviewer’s experience, not on the reader, meaning that the reviewer appears to be more focused on the question of his or her own well-being compared to others’. Most of the posts of this kind are not directed towards the reader and the reviewer passively complains, without directing any words towards the reader, making the reviewer’s own well-being the primary matter and others’ well-being more secondary at best. For example,

“This product only accomplished one thing: irritation and discoloration to my eyelids. I applied (the product) once a day for 4 weeks and no growth or thickness of the lashes was detected. My eyelids became red and discoloured. In addition, my eyelids were very irritated.” (AP8R6).

Looking at the above review, it can be noticed that the reviewer is criticising the product and purely complaining about what happened after using it. No words were explicitly directed towards the reader at the beginning or anywhere in the review. It reflects a more negative yet passive, self-focused approach to an evaluative review.

5.3.5 Summary of Online Value Destruction Forms

This theme revealed that consumers engage in four forms of online value-destroying behaviour: warning, recommending, exposing and evaluating. Posts and reviews may combine some of those forms together, with one being dominant over the other(s). It was also observed that those forms might be in connection to the last driver of online value-destroying behaviour (seeking well-being).

5.4 Responses to Online Value Destruction

Once consumers share their negative experiences on third-party websites, they are seen by other consumers or potential consumers who are engaging online. Consumers may sometimes interact with the reviewer's post by responding to it. There are several types of responses, which are mostly guided by the responder's previous experience with the reviewed item. In most cases when the responder has had no experience with the reviewed item, the response identified was of three kinds: asking the original reviewer for further clarification, thanking the original reviewer for the review, and criticising the reviewer, the company or another respondent. On the other hand, in situations where the responder has had previous experience with the reviewed item, the response takes one of three forms: helping the reviewer with the problem, supporting the reviewer's opinion, and defending the focal brand.

5.4.1 Consumer Enquiry

After reading the review, respondents sometimes reply to the original reviewer by asking them questions to be more informed. In some replies, the respondent asks questions to get more details from the reviewer regarding the review. Readers who are inexperienced with the brand, in other words potential consumers, go to

reviews in search of information and try to educate themselves as much as possible about the brand to be able to make an informed purchase decision. Those readers have already dedicated a portion of their time and put in effort to understand more about the brand. Moreover, many of them are even willing to put in extra effort to know more about the potential problems encountered by the brand by interacting with reviewers and asking them questions. Readers responding to reviews sometimes ask for more details when the reviewer has not provided enough. Potential consumers are sometimes interested in knowing more than the reviewer expected and presented and thus, they ask the reviewer for more. The following response was written as a reply to a short review that did not mention the details of why the product was unsuitable. All the reviewer said was that the product worked for a friend, but did not work for the reviewer. This comment made the following respondent curious about why the product did not work for the reviewer and wondered if there could be other problems such as allergic reactions.

“Why don't you just discuss the possible reasons for the product not working as stated?? I think everyone here would be interested in knowing why some these issues are occurring such as lashes falling out and swollen eyes shut?? I know I would want to know the answers to these negative questions and if there is a possible allergic reaction that some can have?” (AP8R3C1).

The reviewer may or may not have the answers to all respondents' curiosities and may or may not reply. What is important here is that short reviews that are relatively lacking in information and detail, such as what the problem with the brand is and why the reviewer thinks it did not work, may sometimes trigger questions from readers seeking information because this is what they are originally looking for in reviews.

Furthermore, respondents are sometimes curious to know what happened next with the original reviewer regarding the problem raised. For instance, whether it was solved or not, or if the company responded to them. Reviews that are clear about the situation but have incomplete endings or do not mention how the reviewer went about solving the problem can sometimes evoke curiosity for the reader. For example, reviewers sometimes mention that they contacted the company regarding the problem, complain about the company taking too long to

respond to them, or mention that they returned the product for a refund, and are sometimes responded to with questions from potential consumers. Those potential consumers may want to know more about how those negative experiences turned out, or whether potential issues are resolved or not and if so, how. It is a way for potential consumers to try to minimise the risk associated with uncertainty and a way to ensure that there is a way out or that potential issues that others had can be resolved in an acceptable manner. Potential consumers here also want to make an informed decision. The following quotation illustrates responders asking those questions in their comments:

“How long did it take (the company) to get back to you to replace your (brand)? Just curious as I am debating between the (focal brand) or (another brand) (which has higher rate of repair but better customer service).” (AP3R3C2).

The above are situations where the responder did not have any experience with the company. There is another situation when experienced respondents may respond with a question. They may do so to help or advise the original reviewer on what to do, based on a similar experience they have had. This may involve asking the reviewer if he or she has tried a certain solution that worked with the experienced reader when faced with a similar problem. This is the point where this sub-theme overlaps with another sub-theme, which is helping. In this case, the respondent is trying to help the reviewer, but the response takes the form of asking a question. The following quotation is a response to a reviewer complaining that the product did not work properly. As shown, the response begins with a question to ask if the reviewer is using the product correctly, followed by a sentence to help or guide the reviewer:

“Did you remove the cover and make sure the pressure release valve is clean? If the seal is working and it's still not coming up to pressure, then something else is leaking. Try that.” (AP3R21C1).

5.4.2 Consumer Gratitude

Potential consumers appreciate the information shared by others to help them in their search and with purchase decisions. When consumers or potential consumers read a post that they find useful, or they believe saved them from a bad purchase,

they sometimes reply by thanking the original reviewer for the review. Thanking replies may range from a short, simple “thank you for your review” to a more detailed and appreciative reply saying what the responder liked about the review while thanking the reviewer at the beginning and the end of the reply, for example,

“Yes! Thank you for your review!! Was really interested (& Almost Hit My One Click Button) to Purchase the (product), (...) Thank you for giving us “Pre-Purchasing Customers”, Your Experience on this item! :)” (AP9R62C2).

As the above quotation shows, the responder thanks the reviewer for sharing the experience with the brand and appreciates how their negative experience helped guide the decision of potential consumers. Readers often try to capture as many aspects about the experience with the brand as possible and accordingly form expectations and appreciate detailed reviews that help them do so. Hence, responders not only thank the reviewer for a review that helped them with a purchase decision, they are sometimes more specific and may also thank the original reviewer for the quality and level of detail in their review. The following response illustrates how potential consumers appreciate details:

“Thank you for your detailed review. This gives some insight into what to expect if I buy this (brand).” (AP3R20C1).

5.4.3 Helping

A crucial part of consumer-to-consumer interaction online revolves around the idea of helping each other out. As mentioned in phase 1 above, consumers are sometimes concerned with others’ well-being and engage with online value destruction to help others make decisions and avoid bad purchases. This also works the other way around or in other words, it is mutual. When consumers read about someone’s unpleasant experience, they may sometimes leave a comment that could be of help to the original reviewer regarding their problem. Experienced consumers provide helpful and informative comments by advising the original reviewer, sometimes with technical advice on how to solve an issue for example, *“After cooking something that was a bit ‘frothy’, it didn’t seem to work. Turns out I had to take off the pressure relief valve and clean it. If your pot won’t come*

to pressure, or steam is constantly releasing, there are videos on YouTube how to fix it.” (AP3R1C82).

It is apparent from the above quotation that the respondent is already a current consumer of the brand who has had a similar experience as the original reviewer but was able to understand the problem and find a solution to it. The responder here did two things to help: first by suggesting a possible solution and second by guiding the reviewer to another source of information that could possibly help them solve the problem.

In other instances, comments involve recommending an alternative brand. Experienced readers who have had a previous pleasant experience with another brand sometimes recommend it to the reviewer. Moreover, responders can even try to help by guiding and encouraging the original reviewer to take a certain action regarding the issue at hand to solve it or at least get a refund, such as contacting the company’s consumer service, filing a complaint to higher authorities that have regulatory power over businesses, or in extreme cases even suggesting that the reviewer sue the company for example,

“So, what do you do next? Contact the Better Business Bureau in your area and begin a file on them. Second contact the State Attorney General’s office in your area and let them know about this product what has happened to you. Next don’t give up on getting your money back. If you paid for this item via credit card, contact them as well and if they are anything like Wells Fargo, they will help you try to get your money back.” (AP9R32C1).

5.4.4 Supporting

When consumers relate to the reviewer’s post, they sometimes add a comment in support of the reviewer. Those responders relate to the post because they are also consumers who have had an experience with the brand and reading about a similar experience sometimes encourages them to support the reviewer and share their own experience in the form of a response. Consumers support the reviewer by expressing their agreement with the point of view expressed as a confirmation of truth or by simply stating that they had a similar experience with the focal product or service being reviewed. Some of them may even go on to explain the details of

their experience. The following quotation demonstrates how readers can respond to a review they agree with to show support by also expressing their own problem as well:

“I completely agree with this review. I ordered this thinking it was the same model I had before, but it was different. This is very difficult to get an accurate reading since you can't be certain you are positioning your wrist correctly. I tried it at various positions and got totally different reading. The older model was typically spot on with the readings (...).” (AP5R46C6).

Furthermore, this act of support is sometimes triggered when the reader sees that there are other responders who have commented on the review and are criticising the reviewer or the content of the review itself. The reader therefore writes a comment supporting the reviewer as a response to others who are doubting the accuracy and truth of the reviewer or the review. This happens when the reader is also a current consumer that has had a similar experience with the brand to that of the reviewer. The response quoted in the following example was a reply to other responders who were doubting the reviewer and did not seem convinced with the content of the review. The responder therefore begins by assuring others that the problem is real and goes on to explain how he or she experienced something similar.

“I can confirm (original reviewer's) complaint is not a fluke. I just received my new (the brand) that I bought here on Amazon on Prime Day, and after ONE use there is chipping at the bottom interior of this pot (...).” (AP3R17C1).

5.4.5 Defending

Loyal, satisfied consumers sometimes cannot stand seeing negative content about a brand they like without interfering to help the focal brand against the unfairness. Such consumers reply to negative posts by defending the product or the company they have had a positive experience with. Those comments usually involve a positive testimonial on how good the brand is, saying they have been using it for quite some time with no problems. Consumers leaving comments defending the brand are sometimes accused of being an employee of the company or someone who is being paid to do so, and this explains why the responder in the

comment quoted below starts by trying to reassure the readers that he or she is a real and genuine consumer with no bias:

“I PROMISE I'm REAL AND HAVE used this product for YEARS!! It's AWESOME!!! You got it from a bad vendor who doesn't realize that the product only has a 90day shelf-life. NOT FAKE REVIEWS ON THIS PRODUCT!!!!!! IT IS A SPECTACULAR PRODUCT WHEN FRESH!!!! Don't ever buy this from any vendor other than (the company).” (AP10R3C2).

It can be concluded that such responders go beyond just giving the focal brand a positive rating and a review of their own and start to defend it against negative reviews. It is as if they are trying to eliminate the possible effects of negative reviews rather than just leaving a positive review and letting potential consumers see both and decide for themselves. They also sometimes justify or give excuses as to why the problem complained about might have happened, like getting a fake product from a bad source, or that this is just a coincidentally defective product and that is bound to happen anywhere, for example,

“You got a counterfeit product. You MUST buy your product from a legit source like a veterinarian and not online. Sadly, there are too many counterfeit products on the market and not enough warning (...).” (AP2R2C6).

5.4.6 Criticising

Comments may sometimes involve some sort of criticism when the reader does not like or approve what he or she is reading. Readers can comment by criticising the reviewer, the company or another respondent. Such comments are usually more aggressive or sharp compared to other types of responses. Unlike defending and supporting for example, critical replies are negatively charged and explicitly attack the entity that provoked the reader, whether the reviewer, the company or another responder. The responder may criticise the reviewer when they feel that they are being unfair in their judgement or rating and that they are to blame for the problem. It is sometimes evident to the reader that the issue the reviewer is complaining about is due to misuse, or the reviewer's inability to follow the instructions for use correctly. Moreover, when readers come across a complaint that appears to be due to an uninformed consumer, they sometimes respond by

blaming the reviewer for not doing enough research before purchasing or using the brand, for example,

“You rate the game poorly because you didn't research the game prior to purchasing? This is your own fault, and you should rate yourself low for being an uninformed consumer buying first then reading later. Shame on you” (AP11R17C1).

The responder may also criticise the company or the brand for dealing unfairly with the reviewer, for example when the reviewer complains about being ignored, or a warranty not being honoured or when readers see no response from the company in the comments section. Some comments involve criticising the company for being misleading in their advertising or communication when reviews show that the product or service does not seem to be as advertised. This kind of response is also sometimes triggered when responders get provoked on seeing a reply from the company to the original reviewer in the comments section which they do not like or find impersonal, unhelpful or unfair to the consumer, for example,

“After reading the reviews, I was turned off by your continual reference to “limited warranty” when your customers reported a product failure. Your responses send up a red flag that your product is probably subpar and bothered me enough to express my opinion. The customer of this particular review indicated the unit fell over. (...) your company should well know that personal home grooming products are EXPECTED to fall over Indeed (...). So, if your product breaks so easily, then it tells me your product is not durable enough for ordinary personal use nor worth the steep price you charge. Doesn't seem quite ethical (...).” (AP9R33C2).

Finally, the responder can sometimes criticise another responder when they notice any out-of-the-ordinary comments or behaviour from that responder, such as being rude to the reviewer, or when they feel they are biased in their replies, or in extreme cases are being paid by the company to leave a comment on every negative review to try to discredit it. Such comments usually involve accusing the other responder of being biased or sometimes use sarcasm to criticise the comment, for example,

“You keep answering in every complaint. You must work at the company and want to make people feel as if it is their fault. Nice try, but not buying it. There aren't these many people having problems for it to be "user error"” (AP3R14C5).

5.4.7 Summary of Online Value Destruction Responses

This theme presents six types of reader responses to online value-destroying behaviour that are guided by the reader's perception and previous experience with the company. At this point in the process, the focus shifts from the reviewer to the reader. Inexperienced readers' responses involve consumer enquiry, consumer gratitude and criticising. Experienced readers' responses involve helping, defending and supporting.

5.5 Potential Intervening Factors

Not all negative posts have the same impact on consumers who read them. A negative post may be value-destroying for one consumer but not for another. The analysis revealed that there are factors that determine or affect the impact of a value-destroying post, and these are perception and previous experience. The reader's perception of negative content in terms of credibility and risk will determine whether it will influence them or not, as will their previous experience with the brand.

5.5.1 Perception

Consumers exposed to online value destruction will not always take what they read for granted. Consumers create for themselves some judgement criteria against which they can evaluate the content they read before believing it and acting upon it. Those criteria are highly based on how consumers perceive the whole situation. This is a highly subjective matter because the impact of value-destroying content is affected by how the consumer perceives two things, namely, credibility and risk.

Perceived Credibility

For the negative online content to have a value-destroying effect on consumers, it needs to be perceived as credible, and if not, readers will not believe what they read and will not take it seriously. Consumers seek to verify the credibility of consumer-created posts or content they read online and have different ways of doing so. Evidence, the agreement of others, the source, and review quality are the four main factors that assist readers in assessing the credibility of the negative content they read. Those factors originally emerged from the interview analysis and were supported with evidence from the reviews in the netnography data analysis.

A post that contains evidence of the problem or incident that the consumer is facing is perceived as more credible for other consumers who are engaging online. Consumers are exposed to negative brand-related content all the time, whether as posts on social networking sites or in the form of negative reviews on review aggregators. With the increase of exaggerated and fake posts or reviews, consumers have become more sceptical than before and accordingly expect more information from the reviewer as evidence in support of their claims. Hence, consumers who engage in value destruction and create negative content try to make their posts as rich and believable as possible because they want to reach as many people as possible. They do so by attaching evidence that might strengthen the impact of their posts. Evidence can be in the form of an attached picture or even a video illustrating the problem experienced. Consumers mention that seeing such things provides proof and makes the post more believable, for example, *“Sometimes people put a picture of the bill for example. There was someone complaining about car service centres, where they didn’t want to change the spare part although he was still in the warranty period. He put the invoices, he made a video, he posted a picture of the details of the invoice and the date of buying the car compared to the date he went to the service centre, he even put a picture of the spare part. For me, I believed him 100%.”* (Int14).

As the above quotation from one of the interviews illustrates, the interviewee mentioned that he believed the reviewer because of the evidence provided, and could understand details of the issue that the reviewer was having with the service

centre because of the evidence provided in the post. The following quotation also provides an example of how this was supported from the netnographic phase, as a reader responded to a review by praising the reviewer for adding a video that illustrated the problem:

“Best review ever. You added a RELEVANT video that clearly illustrates the problem. All Star!” (AP3R12C1)

Evidence supporting negative reviewers’ claims is therefore considered one of the factors that help add to the credibility of the negative post, giving it higher value-destroying potential.

Another factor that adds to the credibility of negative content is the extent to which others agree with it and are having similar problems to the original reviewer. Hence, it is not just a question of the number of negative reviews, but also how much endorsement the review receives from others with the same problem. Several interviewees mentioned that seeing many negative reviews, where most of the complaints are about the same thing, increases credibility for them. A negative review also becomes more credible for the reader when there are many others endorsing and supporting the original reviewer in the comments, for example,

“I try to make sure that it is not a single incident from this person, and I start to read comments on the review to make sure if many people agreeing or disagreeing or are facing similar things from the same source.” (Int13).

This was also evident from responses to reviews from the netnographic phase. For example, the responder quoted below refers to refraining from using the brand after looking at several other negative reviews on the brand in addition to the comments of other users that support and agree with the reviewer on that specific review:

“(…) there is NO WAY I would use these collars on my dog after reading ALL of that review as well as the previous comments in response to that review.” (AP2R20C82).

The third thing that affects the credibility of the content is the credibility of the source. In other words, who created the post and where they posted. Interviewees talked about the way in which reading negative content from a person that they

personally know and trust adds to its credibility from their perspective. Moreover, how the person perceives the source they are familiar with is also important, and thus, knowing that the source is someone they share values and opinions with strengthens the perceived credibility of the content and gives it stronger impact, for example,

“If I can relate to the person sharing this review, for example if it’s someone I know, and I know their preferences, their taste so I would definitely relate because I know them already. If their explanation to that review or their breakdown to that review is something I can relate to that they share the same values I share or we have the same methodology in their review, it would definitely have more impact than just regular or other reviews.” (Int16).

This does not mean that reading negative content from anonymous sources on third-party websites is perceived as non-credible. Consumers in those instances have their ways of verifying the credibility of the source, such as looking at their history of reviews to see if they often write them, or whether they are always negative and always leave negative reviews. Verified purchases are perceived as more trustworthy, while sponsored reviewers where the reviewer got a free sample to try out and review are not. If the platform allows, readers also sometimes check the reviewer’s profile to see if he or she seems to be someone they can trust or relate to, for example,

“I check the reviewer’s profile to make sure, if it’s an Amazon review for example, I go check if it is a verified purchase, I make sure that it is not a sponsored review, or it’s not a sponsored product, just to make sure that this is a good review.” (Int12).

Although this factor was more evident from interviews, it was also supported by the data from netnography when observing the responses to negative reviews. Upon checking other product reviews written by the reviewer, the responder quoted below criticised them for always writing negative reviews. This made the responder doubt the reviewer’s opinion as they now appear to be negative and hardly ever satisfied and hence, perceived as a less credible source.

“I noticed you have 4 reviews for 4 of your previous purchases. All 4 give 1 star and very negative reviews. Either you are a very unlucky man or a person who will never be satisfied with any purchase.” (AP5R41C4).

The fourth determinant of credibility is the perceived stylistic and linguistic quality of the post. Consumers appreciate posts that are well written and detailed enough to because they give a hint of the true negative experience. The wording used, misspelling and grammatical mistakes reduce perceived review quality. Two- or three-word reviews with swear words are not appreciated and are not seen as destructive because they are not sufficiently information-rich and only reflect the reviewer's anger rather than their credibility. Also, expressing the problem in a way that makes sense to the reader, with maybe pros and cons to the experience, adds to the quality of the review. The analysis shows that consumers evaluate the quality of the review they are reading and make judgements accordingly. For example, the interviewee quoted below highlighted how he loses interest in poorly written reviews compared to how engaging others that are well written can be:

“Definitely, the construction and the text itself. I mean, if it is someone just cursing, I wouldn't bother about that review, but if someone is explaining their point of view, that's definitely important because there's an actual base to what they're saying.” (Int16).

It was also evident from observing responses to reviews that respondents expressed their appreciation of reviews that are detailed and well written with the reviewer putting effort into writing, and returning with updates on the product after using it for some time:

“thank you so much for your initial review and then the various follow-ups. Yours is such a useful review because you've offered a complete pros and cons over an extended period of time.” (AP2R20C234).

Perceived Risk

The second aspect of consumer perception that affects online value destruction is the perceived risk of the problem mentioned in the post or review. Negative posts about issues that are perceived by the consumers as risky tend to be taken more seriously. Consumers would not risk a negative experience with expensive products or services and hence, reading a negative review about an expensive item can have a stronger impact on consumers.

“I seldom write reviews, but usually always look at them when I’m about to purchase something, especially something expensive.” (AP3R1C31).

Interviewees also mentioned that they are not willing to take a chance on issues concerning something of significance to them such their health, their children or the environment for example. Therefore, it depends on how significant the issue is from the reader’s perspective and the amount of risk they think they are taking if they disregard the review. In other words, readers mentioned ignoring a negative review when they did not consider the issue at hand to be risky. For example, the interviewee below talks about how there are certain issues she would not “risk it” with when reading negative posts on Facebook:

“They’re not very effective on your decision unless it is something that you’ll eat, drink or stay in you know what I mean? But if it’s just something that you’re just killing time with, then you could try it. But when someone warns you about a food product for example then no, of course I will not risk it.” (Int5).

5.5.2 Previous Experience

This theme mainly emerged from the interview data when interviewees talked about how their experience and familiarity with the brand guided their judgement when exposed to negative value-destroying content online. In the previous section (5.4 online value destruction responses), it was evident from the reviews that previous experience with the brand played an important role in determining the type of response elicited from the reader. This theme therefore conforms with the previous one by highlighting how consumers clearly indicate that their own experiences also guides their cognitions and judgements, and hence, their behaviours or responses. In situations where the reader has no previous experience with the brand, the negative content can have a stronger impact and become value-destroying for the reader, in other words, potential consumers are relatively easy to sway and scare off with negative content because they have nothing else to refer to for judgement. On the other hand, when readers have an experience of their own to compare to, their judgement differs depending on their own experience. Even just being familiar with the company or brand gives the reader some leverage. Consumers who had a good experience with the brand indicated

they were less prone to being affected by negative value-destroying content, for example,

“I won’t really go with those reviews because I know the product and I know the company really well. I’ve had them for so many years, so if a thousand people is writing about things, it doesn’t mean anything to me. But if it’s a product, a hotel or a place that I’m not familiar with, I would take them into consideration.” (Int6).

Uncertainty plays an important role in readers’ vulnerability to online value destruction. When they do not know enough about the brand or are unfamiliar with the provider, consumers may be easier to influence because of uncertainty. When asked, interviewees talked about how familiarity with the company or the brand made them ignore some of the reviews and comments, even if they themselves did not have direct experience with the brand, for example,

“I always check the reviews before booking rooms especially when the hotel is not a big name, so I can expect some variation from the information provided from the hotel site but when I deal with products, well known products, I may neglect the reviews actually.” (Int13).

5.5.3 Summary of Potential Intervening Factors

This theme presented readers’ perception and previous experience as the potential intervening factors in the process of online value destruction. In doing so, it proposes that consumer-to-consumer online value destruction only occurs based on the reader’s perception the content (in terms of credibility and risk) and previous experience, where lack of experience and uncertainty can make consumers vulnerable to online value destruction. Those factors also appear to connect this phase and the next by influencing consumer responses and consequences of online value destruction (to be discussed next). This marks the end of the second phase of the process which included the forms, responses and potential intervening factors for online value destruction. Table 8 below summarises the coding structure of phase 2 and how the researcher arrived at the aggregate theoretical dimensions of this phase.

Table 8: Phase 2 Coding Structure

Quotations	1 st Order Codes	2 st Order Themes	Aggregate Theoretical Dimensions
<p>“Be very careful if you decide to use this collar.” (AP2R3)</p> <p>“I should not say it is bad product, but be aware that your pet can have problems with.” (AP2R7)</p>	Passive Warning	Warning	Online Value Destruction Forms
<p>“This product is terrible even while following the instructions to the max the product does not perform as advertised beware! Don’t buy this product it’s BAD” (AP3R140)</p> <p>“DO NOT TRUST THE BP READINGS YOU GET FROM THIS DEVICE! It’s going back for a refund as soon as I can arrange it” (AP5R78)</p>	Persuasive Warning		
<p>“I would never recommend this item to anyone - total waste of money.” (AP5R26)</p> <p>“I removed the collar and would never recommend this product to anyone.” (AP2R18)</p>	Recommending Against Brand	Recommending	
<p>“I have been using it for three weeks and I see no new growth. I have used (competing brand) in the past with success.” (AP8R8)</p> <p>“I’d NEVER recommend your pet to wear these. Ever. Get (competing brand) if you can, or if the pet can’t tolerate it, find natural remedies that work.” (AP2R12)</p>	Recommending Competitors		
<p>“I don’t believe this product is safe to be putting on your eyes.” (AP8R14)</p> <p>“This product killed my German Shepherd. (The brand) will not admit it but my vet also believes that” (AP2R64)</p>	Product Issue	Exposing	
<p>“YOU need to explain to your LOYAL CUSTOMERS why you jacked the price to more than DOUBLE!!!” (AP10R27)</p> <p>“With a few minutes research, it easy to verify that there are hundreds of complaints regarding this company and their refusal to honour warranties. Wake up Amazon. Unethical companies should not be allowed to continue selling on your site” (AP3R1)</p>	Misconduct		
<p>“The headphones themselves work fine, but I am unable to get the microphone to work. At best, the microphone produces an extremely quiet and muffled sound.” (AP6R204)</p>	Pros and Cons	Evaluating	

<p>“I liked that it is so small and easy to store. However, it did not give me accurate readings.” (AP5R60)</p>			
<p>“After little under a month of use, I pressed the button to open and saw one rib is broken. Seems to be a common problem” (AP1R3)</p> <p>“Stopped working 2 days after return window (30 days) closed. Seriously used it about 10 times” (AP6R177)</p>	Complaining		
<p>“I’m definitely going to be reading it, second of all, I will be contacting the person to get more info if it’s not all written down already” (Int10)</p> <p>“The question this review begs is, how accurate was the unit after you learned to operate it properly?” (AP5R41C20)</p>	Consumer Enquiry		
<p>“So, a big “thank you” to those of you who posted honest reviews. You’ve saved me \$400-500” (AP9R64C7)</p> <p>“Excellent review, Thanks for the critical information it is very helpful!” (AP5R75C1)</p>	Consumer Gratitude	Inexperienced Reader	Online Value Destruction Responses
<p>“actually, it’s the company’s fault for not putting this on the box where it is noticeable for people that don’t look at the small print” (AP11R3C1)</p> <p>“This has nothing to do with how well the product does or doesn’t work. It’s your fault for losing the charger anyway.” (AP9R55C2)</p> <p>“Your comment is mean! It is not unreasonable to expect a product to last more than 5 weeks, and the idea of having to pay shipping to return it is like adding insult to injury.” (AP3R8C9)</p>	Criticising		
<p>“Did you give the collar a good stretch before you placed it on your dogs? give that a try it should release more of the active ingredient.” (AP2R20C4)</p> <p>“The company will replace it within a year. Just go to their website and contact them.” (AP3R2C1)</p>	Helping Reviewer		
<p>“I TOTALLY agree with everything you have said. A major disappointment for me.” (AP3R65C3)</p> <p>“I confirm that this reviewer’s experience is very true. I too have the old model. It is easier to</p>	Supporting Reviewer	Experienced Consumer	

<p>use. You don't have to hold your arm out & it is VERY accurate." (AP5R46C35)</p>			
<p>"This is the best product I have ever purchased on Amazon. Perhaps you just had a faulty one? I can't recommend it enough." (AP3R22C1)</p> <p>"You OBVIOUSLY bought a knock off...that is so unrealistic to a (brand) collar, or you had it on too TIGHT!!" (AP2R2C1)</p>	<p>Defending Brand</p>		
<p>"I will go to the profile of the person who shared the review and I will try to know if he is familiar or if we have mutual friends." (Int13)</p> <p>"So, again it depends on the quality of the review." (Int12)</p> <p>"When many people agree on something, then it's not unfair. It's not just a single opinion that will decide." (Int5)</p> <p>"I trust customer reviews, especially customer reviews that are accompanied with pictures." (Int12)</p>	<p>Perceived Credibility</p>	<p>Perception</p>	<p>Online Value Destruction Potential Intervening Factors</p>
<p>"I get affected by all of them, maybe some things more than others like food for example because it is something related to health. Things that can be a bit luxurious... for basic things like food, water, things that have something to do with health, really affect me." (Int14)</p> <p>"if it's a restaurant, and its sushi and the fish is horrible then I'll definitely be like ok you guys need to be careful because fish cannot be messed with, you can't just joke with that." (Int10)</p>	<p>Perceived Risk</p>		
<p>"If I had a similar experience with the company, I'll endorse" (Int15)</p> <p>"I see if I dealt with the negatively reviewed object/ item and see if the same thing happened to me or not. If it did, I support, I share the post." (Int4)</p>	<p>Similar Experience</p>	<p>Previous Experience</p>	
<p>"if it is a place that is unknown to me, an area a country a city or whatever, then it might get me to think, should I actually go or should I not?" (Int10)</p> <p>"IMDB, all the time we check it before going to the movies. Usually when it is a movie we're unsure of. If for example the it's a Vin diesel movie we will go watch it anyways. When it</p>	<p>Uncertainty</p>		

comes to movies that we don't know much about, or we don't know if it is good or bad, then we check it on IMDB." (Int3)			
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Phase 3: Post-Online Value Destruction

This is the last phase of the proposed process of online value destruction. It demonstrates the consumer-based consequences of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction as the main theme within the phase.

5.6 Online Value Destruction Consequences

In situations where shared negative experience passes through the above filters, value can be destroyed because this is when the post becomes value-destructive to the reader. In this case, there are consequences that could occur because of value destruction and the analysis revealed that the consequences fall into three main categories which are cognitive, emotional and behavioural consequences.

5.6.1 Cognitive Consequences

Cognitive consequences are the negative brand-related thoughts that consumers develop due to engaging with online value destruction. These thoughts involve negative brand image and doubt. Readers engaging with online value destruction could start to think less of the focal brand, and their thoughts about the brand may shift from positive or neutral to negative. Even if the thoughts are not completely negative, engaging with online value destruction can raise doubts in the mind of the reader towards the focal brand.

Engaging with online value destruction can affect the way the reader perceives the brand and they may start perceiving it negatively. This theme emerged only from interview data when interviewees indicated that looking at negative content about a brand can create a negative image about it in their minds, especially when the reader has not developed an opinion about the brand yet. Potential consumers who have not had any experience with the brand can be affected by the negative content they read and they are accordingly subject to developing a negative opinion or image of that brand, for example,

“(...) if I don’t have an opinion, it gives me a negative image about the place (...)” (Int9).

Interviewees also mentioned that even if they were not trying to make a purchase decision when they were exposed to negative brand-related content, they would at least keep the information in the back of their mind for future reference should they ever have to deal with that brand or company in the future. Therefore, consumers remember others’ negative experiences to ensure they do not have to go through a negative experience themselves. The problem for that brand in this situation is that value-destroying content affects not only the brand image in the eyes of potential buyers currently making a purchase decision, but also future consumers who are not currently buying but might do so some other time. For example, the interviewee quoted below stated that even though they are not active in sharing or commenting on the negative online post, they will not forget what they read and would retain the negative information until needed:

“I am not very active on such type of posts but I will keep a memory of that because for later on, if I am using the same product that he or she posted about, I would remember that experience and I definitely store this for the record.” (Int16).

Doubt can develop when the reader was originally excited about the brand and was looking forward to the experience prior to engaging with online value destruction. Online value destruction in this case creates doubts and concerns regarding the brand, where the reader begins to rethink their options and investigate the issue further with the tendency to change their mind about the brand and look for an alternative. This does not necessarily mean that this consumer will no longer be willing to deal with the company but there are now doubtful thoughts that will make consumers less confident about the brand than they were before they engaged with value-destroying content. The following interviewee stated how their thoughts about a place would change from positive to doubtful after looking at value-destroying content about it:

“if I already had a positive image about the place, I will begin to doubt whether it was a coincidence for me that it is a positive feeling” (Int17).

This theme was also supported by the netnographic data analysis. When observing some of the responses to negative value-destroying reviews, potential consumers expressed doubt in their responses to value-destroying reviews. In the following response to a negative review, this potential consumer expressed desire for the brand, which then changed to doubt upon exposure to a value-destroying review: *“I REALLY, REALLY wanted one of the (Brand)- BUT not now. After reading this review, I have doubts about the Pressure Cooker AND Amazon”* (AP3R1C45).

5.6.2 Emotional Consequences

Emotional consequences are the feelings consumers experience upon engaging with online value destruction. Those feelings are mostly negative ones such as anger and disappointment, but an interesting finding is that consumers may also experience positive emotions such as happiness and gratitude when they feel that they were saved from a bad purchase. Reading negative content involving an incident or a problem that a consumer experienced with a brand can trigger negative emotions for the reader. Most of the negative emotions experienced by the reader are transferred from the original reviewer to the reader through the process of online value destruction. The anger and disappointment in those posts transfer to the reader who finds the post convincing.

Readers may feel angry after reading about someone else’s negative experience with several interviewees expressing anger about what happened to the original reviewer, and that anger is now directed towards the brand. Negative experiences involving things like scams, unfairness, physical harm and neglect on the provider’s part can be received with anger from the reader, provided that they believe the reviewer’s story or post. The interviewee quoted below expressed how angry they felt about another consumer’s negative experience:

“I got angry for her, I felt like are you serious? When is this going to stop?”
(Int12).

Consumers expressed that they sometimes also felt disappointed after looking at value-destroying content related to a brand they wanted to buy. Readers experience disappointment when they had higher expectations for the brand that

they are reading about. In this situation, it is observed that the value created earlier becomes destroyed, resulting in disappointment. When they read something negative about a brand they were preparing to buy and are looking forward to trying, they feel disappointed in it. This was evident from interview data when interviewees mentioned that they were disappointed in the brand and at the thought that they would no longer experience something they were excited about. The interviewee below for example, was excited about her stay at a certain hotel and felt disappointed when negative reviews destroyed the value that had been created earlier when she looked at the pictures of the place and liked them: ***“I was disappointed because I thought the pictures were very nice, and when I read the reviews, they were negative, so I was disappointed because I wanted to go to this place.”*** (Int2).

This was also evident from the results of the netnography analysis when some of the responders to negative reviews stated in their responses that they found it disappointing that the company or the product did not seem to be as they expected, for example,

“I am surprised that the company did not honour your warranty. That is disappointing.” (AP3R1C39).

On the contrary, the analysis of data from both interviews and netnography also reveals that positive emotions may also be experienced by the reader upon exposure to value-destroying posts online. Potential consumers who have not bought the focal brand yet, or who were about to buy it, expressed feeling happy that reading about the negative experiences of others helped them avoid a wrong decision they were about to make. They are happy they took a shortcut without having to spend time and money that could have been wasted on the wrong brand for them. Others were also consumers who had a similar negative experience with the brand to the reviewer and expressed being happy they were not the only ones with the bad experience. The interviewee quoted below for example, mentioned they were happy to read negative comments on Instagram about a weight loss tea before buying and consuming it because the comments said that it caused health issues for those who tried it. They were therefore glad not to waste money on something that could be harmful and when asked how they felt about reading those negative reviews they said:

“I was happy that I didn’t spend all that money for something that would mess with me in the end. So, I was pretty glad actually” (Int10).

It can be concluded here that potential consumers in this situation are not happy that others had bad experiences, but they are happy for not having to go through one by avoiding a bad purchase after reading value-destroying content. Value is destroyed because the potential consumer who was at some point interested in the brand is now not only refraining from buying it, but is also happy about avoiding the purchase. Those emotions were also evident in some of the replies to reviews in the netnographic analysis. For example, one of the responders to reviews stated the following, where they simply mention being glad to find the negative review:

“I’m glad to have found this review.” (AP2R20C235).

Another positive feeling that emerged from the netnographic analysis was gratitude. In their responses to reviews, some potential consumers expressed feeling grateful and thankful for the reviewers who took the time to warn them about the brand by writing about their negative experiences with those brands before they themselves bought it. In this situation, potential consumers feel grateful for reviews that warn them and help them make a suitable decision. Those potential consumers expressed gratitude to the reviewers, for the comments and the presence of a medium that can help and guide them. The response quoted below shows how one of the responders who reacted to a negative review expressed gratitude to the negative comments:

“I’m grateful for the comments left here on Amazon.” (AP2R20C254).

Gratitude was not only expressed by potential consumers, since the analysis revealed that current consumers can also feel grateful after being exposed to value-destroying content online. Current consumers who had a positive experience expressed their gratitude at being lucky enough to have had a positive experience with the brand compared to that of the reviewer. Others who also had a negative experience were grateful for the fact that their negative experience was not as bad as the reviewer’s. The responder below for example felt lucky after reading about the reviewer’s negative experience with the brand. Although this responder did not have a fully positive experience with the product, they were able to solve

the problem by returning the product for a refund without any difficulty. The respondent in this case was grateful for the experience relative to the reviewer's and commented:

"I feel I got very lucky; mine's control panel was DOA...I promptly returned it for a refund." (AP3R1C2).

5.6.3 Behavioural Consequences

Behavioural consequences are consumers' negative actions towards the focal brand that occur after engaging with online value destruction which affects consumers' behaviours in terms of purchase, usage and sharing. Due to engaging with online value destruction, the reader might alter their behaviours towards the focal brand, either now or in the future. Readers engaging with online value destruction may hold off a purchase, decide not to buy again, stop usage if they are current users, or share the reviewer's negative experience with others.

Purchase Behaviour

Engaging with online value destruction can direct the reader's current and future purchase behaviour in several ways, from delaying a purchase, to not buying the brand and in extreme cases, boycotting the brand.

Upon engaging with online value-destroying content, potential consumers who were about to make a purchase decision and buy the focal brand can delay their purchase decision. In this situation, instead of buying the brand immediately, they might delay the purchase decision until they have done further research. Potential consumers may also delay purchase to explore other possible alternatives for the brand that might be better for them. Some readers also wait for more reviews to come out, hoping that the problem gets fixed by the provider, for example, *"Was really interested (& Almost Hit My One Click Button) to Purchase the (Brand), but think I'll hold off on this purchase till I see #1- Better Customer Service from reviews, & #2- More Positive Reviews (here on Amazon & on Other Social Media)"* (AP9R62C2).

The responder quoted above commented on a negative review and clearly stated the intention of delaying the purchase until some conditions had been met. It can also be concluded from this statement that this potential consumer is not yet completely lost and there is a chance that they will make the purchase sometime later. This could be explained as a situation of temporary value destruction until further value creation or recovery, in this specific case through better reviews and consumer service. However, whether temporary or permanent, it is still considered value destruction because in this situation, it is uncertain that the company will be able to create or recover value for the consumer through achieving the conditions mentioned. If it fails to do so, value would be destroyed. Delaying purchases was also supported from interviews when some interviewees mentioned that they would wait and see after engaging with online value-destroying content. For example, the interviewee quoted below talked about how negative movie reviews affected actions:

*“(...) when I come to check if I will go to a certain movie or not, I like to see what people think about the movie. Because the trailer could be nice, but the people who saw the movie or experienced it didn't like it. **That can make me wait to watch it online instead of watching it at the cinema**” (Int1).*

Value creation and destruction were both evident in the quotation when the interviewee mentioned that the trailer could be nice (value creation) and people's opinion of the movie could still be negative. The interviewee in this situation waits and watches it later online as it does not seem to be worth watching at the cinema anymore. Hence, value was destroyed although it did not result in total loss of the consumer since the movie was still consumed but through a cheaper means (online). This situation therefore involved a delay in purchase that led to a different means of consumption that cost less because value had been destroyed.

Overall, delaying the purchase in any of the ways mentioned above poses a risk for the business. In the first scenario where the potential consumer delays purchase until some changes or improvements are noticed, there is a risk of losing the consumer to a competitor during that waiting time. In the second scenario mentioned above where the consumer delays purchase until the product or service can be acquired more cheaply, although the consumer was not completely lost

and eventually consumed the company's offering, the value that came out of the consumer was reduced due to the delay in purchase.

The findings also reveal that potential consumers exposed to value-destroying posts may also avoid the purchase. Potential consumers who were looking to buy the brand may, upon engaging with online value destruction, refrain from buying it. Sometimes they become afraid to buy it, other times they no longer feel like they are willing to pay the full price for it; in other words, they see it as not worth it anymore so they do not buy it and go looking for an alternative. This theme was evident in findings from both sources of data. For example, when asked, the interviewee quoted below said that she would totally refrain from any brand that had negative reviews, no matter how many:

"It put me off, seriously I don't come near the thing that had negative reviews even if it is just 2% or 3% negative reviews" (Int18).

Although the above situation could be perceived as extreme, the interviewee expressed her views on negative reviews and how seriously she takes them, even when there are not many. So, the content of negative reviews can still be damaging and have consequences even if there are few of them. Potential consumers in this case could still avoid a purchase upon exposure to value-destroying content online. Supporting evidence for avoiding purchases upon exposure to negative content, in a less extreme version, was observed from responses to negative reviews online. Upon exposure to value-destroying content, the potential consumer below expressed the intention of avoiding purchasing the focal brand:

"After reading all of the reviews on this site and noting the two same complaints over and over again, I think I'll skip buying the (Brand)" (AP9R64C7).

The responder here made it clear that the idea that people agree on similar issues in their complaints was the convincing part, rather than just being scared away by a negative review like the previous interviewee. Those two situations relate to one of the impact factors of online value destruction mentioned in the previous phase, which is perception. However, it is interesting to note that each case was impacted by a different aspect of perception. The review responder relied on perceived credibility when all the reviewers confirmed having similar problems,

leading to them being perceived to be more credible. The interviewee on the other hand relied on perceived risk where she probably would not risk buying a brand with negative reviews, even if there were just a few of them. The point however is that in both cases, the potential consumer avoided the purchase, making it a potential consequence to online value destruction.

Usage

The findings reveal that online value destruction can also affect current consumers of a brand and can have consequences. Current users of the brand can also be exposed to and engage with online value destruction and consequently may decide to stop using the focal brand. This can happen if they read a post about the product or brand being harmful. This theme emerged from netnographic data analysis as current consumers responded to negative online reviews stating that they would discontinue using the brand after engaging with the reviews. The responder quoted below for example, read a review from a consumer complaining about the same reaction to a beauty product and decided to stop using the product:

*“I am having the same reaction. Red dry skin and lumpy bumps. **Going to stop using this product. I look scary!**” (AP8R20C2).*

There are instances when the consumers are having problems but are unaware that they are related to the brand. Those consumers would therefore discontinue use after negative reviews helped them verify that the problems that they are experiencing are indeed related to the brand. The consumer quoted below experienced problems because of the brand and had not made the link or was not sure about it. Having apparently started reading reviews after buying and using the product, they accordingly responded with the following:

*“I wish I had read all of the awful reviews right after the vet put one on my GSD Tuesday. He's been vomiting since. **I finally made the connection and removed it**” (AP2R20C144).*

Sharing

Many responders expressed their intention to share negative information they read with others. Sharing means that readers will actively engage with the online value-

destroying post or review by sharing it online with the people in their circle. Responders said that they sometimes feel obliged to share the information they have and spread the word about the problem to prevent as many others from encountering harm as possible, especially when they perceive the situation to be risky or significant. Readers also sometimes decide to share problems with the authorities who they feel can take legal action against the business. For example,

“I am reporting this reaction to the FDA & EPA. Here is the link, as I am asking that others do as well (...)” (AP2R39C2).

Some interviewees also mentioned that they are sharing the negative post to help the original reviewer with the problem they are having in terms of getting the provider’s attention. For example, the interviewee quoted below stated that they would only share a value-destroying post if it would help the reviewer.

“if I believe in the case of the post shared and I believe that if I share this post it will get things going well or not going well, I mean it will affect in handling the problem, or get that person to get their complaint attended to, I would share it (...)” (Int16)

The rationale here is that the post could become more powerful if it goes viral and the provider can therefore attend to it faster to try to solve it to avoid further damage to the company. Moreover, consumers who had a similar negative experience sometimes support and endorse the original reviewer by sharing negative content, and this adds to the strength and credibility of the value-destroying post. For example,

“When I find a post for example about someone complaining about something, I read it first, then I see if I dealt with the negatively reviewed item and see if the same thing happened to me or not. If it did, I support, I share the post” (Int4).

Sharing could be the most threatening consequence of online value destruction to the company, because this is the stage when the reader turns into a value destroyer and the destruction can then become viral and affect more consumers and potential consumers. Other consequences are harmful to the business, but not as harmful because they affect those who are only exposed to the original

reviewers' posts. Shared posts on the other hand extend to the circles of those who share them and can even be shared further by other readers, and hence spread more.

5.6.4 Summary of Online Value Destruction Consequences

This theme dominates the third and last phase of the process by presenting the impact on consumers upon engaging with value-destroying content online. It revealed consumer cognitive, emotional and behavioural consequences of online value destruction. Table 9 below demonstrates the coding structure of the last phase of the process and how aggregate theoretical dimensions were formed.

Table 9: Phase 3 Coding Structure

Quote	1 st Order Codes	2 nd Order Themes	Aggregate Theoretical Dimension
<p>“Reading all these posts, I am completely confused. Which one is the right one to buy? I need to order one but not sure now which one to order.” (AP5R46C45)</p> <p>“It might sound silly but I felt that the experience was going to be unpleasant based on the comments I read.” (Int1)</p>	Doubt	Cognitive Consequences	Online Value Destruction Consequences
<p>“I always neglect flying with them because I always have this perception in my mind that you fly Alitalia, you lose your bag, it’s always on my mind.” (Int15)</p> <p>“I can take a screenshot or try to save the post for myself if I am afraid to forget the name of the product or service, the bad one.” (Int13)</p>	Negative brand Image		
<p>“I was excited and all of a sudden I got shut down because of the negative feedback.” (Int17)</p> <p>“I am surprised that the company did not honour your warranty. That is disappointing.” (AP3R1C39)</p>	Disappointment	Emotional Consequences	
<p>“I was very angry because of what they did. It was very bad, they did a very bad thing.” (Int3)</p> <p>“Point me in the direction of another product. OH, I AM SOOOO ANGRY RIGHT NOW.” (AP10R27C4)</p>	Anger		
<p>“I feel I got very lucky, mine’s control panel was DOA...I promptly returned it for a refund” (AP3R1C2)</p> <p>“I’m grateful for the comments left here on Amazon.” (AP2R20C254)</p>	Gratitude		
<p>“I’m glad to have found this review.” (AP2R20C235)</p>	Happiness		

“I just think that I’m glad I didn’t buy it” (Int10)			
“I decided to go see the product myself personally and just buy it online after I see it myself.” (Int18) “After reading your update, I’ll look into something else” (AP2R2C3) “I was going to buy the product and then I said no I’m not going to get it. It just changed my mind.” (Int6)	Purchase Behaviour	Behavioural Consequences	
“Very disappointed and won’t be using them again.” (AP2R20C256) “After reading your original post, I dropped the (focal brand) and went back to the (another brand) which is slightly less optimistic, but probably more accurate.” (AP5R41C15)	Stop Using		
“I am reporting this reaction to the FDA & EPA. Here is the link, as I am asking that others do as well.” (AP2R39C2) “I would share the post if it is something important.” (Int7) “If it is something concerning his kids, I’ll repost it on my wall. Because again this is a serious matter.” (Int9)	Sharing		

5.7 Online Value Destruction Process Summary

The findings reveal the phases of the online value destruction process. The findings were into three sections, each describing a phase: pre-online value destruction, engaging with online value destruction and post online value destruction. There are four main players involved in the process of online value destruction that takes place on third-party websites: the reviewer who created the value-destroying post or review, the reader who is either a potential consumer or another current consumer that is exposed to the negative post, the responders to the post who comment in reply to a negative post and the focal company or brand that the value-destroying post is about.

In the first phase, the findings reveal three drivers of online value destruction: perceived negative experience, emotions and seeking well-being. Those drivers represent what happens in the original reviewer’s realm before value destruction is transferred to other consumers as online value destruction. The process begins when the consumer’s experience with the company is perceived as negative,

either due to a problem with a product or an unpleasant interaction with the company. The consumer can then experience negative emotions such as anger, disappointment and frustration because of the perceived negative experience. After consumers experience negative emotions, they begin to think of their own well-being and their need to solve the problem or at least feel better. Consumers seeking their own well-being share their negative experiences online to get the company's attention and a solution or compensation or to get back at the company by potentially hurting it or simply to vent the negativity. The data also revealed that consumers are concerned about others' well-being and share their negative experiences online so that others become informed and avoid bad purchases. It can therefore be concluded that online value destruction drivers can be classified as cognitive or emotional, perceived negative experience and well-being being cognitive and negative emotions emotional.

In the second phase of the process, which is engaging in online value destruction, those series of cognitive and emotional drivers are translated into online value-destroying behaviour. This happens when the consumer becomes an agent of value destruction and shares the negative experience with others by creating value-destroying posts on third-party websites. The findings revealed four forms of online value destroying posts: warning, recommending, exposing and evaluating. An interesting observation was that warning and recommending are related to seeking others' well-being as they are mostly directed towards other consumers and hence reflect the reviewer's concern for them. Exposing and evaluating posts could be a result of seeking one's own well-being, others' well-being or both at the same time. However, one is usually more dominant than the other in the post, making it the primary driver of the post and the other one secondary.

Readers engage with online value-destroying posts over social networking sites and review aggregators. The findings also showed that readers respond or reply to negative posts and responses can take six forms: consumer enquiry, consumer gratitude, helping, supporting, defending and criticising. Readers' responses depend on their previous experience with the brand. Potential consumers with no experience respond with enquiries, gratitude and criticising whereas current experienced consumers' responses involve helping, defending and supporting

An important revelation in this study was that not all negative online posts are value-destroying to the reader, and there are two potential intervening factors that affect the impact of a value-destroying post, namely the reader's previous experience and perception. Readers' perception of negative online posts in terms of credibility and risk helps determine whether it will be destructive to them or not. Readers assess credibility by looking at the post itself (for example, the review quality and source) and how others have responded to it (for example, whether they agree and support or disagree with the original reviewer). Readers also assess risk from the content of the post, where they look at the extent of the problem, its perceived importance to the reader as well as the costs involved. Moreover, readers' previous experience with the brand also influences how negative content affects them. Having an experience of their own can make readers relatively immune to online value destruction and vice versa.

Therefore, it can be concluded from the second phase of the process that perception and previous experience with the brand play a role in two further ways, which are how the reader responds to online value-destroying behaviour, and how the reader is affected by it in terms of consequences. This leads to the third phase of the online value-destruction process and the final revelation of this study, which is that there are consequences for online value destruction. They can be classified into three categories: cognitive consequences (doubt and negative brand image), emotional consequences (anger, disappointment, happiness and gratitude) and behavioural consequences (purchase behaviour, usage and sharing). The following flowchart summarises the findings of this study.

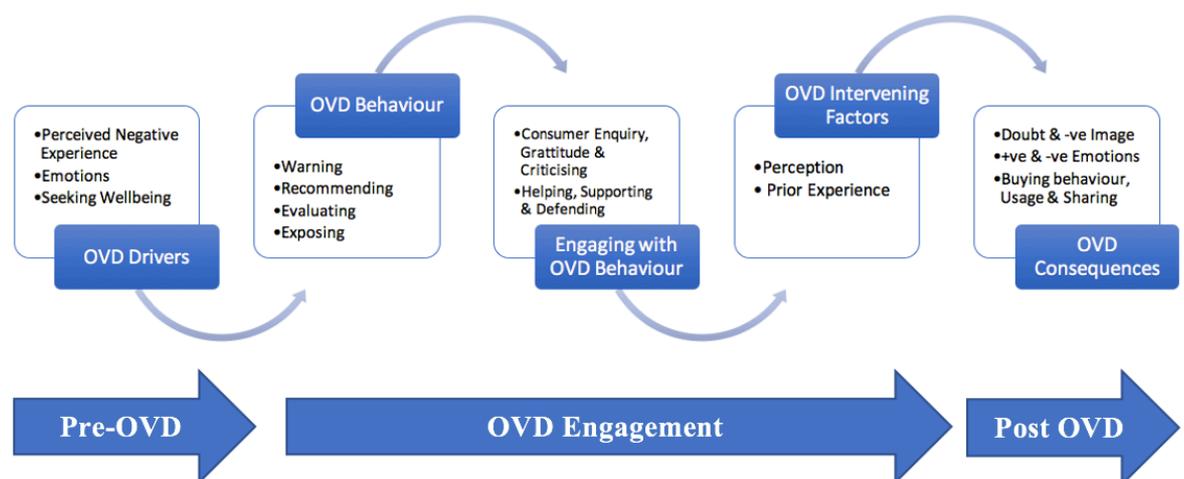


Figure 2: Online Value Destruction (OVD) Process Flowchart

5.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from the qualitative analysis of data from both interviews and netnography. The chapter has presented and discussed the main themes of the findings and provided quotations from the data to support and justify those themes. The main themes are merged together, creating a process for online value destruction. The process consists of three temporal phases that present the drivers in pre-online value destruction (phase 1). The second phase of the process (online value destruction engagement) demonstrated the forms of online value-destroying behaviour as well as the types of reader responses to value-destroying posts. This phase also proposed potential intervening factors that influence the process of online value destruction. The last phase includes the proposed consequences of online value destruction that occur post-online value destruction (phase 3). The next chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to the literature.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the study's findings. The purpose of this chapter is to bring all the strings of this research together. It discusses the results and the data analysis in the context of past literature and the themes that emerged from it. The chapter also explains how this research achieves the research objectives presented at the beginning of the thesis and more specifically, it contextualises, evaluates and discusses the findings in relation to existing knowledge on online value destruction, engagement and consumer-dominant logic. This thesis presents a process that provides an understanding of online value destruction in the context of consumer-to-consumer online engagement experiences. The main aim of the study is to explore and provide a better understanding of the online value destruction process in consumer-to-consumer online engagement experiences. The current chapter is divided into several sections according to the research questions, each explaining how the research conducted has answered the focal question considering the literature.

6.2 Phase 1: Cognitions and Emotions in Online Value-Destroying Behaviour

One of the objectives for the current study was to examine the online engagement dimensions involved during consumer-to-consumer engagement in online value-destroying behaviour. According to the current study, cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions were necessary to explain the online value destruction process because they play a vital role in shaping consumers' interactions, attitudes and most importantly engagement. Studies that adopted the service-dominant logic to examine value destruction mostly adopted resource theory (for example, Smith, 2013; Quach and Thaichon, 2017) or practice theory (for example, Cabiddu *et al.*, 2019; Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Dolan *et al.*, 2019; Echeverri and Skålen, 2011) and many applied service-dominant approaches and terms to the consumer. Many also describe the consumer's realm as "one of the systems" (for example, Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Smith, 2013), which

implies that the utilitarian aspects of a business system (such as resource loss) apply to consumers as well. Although these approaches do apply to both interacting sides, those service-dominant aspects generally suit business-to-business, business-to-consumer or any service-dominant setting more. This study argues that, when it comes to a consumer-dominant view on consumer-to-consumer interactions, these approaches are insufficient to explain the depth of the consumer's realm, that is driven more by cognitive and emotional processes.

Consumer-to-consumer interactions are more organic processes rather than structured business-like systems. The current study acknowledges the relevance of resource and practice theories to explain value destruction in business settings but proposes that in their sphere, consumers rely on cognitive and emotional processing to perceive and evaluate resources and accordingly manage resources and well-being through practices or behaviours that are driven by the interplay between cognition and emotion. Therefore, it was necessary to adopt the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions from consumer engagement theory throughout the online value destruction process in the consumers' realm to complement and build on existing theories from the service-dominant perspective.

Although cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects are more suitable when it comes to describing the consumers' realm, it could be argued that they could possibly fit in service settings that are based on consumer-provider interactions, because of the high dependency on the human factor in those businesses. Accordingly, the cognitions and emotions of service representatives can also produce value-destroying behaviours from them. Research has shown that consumer misbehaviour affects frontline employees (Kashif and Zarkada, 2015), where a rude and misbehaving consumer can cause anxiety and frustration for frontline employees, making them respond in destructive ways such as using offensive language or a rude tone, or ignoring the consumer request. Businesses are after all made up of people. From the business perspective, the process could however also be more cognitive and functional because of the system and policies that guide business processes and responses in interactions. This makes frontline employees' responses in general more systematic, impersonal, bound by set procedures and protocols that make it more objective, with more emotional

control or suppression at times. Value destruction in the consumers' sphere on the other hand, can be more dynamic, unstructured, subjective and therefore, complex. It is more of a process guided by cognitive, emotional and behavioural factors rather than a system of resources and practices.

The current research proposes that online value destruction in the context of consumers' digital interactions on review aggregators and social networking sites involves behaviour or action that is driven by a combination of cognitions and emotions. The first phase of online value destruction consists of a combination of cognitive and emotional drivers for online value-destroying behaviour. Consumer behaviours are produced by the interplay between cognitions and emotions (Azer and Alexander, 2018; Bigné *et al.*, 2008; Chebat and Michon, 2003). Psychology has debated whether cognitions lead to emotions (Lazarus, 1991) or emotions lead to cognitions (Zajonc and Markus, 1984). Marketing researchers rely more on the cognitive theory of emotions (Lazarus, 1991) to study consumer behaviour (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999; Bagozzi and Moore, 1994; Bigné *et al.*, 2008). The findings show that during this phase, consumers go through cognitions that lead to emotions and then those emotions lead back to cognitions before they engage in online value-destroying behaviour.

The proposed sequence in drivers creates a representation of the consumers' iteration between cognitions and emotions that precedes online value-destroying behaviour. This was achieved by adopting consumer engagement theory (Bowden *et al.*, 2017; Hollebeek, 2011; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Patterson *et al.*, 2006; Vivek *et al.*, 2012) by adding three engagement dimensions to the process of online value destruction. More specifically, the current study proposes that online value-destroying behaviour has the characteristics of active online consumer engagement behaviours that have a combination of cognitive and emotional roots. This characterisation of value destruction is different from previous research portraying it as practices in dyadic interactions rather than active engagement. Engagement is key in the destruction of value online, because online value destruction is only complete when readers engage with the value-destroying content and are consequently affected by it.

6.3 Online Value Destruction Drivers

This section discusses the findings within pre-online value destruction considering relevant literature. It explains the details of iterations in consumer cognitions and emotions that drive online value-destroying behaviour in reference the theoretical concepts that are relevant to the discussion on that phase of the process.

6.3.1 Perceived Negative Experience

Since this study takes the consumers' perspective, the focus is on how they perceive the experience with the company or the brand. This study stresses the role of perceived experience in consumer value by proposing that perceived negative experience is the foremost driver of online value-destroying behaviour. According to Holbrook (1999, 2005), value is conceptualised as something that resides in the consumer experience, not in the product or its possession. As mentioned above, previous research mostly captured the service-related issues (for example, Järvi *et al.*, 2018; Sthapit, 2019) and interaction-related issues (for example, Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Kashif and Zarkada, 2015). Taking the consumers' perspective helped combine those two perspectives under the broader term of perceived negative experience. Therefore, this study merges previous work about value destruction antecedents that appeared fragmented. This also suggests that the overall perception of the experience matters, and in the consumers' context, it is created by the aggregation of all positive and negative factors consumers encounter in a consumption experience.

Unlike the current study, previous studies examined value destruction in consumer-provider interactions, this study argues that those product/service problems or experiences are not just antecedents of value destruction during consumer-provider interactions. It proposes that this may have further emotional and cognitive implications for consumers and hence affect their behaviour in their own sphere. The findings show that consumers sometimes create negative content to harm a business and sometimes engage in value-destroying behaviour for their own gain (Daunt and Harris, 2017). It therefore proposes that not all consumer-generated negative content online should be treated as misbehaviour, even from the provider's perspective. Previous research highlighted that rude and negligent

frontline employees were drivers to what they termed ‘consumer misbehaviour’, which is an identified antecedent to value co-destruction (Kashif and Zarkada, 2015). Although consumer misbehaviour is positioned in the literature similarly to online value-destroying behaviour (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Echeverri *et al.*, 2012; Järvi *et al.*, 2018; Kashif and Zarkada, 2015), the findings of this study revealed otherwise. The difference is that from a consumer-dominant perspective, online value-destroying behaviour is not necessarily misbehaviour, because there are situations where consumers resort to it with good intentions, such as seeking others’ well-being, a point that will be discussed further later in this chapter.

From a provider’s perspective (Echeverri *et al.*, 2012; Järvi *et al.*, 2018), it may be positioned as misbehaviour because of its potential negative effects on a business. Järvi *et al.* (2018) also linked “blaming” to consumer misbehaviour (Kashif and Zarkada, 2015) and identified it as an additional individual antecedent of value destruction that is influenced by the provider’s behaviour in the contexts of B2B, B2C and B2G. However, from the consumers’ perspective, it may be considered normative behaviour, as many consumers mentioned that sharing experiences with others is among the activities they regularly engage in on third-party websites. They share positive experiences to encourage and support businesses they had good experiences with, and share negative ones to warn others and punish or discourage businesses they had unpleasant experiences with. They also expect the same from others within and outside their network.

Another reason engaging in online value-destroying behaviour by sharing unpleasant experiences is sometimes perceived as positive is that it is believed to be a form of constructive criticism that can help improve the focal business or brand. Businesses should benefit as much as possible from negative online content, harvest consumers’ honest unfiltered opinions about experiences with them and use them to improve instead of fighting them or trying to delete them. Businesses should also acknowledge that this is considered normative behaviour in the consumers’ sphere, to the extent that many consumers consider businesses with nothing negative on them suspicious. Businesses therefore should embrace the organic system created by consumers and not treat all negative content negatively.

It may appear from the discussion above that many consumers who engage in online value-destroying behaviour experienced value destruction with the provider first, because they share a similar antecedent. However, experiencing value destruction is not necessarily a driver to online value-destroying behaviour. This is because there is also a possibility that those negative experiences did not fully destroy value, and consumers experienced a reduction in value rather than destruction. The research has indicated that sometimes during the interactive process of value formation practices between consumers and providers, value can be created, destroyed, reduced or recovered (Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Echeverri and Skålen, 2011). It is therefore not always creating or destroying value, sometimes the combination of the two can have an aggregate effect, resulting in just a reduction in value, or can help some of the damaged value be recovered. Whether consumers experience value reduction or destruction with the provider, they may still feel it was an unpleasant experience, seek well-being and hence, engage in online value-destroying behaviour. Therefore, the trigger here is not necessarily the destruction of value per se. Accordingly, the term perceived negative experience is chosen instead, as an indirect driver to online value-destroying behaviour. Whether value was initially destroyed or reduced, that is what triggers the rest of the events in the sequence leading up to online value destruction engagement.

The possibility of engaging in online value-destroying behaviour upon value reduction reflects that experiencing value reduction can be as dangerous as value destruction in consumer-provider interactions. Research has placed more focus on the notion of value destruction and portrayed value reduction as a mild version of destruction when the interactive experience involved a value-creating aspect as well (Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Echeverri and Skålen, 2011). However, this study reveals otherwise, by arguing that value reduction should not be underestimated because in the consumer sphere it may have similar implications as value destruction when it comes to emotions and accordingly behaviour.

Experience sharing is normalised among consumers, and sharing a value-reducing experience may have a destructive impact on readers and accordingly the business. Businesses cannot control what aspects of the experience the consumer

share with others online either. The reviewer may have experienced value reduction but that does not mean that the experience will transfer to others as it is and what was value-reducing for one person may be destructive for another and vice versa. The highly subjective factors in the situation are what make value reduction possibly as threatening to a business as value destruction in this context. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that consumers are exposed to multiple reviews and their perceptions are affected by the aggregation of information from all the content they see. Therefore, the aggregate effect of seeing multiple value reducing posts can eventually be value destroying for the reader even if each review on its own was based on value reduction not destruction.

In this study, the focus is not on whether the provider is inadequate or not, or whether the company's representatives were helpful or not; rather the focus is on consumers' perception of the product, service or company interface. According to appraisal theories of emotion, the interpretation of the event is what generates emotions rather than the event itself (Roseman and Smith, 2001). More specifically, this study argues that most research on value destruction from the perspective of service-dominant logic has overlooked consumers' perception, even though their interpretations may implicitly imply consumers' perception of events or service. The term "perception" is vital in this context because all the concepts involved (such as value and experience) are highly subjective. It is consumers' perception of an experience that determines how negative or destructive it is and consequently determines the emotions and cognitions that follow and hence behaviour. Therefore, adopting consumer-dominant logic allowed for this interpretation to emerge and highlighted that it is not only about service failure or unpleasant interactions, but consumers must perceive them as such for the rest of the online value-destruction process to unfold.

Perception also reappears during the process of online value destruction when other/potential consumers engage with the online value-destroying content. Perception then acts as one of two main determinants (prior experience) of the impact of online value destruction. No matter how negatively charged the content is, it only becomes destructive depending on the readers' perception of it and their prior experience with the focal brand. This will be discussed in detail in

Section 6.5.2. This is another consumer-dominant notion in a context that is beyond the provider's facilitation or interference of any kind, which suggests the superiority of consumer-dominant logic against service-dominant logic in understanding consumer-to-consumer contexts. Another view that this study adds is that perceived negative experience is not only an antecedent of value destruction for the individual consumer as the literature suggests but is also viewed as one of the cognitive drivers for the consumer to engage in online value-destroying behaviour. More specifically, this study positions perceived negative experience as an indirect driver of online value-destroying behaviour because it can result in experiencing unpleasant emotions, which is the second driver of online value-destroying behaviour identified in this study.

The current study's findings suggested that a perceived negative experience can result in producing consumer emotions. Drawing upon prior research addressing consumer emotions in service failure (for example, Balaji *et al.*, 2017), emotions can develop upon a perceived negative experience. In this study consumers attributed several unpleasant emotions to a product/service problem or failure or negative company interaction. Overall, this section reflects the complexity and implications of a consumer's perception of the experience, and that making a purchase (which is positive for the business), does not equate with a positively perceived experience for consumers. This can be a critical implication for businesses, because research has connected negative consumer experiences with negative word-of-mouth, consumer loyalty and future purchase intentions.

6.3.2 From Cognitions to Emotions

The findings reveal that perceived negative experiences affected consumers' emotions negatively, making emotions the second driver of online value-destroying behaviour. In the current study, anger (Smith, 2013; Wetzer *et al.*, 2007), disappointment (Azer and Alexander, 2018; Wetzer *et al.*, 2007) and frustration (Wetzer *et al.*, 2007) were the emotions identified as resulting from a perceived negative experience. In the value creation literature, emotions are identified as an important resource for the process of value creation (Rodie and Kleine, 2000). When value is created, positive emotions often result (Quach and Thaichon, 2017) but on the contrary, when value is destroyed negative emotions follow (Schoefer and Ennew, 2005; Wetzer *et al.*, 2007). However, in this study,

as discussed above (Section 6.3.1) negative emotions can also emerge from value reduction and not always necessarily from value destruction. This means that experiencing value reduction may trigger the same series of events in the consumer realm as value destruction.

Generally, the affective antecedents of value destruction have received little attention in previous value destruction research which took a service-centric approach. Smith (2013) conducted one of the few studies acknowledging the affective aspect of offline value destruction from the consumer perspective, identifying “anger”, “disappointment”, “regret”, “worry” and “anxiety”. The emotional aspect presents itself when the consumer perspective is adopted because it is an essential factor in consumer decision-making and behaviour. The current study conforms with Smith’s (2013) proposition of how the negative aspects of the consumer experience in terms of resource loss affect consumer emotions, and how that affects consumer’s subjective well-being. However, this is only part of the picture that the current study builds on online value destruction. It suggests a slightly different explanation for the role of emotions, in affecting online value-destroying behaviour, due to the nature of the online context and the focus on consumer-to-consumer interactions. Taking the consumer-dominant approach revealed that the value co-destruction process suggested by Smith (2013) can serve as an antecedent to further events in the consumer sphere between consumers beyond consumer-provider interactions.

Research has mostly treated value destruction as a result of failure to create value or loss in created value. The present study argues that this is a relatively narrow outlook which may overlook some serious cognitive, emotional and behavioural implications of value co-destruction on consumers and accordingly businesses. Value co-destruction in consumer-provider interactions should be recognised as the beginning or an antecedent of further and possibly more destructive events in the consumer sphere that end in online value destruction. Given the current trends of technological utilisation in experience sharing among consumers, businesses should not underestimate the possible implications of a negative experience of a single or few consumers. This is because it is no longer about value co-destruction in consumer-provider interactions, but about the resulting online value destruction in further consumer-to-consumer interactions.

In this section, the focus is on how emotions triggered by the perceived negative experience with the company play a role in driving the consumer to engage in online value-destroying behaviour. The current study positions emotions as an indirect driver of online value-destroying behaviour, suggesting that emotions have a mediating role in driving it. More specifically, emotions in this context emerge from a perceived negative experience and result in seeking well-being. This corresponds with research on the emotions in consumer behaviour, which have emphasised the mediating role of emotion between cognitive evaluations and judgement of satisfaction (Oliver, 1993). Although much psychological research presents emotions as a direct motive for behaviour or action (Frijda, 2004; Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2006), the technological aspect of this study resulted in a different categorisation. Emotions in this study act as a guide to consumer cognition preceding behaviour and thus, indirectly driving behaviour. Appraisal theories of emotions explain the emergence of consumer emotions in consumption situations (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999; Johnson and Stewart, 2005; Nyer, 1997; Roseman and Smith, 2001; Ruth *et al.*, 2002) and explain the impact and role of emotion on consumer cognitive and motivational processes, making appraisal a possible cause and consequence of emotions (Roseman and Smith, 2001). In this phase of the online value destruction process, the current study draws upon appraisal theories of emotions in suggesting that consumers evaluate the consumption experience, and emotions emerge due to their perception of the experience.

Emotions have also been described as a response that emerges due to a certain consumption experience (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). More specifically, they are responses to appraisal of a certain situation (Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2004). Those emotions in turn have an impact on the consumer's direction of thought in terms of intentions, decisions and therefore corresponding behaviours. For example, Strizhakova *et al.* (2012) demonstrated that in situations of consumer anger related to service failure, consumer rumination about the situation leads to negative intentions to engage in negative online word-of-mouth towards the provider. Conformingly, in this study, experiencing unpleasant emotions due to a perceived negative experience makes consumers ruminate about the current state of declined well-being, which leads to seeking well-being improvement and

accordingly engaging in online value-destroying behaviour. This is also in line with research that positions negative or unpleasant affect as one of the components of subjective well-being (Diener *et al.*, 1999).

More specifically, feeling those emotions drives consumers to start thinking about changing how they feel by improving their declined state of well-being. In other instances, consumers also think about protecting others' well-being and seek to do so by informing and warning them. In this study, emotions trigger the final driver (seeking well-being) before consumers start engaging in online value-destroying behaviour. Accordingly, the current study builds on previous research that positions well-being as an outcome of the value co-destruction process (Smith, 2013). However, the focus here is on how consumers behave when they experience declined well-being and how the affective aspect not only gives a sense of declined well-being, but also motivates consumers to seek situation improvement.

In this study, consumers can feel specific and intense emotions such as anger or frustration, but at the same time be driven by sympathy and caring about others and hence, think about others' well-being. In recent research, the emotional realm was described as a complex, high-dimensional space (Cowen *et al.*, 2019). The positive and negative affect approach is mostly adopted in research as general emotional dimensions for simplification (Laros and Steenkamp, 2005). However, the current study's findings support the idea that important nuances of positive and negative emotions may be neglected under this general categorisation (Lerner and Keltner, 2000; Zeelenberg and Pieters, 1999), resulting in loss of specific details about consumers' feelings (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999). Taking the valence-based outlook on consumer emotions can also imply that positive and negative emotions are mutually exclusive, which is not the case here. They can coexist and feeling negative emotions during a negative consumption experience does not necessarily prohibit experiencing positive ones too (Babin *et al.*, 1998; Balaji *et al.*, 2017; Westbrook, 1987). This reflects the necessity of acknowledging the specific approach to emotions because evaluations of a specific consumption experience with a company elicits specific consumer emotions. Appraisals of specific consumer emotions then become the basis upon which a series of specific restorative consumer behaviours towards the issue are built (Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2004). In this study, the specific behaviour is online value destruction by

seeking well-being.

To gain deep insights into online value destruction, this study focuses on three specific emotions that emerged from the data: anger, frustration (Richins, 1997) and disappointment (Zeelenberg *et al.*, 1998). This also conforms with the appraisal tendency framework, which proposes that specific emotions may elicit specific cognitive and motivational processes, which justifies the impact that each emotion may have on consumer judgement and decision making (Lerner *et al.*, 2007). For example, a negative consumption experience may result in anger or sadness, but angry consumers are more likely to feel charged to act upon it, while sadness may result in withdrawing (Roseman and Smith, 2001; Shaver *et al.*, 1987). In negative word-of-mouth literature for example, anger triggered negative word-of-mouth while sadness did not (Nyer, 1997; Wetzer *et al.*, 2007). Anger was also more evident in the current study's findings, which explains why other negative emotions were not evident in the data.

Frustration has been connected to anger and often considered synonymous or a subcategory in marketing research (Laros and Steenkamp, 2005). Although anger is popular in psychological and consumer research, it has also been suggested that service failure results in frustration (Laros and Steenkamp, 2005; Nyer, 2000). Research also showed that reviewers sometimes express their frustration about having wasted time and money as well as physical and emotional efforts (Sthapit and Björk, 2019). The current study regards anger and frustration as distinct emotions, because of the possibility that each may result in different consumer intentions when seeking well-being and engaging in online value-destroying behaviour. For example, anger may be more associated with revenge (Wetzer *et al.*, 2007) and intentional destruction of value, while frustration may be associated with venting, problem solving or attainment of the original goal of consumption, and at the same time possibly warning others. Disappointment on the other hand, may be associated with warning others (Wetzer *et al.*, 2007) and promoting others' well-being. Having this possibility of differences between emotional states and the resulting type of seeking well-being calls for distinction between those specific emotions in the current study.

Overall, the current study's findings concerning emotions are important because of the role they play in driving the consumer cognitive processes leading up to

engagement in online value-destroying behaviour, which is of great relevance to the firm. Different emotions can be felt upon a perceived negative consumption experience, but adopting the consumer-dominant perspective helped identify and propose emotions that can be associated with online value-destroying behaviour. Although emotions are an indirect driver, the mediating role they play makes them essential for the process to unfold. Additionally, taking a specific approach to emotions implies that the general perspective of negative emotions may not be sufficient to explain the cognitions and behaviours that consumers engage in within their sphere, especially because not all negative emotions drive online value-destroying behaviour and therefore, focusing on specific emotions may be more insightful.

Consumers experience unpleasant emotions pre-online value destruction and engaging in online value destruction can sometimes change their affective state for the better. By engaging in online value-destroying behaviour, the consumer may feel avenged, as if justice has been restored, they have saved others or vented their negativity. This can transform the anger, frustration and disappointment into hope, relief, happiness and satisfaction. Accordingly, engaging in this behaviour can be transformative for consumers in terms of emotions, and therefore, they sometimes resort to it. However, the technological aspect in this context adds another cognitive aspect between the emotions and the behaviour (seeking well-being).

6.3.4 From Emotions to Cognitions: Seeking Well-being

As mentioned above, when consumers feel that there is a decline in their well-being by feeling negative emotions, they may start pursuing ways to restore or improve their perceived well-being. More specifically, when doing so, they start looking for ways to solve their problem or at least try to make themselves feel better. Several researchers have conceptualised value destruction as the decline in well-being (Järvi *et al.*, 2018; Lefebvre and Plé, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Smith, 2013; Sthapit and Björk, 2019) and this study acknowledges this notion in consumer-provider interactions. However, the difference in looking at consumer-to-consumer interactions is that the current study is more focused on what actions the decline in well-being will drive consumers to perform. This study proposes that consumers who experience a decline in well-being may seek

to improve it. Well-being then becomes a motive for further behaviours in the consumers' sphere and not only a representation of the value destruction that has been experienced. More specifically, in seeking to improve their well-being, protecting others' well-being, or both, consumers may engage in online value-destroying behaviour. Accordingly, in this study seeking well-being is positioned as the final motive in the chain of online value destruction drivers.

When it comes to seeking their own well-being enhancement, consumers stated that they may engage in online value-destroying behaviour in an attempt to find a solution or compensation for their problem by drawing the company's attention to it. Research has suggested that consumers employ different coping strategies to deal with different unpleasant events depending on their appraisal of the focal event (Lazarus, 1991). It has also been suggested that there is a similarity in coping behaviours from angry and disappointed consumers (Yi and Baumgartner, 2004). Reflecting on this, online value-destroying behaviour can be explained as a coping behaviour, used by consumers as a problem-solving coping mechanism to deal with negative consumption experiences (Yi and Baumgartner, 2004). Smith (2013) also classified this kind of behaviour as part of consumers' confrontational coping strategies (as opposed to avoidance strategies) for dealing with resource loss and well-being restoration. Consumers seeking redress sometimes believe that sharing their problem publicly on third-party websites such as Amazon.com or Facebook will gain better and quicker attention from the company. This is because companies want to reduce the amount of negative content visible to other and potential consumers. Several respondents talked about the power of social media and how they view it as a powerful tool to put pressure on the business and obtain redress.

For some consumers, social media is viewed as the fastest way to obtain redress and therefore, their first response to a problem is to share it on social media. For others, it is a last resort after pursuing several other options and ways of attempting to contact the business to no avail. Sometimes, consumers just want to vent emotions concerning the problem and rid themselves of negative emotions (Bougie *et al.*, 2003; De Matos and Rossi, 2008; Grégoire and Fisher, 2008; Kähr *et al.*, 2016) and they are not interested in the post resulting in solutions, compensation or a response, or at least it was not the main objective. Online value-destroying behaviours motivated by those aspects, along with other's well-

being, can be classified as what Kähr *et al.*, (2016) referred to as instrumental aggression, where consumers hurt brands to achieve another objective such as compensation. Concepts such as negative electronic word-of-mouth (Bachleda and Berrada-Fathi, 2016; Nam *et al.*, 2018), consumer retaliation (Huefner and Hunt, 2000), negative consumer brand engagement (Juric *et al.*, 2016) and negatively valenced brand engagement (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014) have been classified as instrumental aggression (Kähr *et al.*, 2016).

There are also instances where consumers seek revenge by trying to hurt the business that they feel wronged them, with the aim of getting even (Funches *et al.*, 2009) or for equity restoration (Wetzer *et al.*, 2007). Consumers often perceive themselves as relatively less powerful compared to organisations and sometimes feel helpless when dealing with companies about product or service-related issues. Participants in the study mentioned that social media and review aggregators empowered them by making them feel superior and more in control when facing a situation that they perceived as unpleasant or unjust. This sense of power sometimes produces vengeful behaviours such as engaging in online value destruction. Research on revenge and power has shown that individuals who perceive themselves as chronically powerless often engage in seeking vengeance when exposed to power (Strelan *et al.*, 2014). This study therefore presents the concept of online value destruction as a tool for demonstrating consumer revenge behaviour.

Some consumers want to attack businesses and believe they do not deserve to be in business because what they offer is not up to standard. They even sometimes believe that what they are doing is for the benefit of themselves and others. This is a more aggressive side to seeking well-being, and is in line with the concept of consumer brand sabotage, which is classified as hostile aggression (Kähr *et al.*, 2016). This is the term adopted when hurting the brand is the main objective of consumers (Kähr *et al.*, 2016). Accordingly, the current study proposes that unlike any other negative online consumer behaviour, online value-destroying behaviours can be both instrumental aggression or hostile aggression, unlike the other concepts classified as either one or the other.

This idea supports the argument presented at the beginning of the thesis that online value destruction is a broader notion that encompasses concepts like

consumer brand sabotage, negative (electronic) word-of-mouth (for example, Bachleda and Berrada-Fathi, 2016; De Matos and Rossi, 2008; Nam *et al.*, 2018), negatively valenced influencing behaviour (Azer and Alexander, 2018) and consumer retaliation (Grégoire *et al.*, 2009). Consumer brand sabotage can be one of the examples of online value destruction behaviours, more specifically, the deliberate or intentional type (Kähr *et al.*, 2016) while consumer redress-obtaining behaviours can be an example of unintentional online value destruction. All these behaviours can potentially destroy value for consumers exposed to them. Given their potential to destroy value, these concepts can be classified under the umbrella of value-destroying behaviours. This therefore explains the commonalities in some of the antecedents of online value destruction and the antecedents of those behaviours. This is also an important revelation for businesses that come across such behaviours while monitoring their online presence. They need to be aware of their value destructive potential and deal with them adequately to minimise or prevent the destruction of value for other consumers.

6.3.5 Emotions in Well-being-Seeking Behaviour

Overall, the current study adds to the present literature a novel idea in conceptualising and classifying value destruction in the online context. This study sheds light on how negative behaviour that is fuelled and motivated by negativity can also have a positive dimension. Research on consumer care has demonstrated the interconnectedness between self-care and care for others (Shaw *et al.*, 2017). More specifically, the idea of seeking well-being has a negative and positive dimension because it drives consumers to engage in negative behaviour for the betterment of themselves and others. Seeking well-being explains the transition of the consumer affective state from unpleasant emotions such as anger, frustration and disappointment to more pleasant emotions such as hope, relief, happiness and satisfaction.

To elaborate, in the pre-online value destruction phase, the consumer mostly experiences unpleasant emotions. When positively seeking well-being, hope may emerge when consumers engage in online value-destroying behaviour hoping for problem resolution, compensation or saving and helping others. On the other hand, when negatively seeking well-being, through revenge or hurting the

business, anger and frustration are likely to persist during online value-destroying behaviour. Pleasant emotions appear after online value destruction engagement, where consumers feel they have vented their negativity or feel they have done something good by warning others, or have the satisfaction of potentially harming or exposing the focal business. However, it is noteworthy that the positivity following online value-destroying behaviour is not communicated or transferred to readers engaging with the content. Only the anger, frustration and disappointment are communicated to the reader.

Care theory research emphasised the difference between benevolence - "*the desire to do good*" and beneficence - "*doing good or showing active kindness*" (Smith, 1998, p. 16) and suggested that care can be both a mental interest and concern or actions and practices that emerge from that interest (Shaw *et al.*, 2015). Resource limitation also constrains how consumers practise care (Shaw *et al.*, 2015). Reflecting on this, the current research shows how technology, like third-party websites, offers consumers the resources to facilitate the move from benevolence to beneficence. Consumers found a way to show their care for others by sharing their negative experiences with them and preventing negative experiences from happening again. In this case, consumers may view this behaviour as a way of expressing care towards friends, family and distant others, which is something of value to consumers. However, from the business perspective, it is value-destroying or -reducing behaviour because of the potential harm it causes it.

Furthermore, based on the proposed idea, it is suggested that online value-destroying behaviour in consumer-to-consumer interactions should not be classified as purely negative and the positive dimension to online value-destroying behaviour should be acknowledged. Several previous researchers combined the examination of value creation and destruction (Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Neuhofer, 2016; Quach and Thaichon, 2017; Zhang *et al.*, 2018), and positioned value destruction as the negative side of value creation. Thus, value creation and value destruction were treated as opposing sides of the same spectrum of practices, behaviours or resources and they may indeed be opposing in the context of consumer-provider interactions. However, in the context of consumer-to-consumer online interactions, this concept was not applicable because the current study revealed a positive side to the negatively charged process of online value

destruction, which is seeking one's own and others' well-being. The concept of seeking others' well-being proposes the possibility of including an altruistic, benevolent dimension to online value-destroying behaviour. According to previous research, there is no negative dimension driving value-creating behaviour. Accordingly, it is suggested in this study that online value destruction is not the reverse process of online value creation. Online value destruction is therefore not the opposite of online value-creating behaviour.

Simultaneous online value creation and destruction

The consumers' sphere adds a layer of complexity to the destruction and creation of value and the relationship between them. They seem to overlap in the process of online value destruction because negative online content is something of value to readers, and that is why they engage with it. From the business perspective, it may be destructive to value, but from readers' perspective, there may be several ways to interpret this. This value-destroying content can be damaging to readers' perceptions of a business value proposition. However, value-destructive content may protect readers from a negative experience, help in a purchase decision, reduce uncertainty or help assess the risks involved. Accordingly, there appears to be an element of value creation within the process of online value destruction.

On an individual level, consumers seem to be attempting to recover some of the value destroyed during a negatively perceived experience in the hope of compensation, venting negativity or problem resolution and hence, online value recovery. Additionally, from the perspective of such consumers, part of doing so could be about trying to give readers valuable information to avoid pitfalls and make more suitable choices, hence, online value creation. Those consumers are acting as consultants free of charge who employ resources such as technology and expertise for the well-being of others. On a wider scale, better choices and matchmaking can mean more satisfied consumers and business owners and enhanced social welfare. Meanwhile, they are still value destroyers from the perspective of the focal business. There are also situations where consumers engage in online value-destroying behaviour to harm the business, hence, online value destruction. Overall, during the process, some gain while others may lose; for example, consumers may gain and the focal businesses may lose, and meanwhile, other competing businesses may also gain.

Reflecting on the literature (see Section 3.9.1), Schumpeter's view on innovations involves new combinations of knowledge and resources for commercial benefit (Schumpeter, 1950). Conformingly, consumers have the resources and expertise and know how to utilise the reach and scale of media and technology for the betterment of both themselves and others. As the findings show, consumers sometimes believe they are doing good by contributing to ridding the market of incompetent businesses. In the process, they therefore eventually increase the welfare of consumers and competent businesses in the long-run, despite short-term welfare loss for incompetent businesses. Likewise, Schumpeter's (1942) view on welfare assessment favoured a long-term view of the impact on welfare overtime (Schubert, 2013). Moreover, the current study also taps into the discussion of the shared economy by uncovering ways consumers have an impact on the market through sharing their intangible assets (experiences and knowledge) with others and influencing their perceptions, buying choices and behaviours, but in this case, for free (Görög, 2018). Technological advancement is the central facilitator of this dynamic market activity because of the capabilities of digital platforms.

6.3.6 Intentionality in Online Value Destruction

Consumers engaging in online value-destroying behaviours can have different intentions behind their actions. The literature on value destruction shows that it can be intentional or accidental (Lefebvre and Plé, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). It has also been suggested that, in provider-consumer interactions, accidental value destruction in provider-consumer interactions is more likely, while intentional value destruction is counterintuitive (Lefebvre and Plé, 2011). On the contrary, the current study proposes that in consumer-to-consumer online interactions, the situation is reversed and that this theory therefore does not apply to the context. Engaging in online value-destroying behaviour by creating negative brand-related content sounds more like intentional behaviour and less of an accident.

Accordingly, the term unintentional is preferred in this study rather than accidental. The term "accidental" (Lefebvre and Plé, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010) was more fitting in the context of service systems that come together mainly for creating value but then the result was value destruction rather

than creation. In the context of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction, although consumers sharing negative brand-related experiences can be considered as value creation for them, it is not always the case for the company. When writing a negative review, consumers were not trying to create value for the business and accidentally failing. For instance, in situations when consumers are concerned with others' well-being, their intention is to save others, not to destroy value, but not being the objective does not make it an accident if it happens. Consumers engaging in that kind of behaviour are mostly aware of the potential harm this may bring to the business, even if it was not their objective, it is not a surprise if it happens. An accident is a stronger term implying the intention was the opposite (business value creation for example), and in this case, it is not, so the term unintended is used rather than accidental.

As mentioned above, online value destruction can be intentional when consumers engage in it to harm the business in terms of sales, consumers, image or reputation. As mentioned in the previous section, some consumers seek revenge and want to put the company out of business and try to use digital means to create value-destroying content for the public to see. In those cases, consumers are not looking for compensation or resolution to their problems anymore. They are there to burn all the bridges between them and the company, and want to see the business suffer losses. This does not necessarily mean that all consumers seeking their own well-being intend to destroy value. For example, when asked, some respondents mentioned that they were not interested in harming the business in any way, they just wanted their problem solved or attended to. Others were seeking attention, help or assistance from the company or other experienced users, and company harm or destruction was not their intention.

Consumers seeking others' well-being do not usually intend to harm the brand. They are more focused on informing others about problems to increase their awareness and prevent them from having a similar negative experience. In this case, this study adds to the discussion that consumers are not necessarily misusing technology (resources) accidentally or intentionally as suggested by previous research (Neuhofer, 2016; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). This is because in many cases those consumers believe they are doing good rather than harm, just as several respondents mentioned feeling happy to be helping others. Hence, it is not necessarily resource misuse, and it can sometimes be considered as making

use of the resource (technology) to inform others or aid oneself. However, the current study also adds that there are some cases where consumers seeking others' well-being may intend to destroy value. Some are willing to destroy value and harm the business for the sake of preventing others from experiencing harm. Those consumers believed that harming a certain brand they think is potentially harming other users is a good thing, and they would intentionally try to destroy that company or brand to protect others from unethical business behaviours.

Wetzer *et al.* (2007) proposed that negative word-of-mouth can have different levels of destruction and can be self-focused or others-focused. Negative word-of-mouth from an angry or frustrated consumer is usually self-focused and can have a more destructive effect on potential consumers, especially when revenge, business harm or slander is the objective. Building on this proposition, which touches upon one's own and others' well-being, intentions and destruction level, the current study suggests that there may be a relationship between intent and the level or potential of destruction that occurs from online value-destroying behaviour. The beginning of this section was more focused on the intent of the behaviour rather than its result in terms of destruction.

More specifically, the term destruction can in some situations be strong compared to what happens, because it may imply irreparable damage (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Although possible, it may seem counterintuitive that a consumer can cause irreparable damage unintentionally, but that does not mean that there was no damage. Accordingly, the current study proposes that when unintentional, this behaviour can cause online value reduction rather than destruction. Intentional online value destruction on the other hand has more potential to destroy value, not just reduce it, because destruction may require more effort and persistence. However, it is noteworthy that in this context, the level of destruction of the content depends on readers' perception of it, and that makes it highly subjective, to the extent that even consumers intending to destroy value may fail to do so.

Determining intention is an important factor when dealing with online value destruction, especially for businesses responding to the online value-destroying content. The current study's findings differ from previous research that addressed intentionality in value co-destruction, since it reveals some indications that can

help determine intentionality in online value destruction. Those conclusions were easier to draw because of the nature of the online context of this study and apply mainly to that context.

Typical intentional online value-destroying posts are usually highly aggressive towards the business, in terms of using harsh words and accusations. It may also be spelled out explicitly by stating things such as the company should not be allowed to do business or directly asking and persuading others to boycott or not to buy, or initiating class action suits in extreme cases. Consumers intending to destroy value may also use more than one platform to share their post to maximise viewership and potential destruction. Also, the focus of the post is usually the original reviewers' own problem and no concern for others is communicated in the post.

Unintentional online value-reducing posts on the other hand are less aggressive towards the business and are more balanced. They might also mention pros and cons in an evaluative sense of the experience with the company or the brand. They show concern for other consumers and provide a warning rather than taking an aggressive, persuasive tone. The content is usually directed towards readers rather than the company. When the focus is on the issue with the company, it takes the form of seeking help or asking for advice from other experienced users.

6.4 From Cognition to Behaviour

The cognitive factor appears to be more dominant than the emotional. This is an aspect that presented itself due to the nature of the online context. During value co-destruction in consumer-provider live interactions such as face-to-face or over the phone, there is more room for impulsive reactions or responses from consumers during a conversation. Those impulsive reactions in live interactions can be emotionally driven things that a consumer may say while angry and could later apologise for, saying they did not mean to be rude and that they acted out of anger. This study suggests that this does not entirely apply to the online context, even if consumers engaged in online value-destroying behaviour and created a post on the spot while angry or emotionally charged. This is mainly because of the temporal aspect in this context, which is the time gap between

the occurrence of the problem and consumers' engagement in online value-destroying behaviour.

The literature suggest that the impact of emotions depreciates with time delays (Lerner *et al.*, 2015). Even if the consumer goes straight to online value-destroying behaviour and creates the post, the fact that it is in the form of a text and not spoken makes it less spontaneous, because the consumer is more conscious of it and has the time to think about the text while writing, read it again and even edit it to make it better, worse, more/less aggressive, or destructive. Many consumers mentioned that they chose their words carefully when engaging in online value destruction because they wanted their message to be clear, persuasive, convincing and effective when read by other consumers or even the business itself. This also demonstrates and justifies the cognitive dominance of the drivers leading to online value-destroying behaviour.

The behavioural aspect of the online value-destroying process appears in the second phase of the process, which is engaging with online value destruction. Social behaviour can be explained by reflective and impulsive systems interacting together (Strack and Deutsch, 2004). A reflective system relies on high cognitive capacity, using knowledge of facts and values to produce behavioural decisions. An impulsive system on the other hand is fast and requires little or no cognitive effort (Strack and Deutsch, 2004). Reflecting on the findings of the current study, online value-destroying behaviour can be classified as reflective behaviour. As mentioned above, engaging in online value-destroying behaviour is preceded by a sequence of cognitions (perceived negative experience) and emotions leading to a logical reasoning (seeking well-being) that drives and justifies this behaviour from the consumer's perspective.

Unlike in face-to-face interactions, the possibility of a temporal gap between the drivers and the behaviour allows consumers engaging in online value-destroying behaviour to have the time to think about it in terms of platform choice, content, level of detail, using capital letters to express or emphasise words and revising the content before clicking send or upload. Online value-destroying behaviour therefore can be described as calculated as the consumer is conscious of the behaviour and potential consequences of it (Strack and Deutsch, 2004). This may make it seem that there is a degree of intention in online value-destroying

behaviour. The literature suggests that intention plays a role in the reflective system behaviour (Strack and Deutsch, 2004) and having high cognitive capacity can imply that this behaviour is intentional. However, the current study suggests that this can be more complex in the context of online value destruction.

To clarify the differences and connections between reflectivity and intentionality in the context of online value destruction between consumers, it is critical at this point to differentiate between the consumer's behaviour, its intended outcome and the actual outcome. The behaviour is the negative online consumer behaviour that the consumer engages in. This kind of behaviour has the potential to destroy value whether the consumer intended to do so or not. Because of its value-destroying potential, the current study labels this behaviour as online value-destroying behaviour. As mentioned in the previous section, consumers engaging in this behaviour may have different intentions, and they sometimes intend to destroy value and sometimes they do not. Value destruction can hence be intentional or unintentional. Intended outcome is what the consumer initially intended when engaging in the negative behaviour and the actual outcome on the other hand is what really happens due of engaging with the negative online behaviour. What the consumer intends from the behaviour is not always the actual outcome of it. For example, consumers sometimes write negative reviews to inform others or help the business improve, while the actual outcome can be loss of some potential consumers and hence, value destruction. In other words, the destruction of value is not always the intention of the behaviour even if it is the actual outcome. The opposite can also be the case when a consumer may intend to destroy value and hurt the company but fail to do so.

Given the above classification, the current study proposes that the consumer's negative online behaviour is reflective and intentional given its high cognitive capacity. The consumer deliberately creates negative content and posts it, making the behaviour itself conscious and intentional rather than impulsive. However, this does not mean that the consumer always intended to destroy or even reduce value by engaging in this behaviour. They possibly meant to create the post but did not mean it to have a negative effect on value, and the intention could have been something else (like others' well-being), meaning that online value destruction could still be unintentional. In this case, the consumer either does not know or does not care about the value-destroying potential of their behaviour

because it was not the intended outcome, even if it turned out to be the actual outcome of the behaviour. Therefore, the negative online behaviour is intentional but the destruction of value resulting from it can be either intentional or unintentional.

6.5 Phase 2: Engaging in Online Value-Destroying Behaviour

6.5.1 Online Value Destruction Forms

The findings of the current study revealed four ways in which online value-destroying behaviour is manifested in the context of consumer-to-consumer interactions on third-party websites. A notable observation was that a single post can include more than one form, but one of them is usually dominant over the others. Several researchers that have examined the online and offline practices of value formation in service-dominant logic lacked this idea; they did however, conclude that practices can also be destructive to value (Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011).

Camilleri and Neuhofer (2017) listed some of the consumer-provider online practices that can create or destroy value in the context of a shared economy, which include ‘welcoming’, ‘expressing feelings’, ‘evaluating location and accommodation’, ‘helping and interacting’, ‘recommending’ and ‘thanking’. The current study’s findings show only two of these practices (evaluating and recommending). The rest of the practices either do not apply to the context (for example, welcoming) or had a different positioning in the current study’s findings. For example, expressing feelings is considered a driver to online value-destroying behaviour, while thanking and helping were observed as consumers’ responses to online value-destroying behaviour. However, the current study identifies two additional forms of online value-destroying behaviour (warning and exposing). The difference is mainly due to the uniqueness of the context and the outlook taken in the current study.

More specifically, a possible explanation is that Camilleri and Neuhofer’s (2017) practices can be both value-creating and -destroying. The current study examines

value destruction only, and things like warning and exposing carry a more negative tone compared to evaluating and recommending. That is why the latter two can also have a value-creating side and were common in both studies. In addition, although the context of shared economies may appear to be consumer-to-consumer interactions, the nature of the relation still possesses the characteristics of provider-to-consumer relationships and therefore, it is still considered that a service-dominant outlook on the destruction of value is being taken. However, taking the consumer-dominant perspective to investigate the online consumer-to-consumer context in the current research involved examining online interactions between consumers about a certain provider. This difference in outlooks also explains the differences in findings.

Although warning and exposing forms of online value-destroying behaviours identified in the current study have some novelty in this context, research on related concepts have shown relatively similar forms of negative online consumer behaviour. Literature shows that consumers sometimes create negative online content to share their perceived negative experience with others and warn them (Nam *et al.*, 2018; Wetzer *et al.*, 2007; Zhang *et al.*, 2018). Azer and Alexander (2018) also explored the forms of negatively valenced influencing behaviour in the online context and identified warning and deriding among other forms also identified in the current study. What the current study adds to this is the idea that those behaviours are potentially destructive to value. Most of the research on similar concepts have overlooked the idea that those negative online consumer behaviours can be classified as online value-destroying behaviours. The conformity of this study's findings with the findings of research on similar notions builds on and confirms the accuracy of the current study's classification of online value destruction as a broader notion that can include concepts like negatively valenced influencing behaviour, negative electronic word-of-mouth and many others.

Identifying online value destruction forms played a very important role in shaping and creating the process of online value destruction, which is the main theme that the findings of the current study are built upon. Forms of online value-destroying behaviour present the transition of value destruction from the offline to the online context. Although the forms of value destruction have been previously identified in few studies (for example, Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017), the current study is

pioneering by positioning them as part of a bigger process and as a point of transition from offline to online value destruction. It concerns the way consumers translate the value destruction experienced into something that fits the online consumer-to-consumer interactive world.

6.5.2 Potential Intervening Factors

In this section and the following ones, the focus of the discussion will shift from the consumer's perspective to the perspective of the reader who is engaging with the online value-destroying content created by the consumer (reviewer). According to the findings of the current study, consumers' prior experience and perception (perceived credibility and perceived risk) are the potential intervening factors that help govern what negative content they engaged with online is destructive to value (see Section 5.5). As discussed above, online value-destroying behaviour is manifested in several forms. However, it is important to highlight that it is different from similar notions such as negative electronic word-of-mouth (Nam *et al.*, 2018), consumer brand sabotage (Kähr *et al.*, 2016), consumer retaliation (Funches *et al.*, 2009) and negatively valenced influential behaviour (Azer and Alexander, 2018). Therefore, experience and perception in this study are considered to be the cognitive filters that separate online value destruction from all the other concepts mentioned above.

Based on the context, the current study is pioneering in proposing potential conditions or intervening factors for the destruction of value during consumer-to-consumer online interactions. Because of the normality of this behaviour and the continuous increase in engagement with brand-related content online, consumers have become more sceptical about what they engage with online, especially with the increase in positive and negative fake brand-related content. Consumers are more cautious and accordingly set cognitive filters as a coping mechanism to minimise the chance of being misguided or misled either towards or against a brand. However, the current study suggests that the important thing here is not whether the negative content is truly fake or not. What is more important, especially to businesses, is whether the content appears credible and convincing to the reader or not. The factors presented in the findings can help businesses because they can use them as guidelines to assess the potential for destruction from the readers' perspective. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, perception

plays a significant role in the process of online value destruction. The consumer's perception of the experience with the company in the first phase sparks the rest of events. Additionally, the highly subjective online value-destruction process relies heavily on the reader's perception of content. The perception of the reader about the online value-destroying content in the second phase determines its transfer from the consumer to the engaged reader.

Perceived credibility has an impact on several aspects during and after online value destruction. Consumers use all the available information to assess and validate the credibility of the post because several events are set in motion past this point. When the content is credible to readers, it means that it may influence them, allowing online value destruction to take place. It may also trigger their response to the post by thanking, helping the reviewer or even criticising the company. Finally, if the reader experiences online value destruction it also means that there are consequences such as a change in purchase decision and sharing the post with others. Therefore, perceived credibility in this context is not only an intervening factor for online value destruction, it is also an influential factor for consumers' responses to the content in terms of behaviours, cognitions and emotions.

Previous research has shown that content that is perceived as more credible can influence readers (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). Credibility determines the usefulness of the information provided by the online content (Reichelt *et al.*, 2014). To assess credibility, readers set their own criteria, where some of the factors are in the negative content itself, such as the trustworthiness of the source (Reichelt *et al.*, 2014), the quality of the review in terms of detail and logic and the availability of evidence proving the truthfulness of the content. However, there is another important credibility assessment factor that the current study adds, based on the nature of the interactive online context of this study. This factor lies in the responses of other consumers to the negative content, in terms of whether they interact and comment on the post to support or disagree with the reviewer. The reader may then perceive it as more credible or less credible respectively. In line with this, research shows that readers rely on reviews and the comments of others as sources of information that aid in problem solving (Dholakia *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, this study suggests that others' responses to reviews or online content influence how the reader perceives it.

The spread of negative word-of-mouth about a brand, where consumers express their problems and dissatisfaction and warn readers, increases the reader's *perceived risk* (Moon *et al.*, 2017). The current study's findings conform with this general proposition, but there is more to the context of online value destruction that may suggest otherwise. The findings suggested that there is more complexity in the process, where readers also assess the negative content itself in terms of risk before allowing it to become value-destructive to them. It is therefore not always just about the mere presence of negative comments or low ratings. Research on electronic word-of-mouth demonstrates that consumers seek online brand-related content, such as reviews, to try to avoid bad purchases or at least reduce the risk of a bad consumer experience (Bhandari and Rodgers, 2018; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Cheng and Loi, 2014; Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003). However, this may seem like an issue of uncertainty. Perceived risk and uncertainty both appear in the study. Uncertainty here is another aspect associated with lack of prior consumer experience, making the consumer uncertain about the provider, as discussed below. In the findings, perceived risk is associated with readers' perception of the severity of issues presented in the negative content, and what they would be risking if they went against the negative review and made a purchase. Therefore, perceived risk can potentially influence purchase intentions and the behaviour of the reader, which are considered in this study to be consequences of online value destruction. This will be discussed in Section 6.7. This is important because it suggests that there might be industries or businesses that are more subject to value destruction than others. Businesses in food and beverages, healthcare or beauty cosmetics for example, may be more prone to destruction from negative online content because they are selling things that consumers may not be willing to take risks with, such as their health.

Research on brand trust and electronic word-of-mouth has shown that readers' *prior experiences* with the brand act as a reference which they turn to in order to assess the trustworthiness of the negative online content (Bhandari and Rodgers, 2018). Potential consumers experience uncertainty due to having no prior experience with the brand to refer to for judgement. Therefore, they refer to others' experiences to aid their decisions (Sparks and Browning, 2011) and reading others' negative experiences can have a negative impact on their brand trust (Bhandari and Rodgers, 2018). The current study therefore proposes that this

makes them relatively susceptible to experiencing online value destruction when exposed to online value-destroying content. Hence, it is essential for businesses to invest in users' experiences with them and try to increase the number of users with positive experiences with their products or services to increase consumers' immunity to online value destruction in the market.

Overall, it is notable that phases 1 and 2 of the process of online value destruction rely heavily on the perceptions and experiences of both interacting parties (the consumer and the reader). More specifically, the perception of the consumer about the original experience with the brand, and readers' perception of the content considering their prior experiences with the focal brand. This increases the subjectivity of online value destruction, because it is not only based on the subjectivity of the perceived experience of one party (the consumer), but also based on the subjective judgement of the other interacting party (the reader). This adds to the complexity of the process of online value destruction compared to similar notions involving negative brand-related content within the context of consumer-to-consumer interactions.

6.5.3 Consumer Collegiality

Readers sometimes interact with the content they come across online by leaving responses in the form of comments, and the current study is the first to examine readers' responses to online value-destroying behaviour. Examining online responses uncovered a new perspective on the nature of consumer-to-consumer online relationships when engaging with online value-destroying behaviour. Research shows that users interacting online are often seeking information from experienced consumers to help in making their decision (Gheorghe and Liao, 2012). Reciprocity has been recognised in value creation online between consumers and providers (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). It is also key in consumer-to-consumer online communications because what online users are often looking for is brand-related information or knowledge from experienced consumers (Chou and Sawang, 2015), especially when they have no prior experience with the brand or in other words are potential consumers.

Expressing gratitude and consumer enquiry may have no additional impact on the destruction process, but for businesses monitoring the situation, they can be indicators of the potential impact of the content. They reflect consumers' interest

in the content, where thanking also shows a degree of convincement from the reader. Accordingly, the current study suggests that these responses can be monitored by businesses to know which content is getting more interest and attention and prioritise dealing with them in terms of potential threats. However, other types of responses may interfere with online value destruction by boosting it through further online value destruction, or hindering it through online value recovery.

Experienced readers also reciprocate support by sharing information with others (Chou and Sawang, 2015). According to the current study, experienced users can aid in online value destruction when they reflect on their own experiences by agreeing with the content and making it more credible to others and hence, potentially more destructive. Responses can also aid in online value destruction when they criticise the company further. Although this study has argued against the use of the term co-destruction in consumer-to-consumer value destruction, it proposes that in this situation of boosting value destruction, there is a possibility for value co-destruction to exist in a unique form in online consumer-to-consumer interactions. The reviewer and responders supporting the reviewer or criticising the business are co-destroying value for the rest of the readers. Therefore, consumer-to-consumer online value co-destruction possesses different characteristics from consumer-provider value co-destruction because it involves two or more consumers co-destroying value for the rest of the users rather than two parties co-destroying value for each other during interactions.

On the other hand, responses can aid in online value recovery for the reviewer when they reflect on their experiences to show support by helping the reviewer with the problem by providing advice or possible solutions. Responses can also aid in online value recovery for other readers when they defend the brand or criticise any content that they may find fake or unfair so that readers are not misled by the review. Therefore, there appears to be an implied system between consumers where they often try to protect it and each other by rejecting behaviour from reviewers, companies or other users that they feel threatens or ruins this system of mutual well-being.

Reflecting on the overall findings, it is notable that there is an extra care factor that is mutually present between the consumers engaging in online value-destroying behaviour with others' well-being in mind, and those whose responses

involve supporting the original reviewer or others. This mutual dependency also suggests that consumers have a duty of care for others when they can, and expect others to care for their well-being as well (Engster, 2005). Consumer care research has also reflected the role of solidarity and common struggles in responding to others' care needs (Shaw *et al.*, 2017). Sympathy has been conceptualised as a response to a threat to an individual's well-being (Darwall, 1998). This extra care factor translates into sympathy from the consumer when others' threatened well-being triggered the online value-destroying behaviour to protect them from potential harm. Readers on the other hand, may rely on empathy to try to legitimise the consumer's feelings about the focal issue. When they can accept that the situation warrants the feelings described by the consumer, they may be affected by it. Darwall (1998) also talked about types of empathy and described proto-sympathetic empathy, where individuals imagine what it is like for the other to feel a certain way in a situation, and accordingly, that can lead to sympathy. From the readers' perspective, proto-sympathetic empathy is what makes them relate to the consumer's situation. Additionally, when some of those readers respond in ways that potentially help the consumer or protect others from misinformation reflects the way in which proto-sympathetic empathy leads to sympathy.

Care literature has demonstrated several types and phases of care (Tronto, 2013). In this context, consumers "care about" others, and to care about can involve the notion of mutual interest with a benefit for the carer (Blustein, 1991), or disinterested care where the care provider does not benefit from doing it (Frankfurt, 1982). From a consumer-dominant perspective, in consumer-to-consumer interactions, care is practised towards the consumer online community, where consumers care about others in general and not about specific people. The care here is mutual, but each party (consumers and readers) does it benevolently without expecting any return from that specific person who originally benefitted from their post or comment. However, from a service-dominant perspective, consumer-provider interactions do not involve that kind of care. Care exists differently between consumers and organisations where it is more reciprocal. Loyal consumers for example, care about the company, but it is care out of interest and has a return for the consumers as well. From a company's perspective, care is expressed and given to consumers but again, it is not an act of benevolence, but more of an obligation or a responsibility that the company

will gain by doing or lose by not doing. Employees may show care towards consumers, but it is mostly part of their job to do so; for example, it is part of the consumer care representative's job to help consumers and respond to their problems.

Therefore, unlike previous research, the current study suggests it is not only a question of mutual benefit and exchange of information and support. The element of mutual well-being fuelled by sympathy and care suggests that there is consumer collegiality rather than just consumer reciprocity. Consumer collegiality suggests that in this system of mutual well-being, consumers act as colleagues who have a sense of responsibility towards each other and engage online to help one another through that system of mutual well-being. Moreover, the term reciprocity may be more fitting in consumer-provider relationships. Contrastingly, the nature of consumer-to-consumer online relationships is different and less formal because it is built on the idea of coming together to aid and shield each other from potential harm from products or services. Therefore, consumer collegiality may be a more suitable term to describe the nature of experience sharing in consumer-to-consumer brand-related interactions online.

6.6 Defining Online Value Destruction

6.6.1 Consumer-to-Consumer Online Value Destruction

Defining value destruction in the online context is one of the important outcomes of this research. It proposes a definition for online value destruction that accounts for the revelations of the findings. It defines online value destruction in consumer-to-consumer interactions as “The damage in consumer value resulting from engaging with online value-destroying behaviours that are driven by the interplay between cognitive and emotional factors, governed by prior experience and perception”.

An important point of distinction that this study attempts to emphasise is in differentiating between online value destruction in consumer-provider interactions and online value destruction in consumer-to-consumer interactions. In consumer-provider interactions, value is destroyed based on a direct experience between the consumer and the provider. Therefore, the consumer is the one who

experiences the destruction first-hand. In value destruction between consumers on the other hand, value is destroyed indirectly through exposure to other consumers' experiences of it. This makes consumer-to-consumer value destruction more complex than consumer-provider value destruction, especially in the online context, because it is someone else's experience and the reader therefore needs to be convinced. Accordingly, for online value destruction to take place, the negative content or experience posted online needs to pass through the reader's cognitive filters (perception and prior experience, Sections 5.5 and 6.5.2).

Building on this idea, in service-dominant settings, consumers experiencing value destruction directly with the provider often face a decline in well-being and loss of resources (Smith, 2013; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). They may also experience unpleasant emotions and waste of time, money and effort. However, this study proposes that consumer-to-consumer online value destruction does not necessitate the loss of resources and well-being, and the potential and anticipation of their loss is enough to destroy value. Readers are not the ones who had a negative experience and no financial, temporal, emotional or physical efforts were wasted dealing with a negative experience of their own. This study therefore challenges the current conceptualisation of value destruction because in online value destruction in the context of consumer-to-consumer interactions, there was no decline in well-being or loss of resources from the readers' perspective and yet, value was still destroyed. The destruction of value in this case is all in the reader's mind and is completely based on someone else's convincing experience shared online.

Consumer-to-consumer online value destruction is when a consumer or a potential consumer experiences value destruction upon exposure to another consumer's unpleasant experience with a brand. Consumer-to-consumer online value destruction is a type of online value destruction that occurs in the consumers' sphere. The introduction and distinction of this concept is necessary because online value destruction can happen directly in the business-to-consumer context during consumer-provider online interactions that end in loss of value for one or both systems (Quach and Thaichon, 2017). Consumer-to-consumer online value destruction on the other hand, happens only in the consumer context, where one of the parties (the reader) was not personally involved in the negative experience with the provider, and value is destroyed without a direct interaction.

Drawing upon consumer-dominant logic debates regarding the unsuitability of service-dominant logic in accounting for consumer value creation processes (Anker *et al.*, 2015; Heinonen *et al.*, 2010), consumer-to-consumer online value destruction can be better understood using consumer-dominant logic. Understanding and introducing the notion of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction is another way in which the superiority of consumer-dominant logic in this context is demonstrated, because even without any interaction with the provider, readers experience value destruction. Although it could be argued that consumer-to-consumer online value destruction is driven by a provider-related problem, implying indirect involvement or facilitation (Grönroos and Voima, 2013), the current study proposes otherwise. This idea does not hold in this context for various reasons. First, this study argues that the initial driver of online value-destroying behaviour is not the interaction or problem with the provider, but the consumer's subjective perception and appraisal of it. This gives the consumer control in the process. Second, the interplay between the consumer's emotions and cognitions following the negatively perceived experience is what drives the behaviour. Provider interaction and involvement has stopped at this stage and the escalation comes from within the consumer. Third, readers are affected based on their own subjective perception of the content that was created purely based on the interpretation and expression of another consumer. Therefore, the content, the medium and the form of the online value-destroying behaviour created by the consumer, as well as the reader's perception of it, fall into an inter-subjective value destruction realm between the consumer and the reader. The provider plays no role in directly or indirectly facilitating the process. In this case, it is suggested that consumer-to-consumer online value destruction emerges through consumer agency and technology (third-party website) facilitation. Service-dominant logic theory cannot incorporate this proposition because it is bound by the inclusion of provider facilitation (Anker *et al.*, 2015).

6.6.2 Temporality in Value Destruction

The current study has adopted a temporal lens on value destruction (Järvi *et al.*, 2018) and focused on the destruction of value that occurs pre-interaction and post-interaction with the provider. In contrast, most studies on value destruction have focused on the destruction of value during consumer-provider interaction (Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Leo and Zainuddin,

2016; Neuhofer, 2016; Smith, 2013; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Value creation research suggests that there are three processes involved in the creation of value: the provider process, the consumer process and the joint process (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014; Payne *et al.*, 2008). Research has also demonstrated the idea of simultaneous creation and destruction of value, and from that it can be implied that value can also be destroyed at different points in time, namely before, during and after interactions (Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Järvi *et al.* (2018) had a unique outlook on the temporal nature of value destruction and organised its antecedents based on the time phase of their occurrence. However, the present study places the antecedents in the pre-online value destruction phase because they occur only before the consumer engages in online value-destroying behaviour and are built on the outcomes of value-destroying or -reducing consumer-provider interactions.

The current study offers different insights into the temporal nature of value destruction in the online context. The novelty here is in how the process of online value destruction itself can be divided into three temporal phases of before, during and after online value destruction. This study argues that unlike consumer-provider interactions, consumer-to-consumer online value destruction does not occur at separate times within consumer-to-consumer collaborations. Consumer-to-consumer online value destruction is a process that flows and is spread over a period consisting of three different time phases. To clarify further, the following section discusses consumer-to-consumer online value destruction considering consumer-provider value co-destruction assumptions.

From the perspective of consumer-provider interactions, consumer-to-consumer pre-online value destruction begins after the consumer-provider interaction has already taken place. Therefore, in relation to previous research, it begins with the consumer's (reviewer's) post-interaction with the provider as a point in time and then travels further. From the perspective of the consumer who experienced value destruction due to a negative experience (the reviewer), this study acknowledges that value is destroyed during consumer-provider interaction. However, when this consumer engages in online value-destroying behaviour as a result, this value destruction using online means is then considered to be post-provider interaction for that consumer (Grönroos, 2008; Payne *et al.*, 2008).

During consumer-to-consumer online value destruction, the perspective shifts as the destruction of value passes from the consumer (reviewer) to the readers engaging with the online value-destroying behaviour of that user. From the perspective of readers, they are still at their pre-interaction stage with the provider, because they are mostly consumers or potential consumers engaging online with brand-related content to collect information to aid a purchase decision (Andreu *et al.*, 2010; Payne *et al.*, 2008). When they come across the value-destroying content online, value can be destroyed before they even interact with the company. Hence, in this case, value is destroyed before consumer-provider interaction takes place. The current study also adds that value is not only destroyed during consumer-provider interactions, but is also destroyed during consumer-to-consumer interactions that happen simultaneously post-provider interaction for the consumer and pre-provider interaction for the reader. Therefore, adopting a consumer-dominant lens when examining online value destruction in consumer-to-consumer online interactions reveals that value can be simultaneously destroyed post-interaction and pre-interaction with the provider.

Although previous research offered valuable insights into the temporal nature of value destruction, this study presents new insights from a different perspective. Overall, the findings of the current study demonstrate how consumers transform value destruction and reduction from their experiences into online value destruction for readers through online value-destroying behaviours. Understanding this is vital for businesses and managers because it offers them insights into a phenomenon that is mostly out of their reach and sphere, yet can have a remarkable effect on their reputation, revenues and accordingly their performance. Businesses should understand that consumers operate on their own timeline and can engage in behaviours that can have an impact on businesses without them knowing. The current study's insights bring businesses a step closer to consumers' sphere to more effectively handle and potentially mitigate the impact of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction.

6.7 Phase 3: Cognitive, Emotional and Behavioural Consequences

Another important objective of the current study was to explore the consequences of online value destruction. Before discussing them, it is important to highlight that the findings suggest that consumer-provider value destruction may result in online value destruction through online value-destroying behaviour between consumers. Empirical research on value destruction has mostly portrayed value destruction itself as the result or consequence of consumer-provider interactions or engagement (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Leo and Zainuddin, 2016; Smith, 2013; Zhang *et al.*, 2018;). The current study begins after value destruction has happened in a consumer-provider dyadic exchange and examines online value destruction and its consequences.

There may be an impact on consumers exposed to online value destruction in terms of their cognitions, emotions and behaviours towards the provider. The reason the consequences take those three forms is because of those consumers' or potential consumers' engagement with online value-destroying behaviour. Prior research showed that engagement dimensions are cognitive, emotional and behavioural (Dessart *et al.*, 2015). Consumers engage cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally with online value-destroying content and accordingly are affected in terms of their cognitions, emotions and behaviours and thus, the consequences too are classified into cognitive, behavioural and emotional. Research to date has not examined the potential consequences of value destruction either online or offline. However, research exists on the consequences of related concepts such as negative electronic word-of-mouth (Bachleda and Berrada-Fathi, 2016; Nam *et al.*, 2018) and consumer complaint behaviour (Dolan *et al.*, 2019).

The cognitive consequences of online value destruction are negative brand-related thoughts that the reader may develop. This is in line with research on negative electronic word-of-mouth, which shows that it can affect brand trust, attitudes, company reputation and intention to purchase (Bhandari and Rodgers, 2018; Lee and Young, 2009; Lee *et al.*, 2009; Mauri and Minazzi, 2013; Nam *et al.*, 2018; Sparks and Browning, 2011). This is critical for business to understand because value-destroying behaviours can eventually have a negative impact on

them if they passed readers' cognitive filters. Although the impact is usually greater on potential consumers, doubt and negative image can translate into loss of brand trust and loyalty, which may eventually lead to brand-switching by current users as well.

Earlier in this chapter, the transfer of emotions from the consumer to the reader through the process of online value destruction was discussed. The main idea involved the transfer of anger and disappointment to readers when they are convinced by the content they engage with. However, the interesting revelation of the findings is that not all the emotional consequences of online value destruction are negative. Likewise, it has also been indicated in research that complaint behaviour on social media does not necessarily result in negative consequences (Dolan *et al.*, 2019). In addition, research also shows that in the context of social media, negative product content may potentially have positive results (Bitter and Grabner-Kräuter, 2016). Readers were sometimes grateful to have seen the reviews before making a bad purchase or were lucky with their purchase, others were glad they did not buy the focal brand. Although the emotions felt are positive, the business is still harmed when consumers feel positive about avoiding its products or services. Reflecting upon the perspective adopted, from a consumer-dominant perspective, this is positive, but from a service-dominant perspective, it is still a negative impact on the business. Therefore, adopting the consumer perspective has helped shed light on ideas that were always viewed negatively due to the involvement of the business perspective. Different nuances have appeared within online value destruction through the positivity within the process that was mostly described as the dark or negative side of value creation. This also better reflects the complex nature of consumer emotions in consumption experiences.

Behavioural consequences included the alteration of current and future or intended behaviour towards the focal brand because of online value destruction. Regarding purchase behaviour, research has indicated that consumers tend to avoid products with negative ratings (Amblee and Bui, 2008). It has also been demonstrated that negative electronic word-of-mouth affects purchase intentions (Bhandari and Rodgers, 2018) and can result in brand disloyalty (Jalonen and Jussila, 2016). Likewise, the findings indicated that consumers may stop using a brand that they have been using following online value destruction. It is also

noteworthy that the most threatening consequence is sharing because this is how online value destruction extends further to other consumers in the reader's circle and eventually beyond that. This consequence is what makes online value destruction potentially viral and even more destructive.

In consumer-provider interactions, value destruction occurs between the company and the consumers. Online value destruction on the other hand, occurs between the consumer and potentially anyone who is exposed to the content on the given platform. Sharing is key in the process because value destruction is transformed into online value destruction when the consumer decides to share the experience with others online by engaging in online value-destroying behaviour. Moreover, when the reader decides to share another consumer's experience, there will be the potential risk of it going viral and turning into mass online value destruction.

This possibility that value destruction could extend to others outside the dyadic interaction of the consumer and provider is the reason why this study has argued that it is value destruction rather than value diminution (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). Because even if it was just value reduction that the consumer experienced, the potential and speed of spread makes it destructive. Moreover, it can have a cognitive, emotional and behavioural impact on consumers before they even interact with the business. Just by interacting digitally with other consumers who have had a value-destroying experience with a business, value destruction is transferred to consumers and potential consumers.

6.8 Potential Relationships Within the Online Value Destruction Process

This section summarises the input from the research findings and discussion by combining the online value destruction process from the findings and the explanation from the discussion to create a prospective conceptual model that sheds light on potential relationships (see Figure 3). If the online value-destruction process is to be tested in the future, this is how the current study proposes to do so. Looking at the overall findings and discussion, there appears to be some connectivity between themes within the process of online value destruction. These potential relationships enable the online value-destruction process to take

place. More specifically, those are the links that move the process from one phase to another. The analysis has shown that there are potential links between online value destruction drivers and online value-destroying behaviour, online value-destroying behaviour and readers' responses as well as consequences.

6.8.1 Linking Online Value Destruction Drivers to Behaviours

Those are the connections that move the online value destruction process from phase 1 (pre-online value destruction) to phase 2 (online value destruction engagement). To explain further, there appears to be a potential link between well-being and the forms of online value destruction. The primary concern of the reviewer was evident from many of the reviews and was even sometimes explicitly stated. Posts that mainly take the form of a warning or recommending can be linked to seeking others' well-being, especially because those posts are mostly directed at the reader with warnings and advice. Reviewers in those cases express their care and concern for others and want to help them avoid a similar experience or have a better one. This was supported by interviewees when many of them expressed their concern for others and how they aimed to "let people know" about their experience so they could avoid something similar.

On the other hand, in posts where reviewers are mainly exposing and evaluating the focal brand, they may be seeking their own well-being, others well-being or both simultaneously. When the reviewer is seeking others' well-being, they might be exposing the business or giving it a negative evaluation to inform others and help them avoid getting involved with the company to prevent an unpleasant experience. Consumers may also provide detailed evaluations with the pros and cons of the focal brand to help others make informed decisions. Seeking their own well-being, reviewers may write harsh reviews exposing or negatively evaluating the brand to get back at the company for mistreatment or injustice. They may also do so to try to get the company's attention to solve their problem. Reviewers could also be seeking their own and others' well-being simultaneously and that was supported by interviewees. Although consumers may be doing so, one of these approaches is sometimes more evident or dominant than the other.

6.8.2 Linking Online Value-Destroying Behaviour and Reader Response

This section illuminates potential links between themes within the second phase of the process (online value-destruction engagement) and explains how readers engage and interact with online value-destroying behaviours. Once the negative experience is shared online, it is seen by others who are engaging on the platform. It was evident from the findings that readers sometimes actively engage with online value-destroying content by responding to it with a comment (when the platform allows). Readers do not only engage with the reviewer but may also engage with other responders or even the company itself. Readers' responses are guided by their prior experience with the brand as well as the perceived credibility and risk of the post. Inexperienced readers may respond by enquiring further, maybe to minimise risk. They may also express their gratitude by thanking the reviewer for the post, reflecting that this post or reviewer was perceived as credible. Inexperienced readers may also criticise the reviewer or review, indicating that they may have perceived them as fake, unrealistic or non-credible. They may also respond by criticising another reviewer or the company when they doubt their credibility or when they perceive the original review as credible.

Experienced readers on the contrary, rely more on their experience to create a response. Readers with prior experience with the focal brand may respond by supporting the original reviewer, especially when their experience was like the reviewer's. They show support by agreeing with the content of the post to add to its credibility when seen by others who are also engaging. Readers with positive experiences with the focal brand may respond by defending the brand against those negative posts, saying that this was not the case with them. Experienced readers may also respond by helping the original reviewer with the issue by providing information or advice. This reflects care and concern for the reviewer and willingness to help. Care and concern appear to be mutual because many of the reviewers were originally concerned with others' well-being. It appears that readers and reviewers rely on each other in a system of mutual well-being (consumer collegiality). Other readers also rely on those responses to help determine the credibility of the content, for example, when readers see others supporting a negative review and agreeing with the content, they may perceive it

as more credible and tend to believe it more compared to posts without endorsements.

6.8.3 Linking Online Value-Destroying Behaviour and Consequences

In this section, the transition from the second (online value destruction engagement) to the third phase (post-online value destruction) is explained by highlighting potential links between the themes to show how online value-destroying behaviour can result in consequences. Readers' experiences and perceptions not only guide their responses to the online value-destroying post, they also influence how they are affected by it in terms of the consequences that may occur due to exposure to online value-destroying behaviour. Experiencing online value destruction is reflected in the consequences, and this is because the findings show that not all negative content is value-destroying. Hence, the consequences of online value destruction reflect its occurrence. Prior experience and perception therefore act as cognitive filters that determine whether the negative online content is destructive to value or not.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, readers rely on their previous experience to assess the content they read and having less experience makes them more prone to experiencing online value destruction because they have no personal experience as a reference to compare with. On the contrary, having an experience of their own shields them from believing everything they read, making them less subject to experiencing online value destruction when exposed to negative content. Readers also rely on their perception to make judgements and accordingly decisions. Readers may be influenced by content that they perceive as credible. When readers believe negative content, they may consequently avoid a purchase, negatively perceive the brand or maybe stop using it if they already are. The level of perceived risk attached to the content also plays a role in determining the reader's judgement of the negative content and how they are affected by it. Things like associated costs and issue significance help the reader in risk assessment. When perceived risk is high, consumers may refrain from transacting with the company because they mention not wanting to take chances with potentially unpleasant experiences.

6.9 Proposed Conceptual Model

The above propositions show how the phases of online value destruction can be linked together. The following conceptual model (Figure 3) explains the online value destruction process, considering the potential links proposed by the current study. The model is speculative and is not predictive of relationships and behaviours. It is the researcher's vision of how these behaviours could be arranged and handed over for further research. The current study does not aim to test this conceptual model, but simply presents it as a demonstration of contribution to current knowledge and as a recommendation on how testing the findings could be conducted. Smith (2013) proposed a value co-destruction process which has several similarities and differences to the current study's model. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in Smith's study value co-destruction is also viewed from the consumer perspective. However, the difference is that her study still adopts a service-dominant logic and examines offline consumer-provider interactions. These two aspects are the main source of deviation of the current study from Smith's (2013). One of the advantages of employing abductive reasoning in this study is that it enables reflecting and building on theoretical insights. This allowed the researcher to develop and propose a conceptual model that offers novel propositions and broadens current understanding of value destruction.

Generally, Smith (2013) suggests that from the consumers' perspective, failing to integrate resources and create expected value is the main trigger of the process of value co-destruction. The consumer resource loss associated with this failure negatively affects well-being. Consumers then try to regain lost resources through coping strategies that include decreasing well-being for the provider. The main idea that the current study supports is engaging in well-being restorative behaviour (online value-destroying behaviour) that can involve company harm or well-being loss such as complaining and negative word-of-mouth as suggested by Smith. However, Smith (2013) added another company well-being-reducing behaviour associated with the offline context, which is brand 'switching' and this is outside the digital scope of the current study. On the other hand, considering the online context, the current study deviates from the idea of associating value destruction only with resource loss. According to the findings, in the online

context, consumers can also experience online value destruction indirectly (see Section 6.6.1) without actual resource loss. Additionally, adopting a consumer-dominant logic enabled the current study to explore further events in the consumers' sphere that reflected how value destruction extends further to others in the online context. As explained earlier in this chapter (see Section 6.2), this is beyond the scope of service-dominant logic, although Smith hints at consumer-to-consumer interactions by including negative word-of-mouth.

Smith's proposed model reflects both consumer and provider perspectives during the process. It shows the antecedents related to resource loss and the resulting emotions and behaviours from the consumer and positions well-being decline as the last consequence that represents value co-destruction. As mentioned in this chapter and the findings, the current study operates with a combination of cognitive and emotional drivers. The behavioural aspect appears in the form of online value-destroying behaviour in the second phase as a result of those drivers and therefore, as the conceptual model shows, there were no behavioural drivers. Online value destruction takes four different forms of behaviour resulting from cognition and emotional drivers.

The current study corresponds with Smith's view that emotions can result in the decline of well-being. However, in her process, these emotions drive consumer behaviours (such as negative word-of-mouth) that increase consumer well-being. The current study on the other hand, breaks it down further by placing consumer behaviour after cognitively acknowledging the decline in well-being due to the nature of the online context (see Section 6.4). The consumer then engages in online value-destroying behaviour to improve their own well-being and protect others'. Accordingly, this makes emotions an indirect driver of behaviour rather than a direct one, and makes declining well-being drive consumer well-being-improving behaviour and not vice versa as the model suggests. Additionally, the current study's edge is in the inclusion of "others' well-being" rather than a focus on the consumer's own well-being only. This reflects the effect the online context and platforms have on consumers' cognitions and behaviours through facilitating communication with close and distant others. Finally, Smith's process is represented only in the first phase of the current study's proposed model, which

extends further into the consumers' sphere, that is outside the scope of Smith's study.

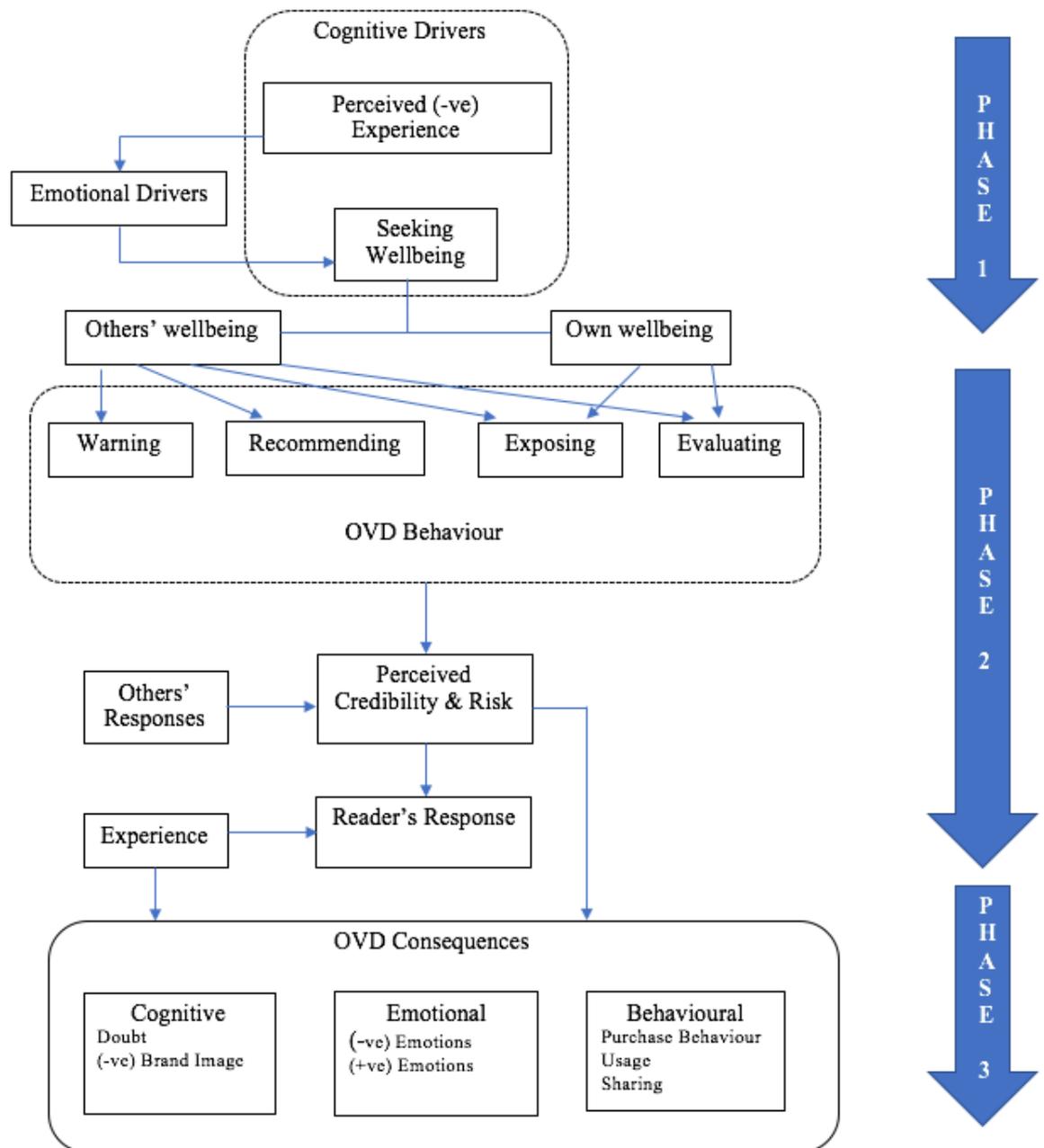


Figure 3: Proposed Conceptual Model

6.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the key findings considering the relevant literature. It was divided according to the phases of the proposed online value-destruction process, each phase demonstrating how the relevant research objectives were achieved. This chapter has also addressed the relevant literature with regard to findings and demonstrated similarities and differences. In addition, it has

presented a new, refined definition of online value destruction. It has proposed two novel concepts in the area of value destruction, which are consumer collegiality and consumer-to-consumer online value destruction. Finally, the chapter has proposed a conceptual model that demonstrates and proposes potential relationships within the process of online value destruction. Those proposed relationships explain the process of online value destruction and how the transition from one phase to another occurs. This study does not aim to test the model, which is a proposal for future researchers who want to examine and test the process of online value destruction. The next chapter will present the conclusion of the thesis. It addresses theoretical and empirical contributions, practical implications, limitations and future research.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key research contributions and implications for theory and practice in addition to the study's limitations and future research. First, it demonstrates the theoretical and empirical contributions that the current study makes to existing knowledge. Second, it explains the implications of the findings for business and provides recommendations for several business strategies based on the proposed online value destruction process. Third, the limitations of the current study are addressed, followed by recommendations for future research.

7.2 Theoretical Contribution

Theoretical contribution involves an advancement of theory by offering an understanding of concepts and their interrelationships within a theory (Corley and Gioia, 2011). The current research makes several theoretical contributions to the understanding of the online value destruction process in consumer-to-consumer interactions. It contributes to existing knowledge on online value destruction through examining consumer online value-destroying behaviours on third-party websites, as well as investigating consumers' insights regarding those behaviours to capture the consumers' perspective on online value destruction in consumer-to-consumer interactions. This study has aimed to explore and provide an understanding of this relatively new phenomenon that has not been approached from this perspective before and contributes to three main research streams: value destruction, consumer-dominant logic and consumer engagement. The main theoretical contributions of this study are discussed in this section.

1- Conceptualising consumer-to-consumer online value destruction

The current study's main contribution to knowledge is in developing and introducing the concept of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction. It offers a definition for online value destruction (see Section 6.6.1), because most current definitions of value destruction do not fully apply to the online context and consumer-to-consumer interactions. In doing so, it offers a new outlook on

the concept of value destruction that challenges the service-centric approach by taking a consumer-centric one which highlights the difference between the value destruction process in consumer-to-consumer versus consumer-provider interactions. The literature has mainly adopted a service-centric approach and addressed provider-involving value destruction (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Järvi *et al.*, 2018; Kashif and Zarkada, 2015; Kirova, 2020; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Smith, 2013; Sthapit, 2019; Sthapit and Björk, 2019; Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto, 2019; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). The current research presents consumer-to-consumer value destruction in the online context where one of the interacting parties experiences value destruction without directly interacting with the business but through interaction with another consumer who did have a direct experience with the business.

Accordingly, this study contributes by positioning consumer-to-consumer online value destruction as a concept that differs from service-centric value destruction and co-destruction by proposing that value can be destroyed without direct resource loss or well-being decline. This contradicts the assumptions of value destruction research that have emphasised loss of well-being or resources as indicators of value destruction. This also contributes to consumer-dominant logic theory, by examining value destruction in online engagement experiences in the consumers' sphere. In doing so, this research widens the understanding of value in consumer-dominant logic by exploring the destructive side and expanding the view that was more focused on value creation.

This study also contributes by demonstrating a conceptual relationship between consumer engagement theory and online value destruction. It does so by examining and presenting engagement dimensionality throughout the process of online value destruction. This idea is highly implicit in the extant literature, where a few studies (for example Smith, 2013) present emotional, behavioural and implicit cognitive factors within the process of value destruction. This study presents consumer engagement as the theory that ties the process of online value destruction together because the process only becomes complete when users engage with the consumer's online value-destroying behaviour.

This study proposes that consumer-to-consumer online value destruction possesses the characteristics of online consumer engagement behaviours that have cognitive

and emotional roots. Previous research portrayed value destruction as practices within consumer-provider dyadic interactions rather than active engagement. Drawing from engagement theory contributed to a more detailed explanation of online value destruction as a process from the consumers' perspective and it revealed the role engagement elements (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) before, during and after online value destruction. In doing so, it revealed the cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects of online value destruction as well as the effects that the online value destruction process transfers to the reader cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally. This also contributes to consumer engagement research by showing how consumer-to-consumer online engagement can potentially be destructive to value rather than just negative. This offers a theoretical explanation that connects the negative consumer engagement with value destruction.

Another contribution to the growing literature on value destruction is by building on the established knowledge of the nature of value destruction in terms of intentionality (Lefebvre and Plé, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010) and temporality (Järvi *et al.*, 2018). By acknowledging technology as a medium of interaction and regarding the business as a third party, the current study proposes that online value destruction in consumer-to-consumer interactions differs from value destruction in service-centric contexts in terms of intentionality and temporality. Regarding intentionality, the current study acknowledges the possibility of unintentional value reduction or destruction. However, the technological factor allows for higher cognitive capacity in the process and accordingly this context accommodates a degree of intentionality in the behaviour itself. This opposes the mainstream understanding of intentionality of value destruction in service-centric contexts, where intentional value destruction is presented as less common.

Regarding temporality, existing research has mostly focused on the destruction of value during consumer-provider interactions (Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Leo and Zainuddin, 2016; Neuhofer, 2016; Smith, 2013; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). The current study contributes by adding that value is not only destroyed during consumer-provider interactions. This idea generally corroborates the research propositions of Järvi *et al.* (2018) who did not, however, acknowledge consumer-to-consumer interactions. This study therefore expands

the theoretical horizon by adding consumer-to-consumer engagement. Accordingly, it proposes that value can be destroyed before the consumer interacts with the business by engaging with other consumers' negative experiences and can also be destroyed after consumers interact with the business when they engage in online value-destroying behaviour. This means that the two interacting parties in this context can be simultaneously at different points in terms of interacting with the business, where the destroyer is in post-interaction and the reader is in pre-interaction.

In a broad sense, an important contribution is in the development and understanding of a process for online value destruction in consumer-to-consumer interactions (see Figure 2). The current study takes a more comprehensive approach to the notion of online value destruction by examining not only the key drivers, but also the consequences and details of consumer-to-consumer interaction that occur in the middle. This contributes to prior research on other forms of negative consumer behaviour such as negative electronic word-of-mouth (Nam *et al.*, 2018), consumer brand sabotage (Kähr *et al.*, 2016), consumer retaliation (Huefner and Hunt, 2000) and negatively valenced influential behaviour (Azer and Alexander, 2018; 2020). It demonstrates their commonalities and differences from online value destruction and classifies online value destruction as a broader notion that can encompass those negative consumer behaviours because of their potential to destroy value. This conceptualisation of online value destruction integrates several concepts within negative consumer behaviour literature that were previously fragmented.

2- Repositioning the role of well-being by introducing consumer collegiality

Taking the consumers' perspective repositions the role of well-being in value destruction from declined well-being as an indicator of value destruction, to seeking well-being as a direct driver of online value-destroying behaviour. This also contributes to well-being research by presenting seeking it as a motive to behaviour while it was mostly portrayed as an indicator of individual happiness, quality of life and life satisfaction on many levels (Diener *et al.*, 2018). In addition, the idea of seeking others' well-being showed how consumers don't only seek their own well-being and that enhancing or protecting others' well-being may even relate to and improve a consumer's own well-being. Moreover, this research

presented an unconventional way of seeking well-being, which is online value destroying behaviour.

This process is built on the concept the researcher introduced and termed consumer collegiality (see Section 6.5.3). Consumer collegiality is an implicit system of mutual well-being that guides consumer-to-consumer relationships and brand-related interactions online. This contributes to brand communities and consumer activism literature, which highlighted the reciprocal exchange nature of online brand communities and anti-brand communities (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2006). This study however alters the basis upon which consumers interact together online from reciprocity to consumer collegiality and accordingly offers an alternative interpretation where a positive element within that negatively perceived concept appears on both interacting parties (the consumer/reviewer and readers).

The current study also contributes to value creation research by proposing a new outlook on value creation within consumer-to-consumer value-destroying interactions. This is because negative online content itself contains information that is of value to the reader, enabling them to make better decisions and perhaps avoid a bad purchase, leading to value creation. Consumers also sometimes engage in online value-destroying behaviour for compensation or problem resolution, which is a form of value recovery. Meanwhile, this content can have a negative effect on the reader's perception of a provider's value proposition, which means value destruction. Reflecting on research proposing the simultaneous creation and destruction of value in service-centric contexts (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2016), this study presents a different perspective on that notion in consumer-to-consumer interactions.

A contribution therefore lies in introducing the positive element of value creation or recovery within the online value-destruction process. The extant literature examining value creation and destruction mostly portrays them as opposing outcomes of the same practices. The current study suggests that there is asymmetry between value creation and value destruction, because there is a positive element of value creation within the value-destruction process, while there is no negative element of value destruction in the value-creation process.

The process also shows how engaging in online value-destroying behaviour can cause a transition in consumer emotions and cognitions from unpleasant to more pleasant ones. Overall, taking a consumer perspective on online value destruction revealed that, from the consumers' point of view, online value-destroying behaviour is viewed as normative between consumers within that system of consumer collegiality. Previous research took a service-centric approach on value destruction and therefore, it was conceptualised as negative. On the other hand, research on consumer activism did not portray such consumer behaviours online as something negative (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2006) because they mostly take a consumer perspective. Accordingly, putting the business perspective somewhat aside in this study by adopting a consumer-dominant logic revealed the positive side of online value destruction.

This idea therefore, bridges together consumer value destruction research with consumer activism on online brand communities. Consumer online brand communities and even anti-brand communities were portrayed as spaces offering social benefits where likeminded consumers connect and support each other even if that meant having a negative effect on the business and its reputation (Dessart *et al.*, 2020; Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2006). Those online brand communities can therefore have simultaneous value creating and destroying implications depending on the perspective taken to examine them.

Overall, this contribution changes the mainstream way of thinking regarding value destruction and offers a new departure point for future research to explore further. More specifically, in the consumer sphere, consumer-to-consumer online value-destroying behaviour can be viewed as consumer-to-consumer online value creation in a consumers' information-based economy where information is created, shared and exchanged between consumers. Consumers from this perspective act as producers who spend time and effort creating and communicating brand-related information that is of use to others and can aid in protecting their well-being. This act aggregately produces valuable information for consumer use when performed by many consumers. In terms of the focal object (provider perspective) of the content created, sharing negative information about it can be destructive to value. However, from a consumer-dominant perspective,

information resulting from this behaviour is valuable, regardless of its valence towards the focal object. Sharing information in this case can be viewed as an act of value creation.

Although the content produced here is based on the existence of a business, it is still created by consumers for consumers. Consumer-generated content (information) in this case can be viewed as a value proposition, where other users use it to make judgements and decisions, and may give feedback that either supports it or disagrees with it. The information value here may be strengthened by supporters and weakened by critics. This phenomenon of consumer-to-consumer online engagement can be viewed as an intellectual realm that digital platforms have helped create. In this realm, consumers create and destroy value. The value is in the content created and shared by consumers regardless of its valence. Value destruction here can come in the form of sharing misleading information, fake content or dishonest reviews and opinions, precisely because this could ruin the main value-creating proposition, which is valuable information. Destroying the integrity and purity of shared information represents value destruction in this consumer-to-consumer intellectual realm that is built on consumer collegiality.

7.3 Empirical Contribution

Empirical contributions involve the revelations of new insights into a phenomenon (Thomas and James, 2006). The current study also makes empirical contributions to the current body of literature. By demonstrating the key cognitive and emotional processes, the online value destruction process developed provides a better understanding of why consumers engage in online value-destroying behaviour (drivers), how they do so (forms of online value-destroying behaviour), how others engage and respond (responses to online value destruction), what determines its effectiveness (intervening factors) and what the effects of its success are (consequences).

Furthermore, the current study proposes potential relationships that appear to connect the phases of the process and some relationships seemed to exist within the phases (see Figure 3). Proposing those relationships ties the process of online

value destruction into a proposed conceptual framework that the current study contributes by presenting it as a suggested representation of how the findings could be tested in future research. This sets up a framework for future research to build on. Several contributions within the proposed conceptual model of online value destruction are discussed below.

1- Identifying drivers and forms of online value destruction

In addressing one of the objectives of this study, which was to identify online value destruction drivers, the current study identifies three drivers of online value destruction in the consumers' sphere (see Sections 5.2.1 perceived negative experience, 5.2.2 emotions and 5.2.3 seeking well-being). This adds to the antecedents examined by previous research, which mostly focused on service-related antecedents (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Järvi *et al.*, 2018; Kashif and Zarkada, 2015; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Sthapit, 2019; Sthapit and Björk, 2019; Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto, 2019; Vafeas *et al.*, 2016). However, an important contribution here is proposing linearity in the way that those drivers are connected and are not mutually exclusive as implied by most literature on value destruction in service-dominant logic. The current study is therefore contributing to knowledge by proposing a new classification of direct and indirect drivers of online value-destroying behaviour based on the idea of linearity in their occurrence.

Additionally, in addressing how value is destroyed online, this study contributes to research on value destruction by identifying forms of online value destruction between interacting consumers on third-party websites. Previous research identified value-creating and -destroying practices online (Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017). However, the current study includes the context-relevant forms of online value destruction in the current literature, in addition to two new forms of online value-destroying behaviour (warning and exposing) in the context of consumer-to-consumer interactions. Those two forms are new to online value destruction literature, although they were previously identified in research on other types of negative online consumer behaviour (Azer and Alexander, 2018; Nam *et al.*, 2018; Wetzer *et al.*, 2007; Zhang *et al.*, 2018). Nevertheless, those studies mostly focused on the behaviour itself and overlooked value-destroying potential and were accordingly classified as negative consumer behaviours. Moreover, the proposed conceptual model (Figure 3) suggests that there could be

a relationship between the type of well-being pursued and the forms of online value-destroying behaviour. Consumers seeking others' well-being can engage in any of the four forms of online value destruction, while consumers seeking only their own well-being may only create exposing or evaluating posts.

Furthermore, the current study positions those forms of online value destruction within a more comprehensive process of online value destruction. In the process, those forms play a significant role by demonstrating the way consumers transform their negative or value-destroying experiences into a practice that communicates something and serves a certain purpose in the context of consumer-to-consumer interactions online. The current study presents those forms as an embodiment of the consumer's emotional and cognitive expressions into the digital world to become the visible part of the process that readers engage with, and hence, it is the touchpoint between consumers and readers on the digital platform. Accordingly, examining the value-destroying aspect of negative consumer behaviour adds a novel perspective to current knowledge by reflecting how different forms of negative consumer behaviour are critical in value destruction, because the level of value destruction is highly dependent on the content presentation and how readers perceive it.

2- Revealing intervening factors for online value destruction

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the current study is the first to identify intervening factors or conditions (perception and prior experience) for value destruction. They are cognitive factors that are created by consumers to cope with increased amounts of brand-related content online, and the increase in fake brand-related content that has come with the growing trend of consumer-to-consumer experience-sharing behaviour. Those intervening factors present themselves due to the online context studied and the nature of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction. This is because it is not based on readers' direct experiences with the business but their judgement of the negative content using their perception and prior experience to assess how convincing it is for them. The identification of those factors also contributes to recognising that consumer-to-consumer online value destruction is more challenging than consumer-provider value destruction because it is indirect and must pass through the readers' cognitive filters. They also help illuminate how consumer-to-consumer online

value destruction works and hence, gives a clearer and more detailed understanding of how value can be destroyed online between consumers. In addition, by proposing potential intervening factors, the current study also suggests potential connections where those intervening factors link online value-destroying behaviour with readers' responses and the consequences of online value destruction (see Figure 3).

3- Identifying types of consumer responses to and consequences of online value-destroying content

The current study also contributes to the existing literature by identifying different types of consumer responses (enquiry, gratitude, helping, criticising, defending and supporting) to online value-destructive content. Considering readers' responses was an essential aspect for advancing understanding of the impact that this negative content has on readers. More precisely, this helped reveal the consequences of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction and more importantly sheds light on the concept of consumer collegiality by showing consumers' solidarity and care for each other.

Additionally, the current study identifies consumer-based consequences for online value destruction by examining the cognitive, emotional and behavioural effects the destructive content has on the consumer once it passes from the cognitive filters. Examining consequences was the best way to show that value was destroyed in the process and how was it destroyed. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the current study is the first to identify consequences to value destruction, especially in the online context. Existing research mostly focuses on value destruction as the consequence of interactions (for example, Camilleri and Neuhofer, 2017; Järvi *et al.*, 2018). This study however, shows that value destruction also has consequences for consumers and accordingly businesses. This therefore contributes to the value destruction literature by identifying cognitive, emotional and behavioural consequences of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction. This reveals the ways in which consumers can be affected by online value-destroying content without directly interacting with the business, which presents an additional perspective to the extant research that mostly covers value destruction from direct business interaction.

7.4 Practical Implications and Recommendations

By introducing the concept of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction, this research provides businesses with an understanding of the possibility for consumers to experience online value destruction without having a direct experience of their own. An important contribution that this study makes is in demonstrating that the future of consumer communications is online. Businesses need to acknowledge this and accordingly adjust their consumer handling strategies, especially in handling negative consumer behaviour that can become destructive to value. Generally, the current study contributes by enabling practitioners to better understand consumers' perspective on value destruction. This enables them to deal with online value destruction, reduce it, control it and maybe even prevent it or its consequences. Another important aspect of this research for practitioners is giving them a better understanding of the power of using social media and review sites as communication tools among consumers and the possible impact of value-destroying behaviour that has become normalised and is beyond the organisation's control. Additionally, based on the new insights this study offers into the nature of online value destruction, managers can anticipate problems and deal with them appropriately (Järvi *et al.*, 2018). The following section sets out the implications and recommendations for business practice and strategies using the proposed process of online value destruction.

7.4.1 Pre-emptive Strategy in Online Value Destruction

Instead of dealing with online value destruction and its consequences, businesses should aim to prevent or mitigate its occurrence in the first place and understanding online value destruction drivers may help them do so (Järvi *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, the current study recommends a broad, pre-emptive strategy, where the main aim is to try to prevent consumers from engaging in online value-destroying behaviour. However, it is noteworthy that online value destruction is inevitable because of the highly subjective nature of consumer perceptions, and a pre-emptive strategy will more likely mitigate its occurrence and effects. Pre-online value destruction happens when the business still has the consumer in the joint sphere and the destruction of value is still contained and limited to one

consumer. Therefore, interactions and issue handling are critical for the kind of experience consumers will take to their own sphere. Identifying and understanding the drivers of online value-destroying behaviour is essential for implementing a pre-emptive strategy. Accordingly, three business tactics are recommended. First, businesses should work on the perceived consumer experience. Second, they should manage consumer emotions when there has been a negatively perceived experience. Third, they should direct well-being-seeking behaviour towards the business's platforms.

The current study shows how a positive consumer experience can aid in consumer immunity to online value destruction caused by exposure to others' experiences. Therefore, positive consumer experiences should be considered a strong weapon against consumer-to-consumer online value destruction because they make consumers less susceptible to it. It is therefore recommended that businesses work on the consumer experience and try to ensure that consumers positively perceive their experience with them. This also requires that businesses manage consumer expectations by creating appropriate value propositions that can be met, and hence avoid disappointment (Smith, 2013). However, working on delivering a positive experience does not guarantee that service failures will not occur (Svari *et al.*, 2011). Businesses should therefore also invest in creating value recovery efforts such as compensation or proper apologies that can help mitigate value destruction when service failure occurs.

Understanding the role of emotions in online value destruction reflects the importance of managing consumer emotions at this stage, especially to prevent online value destruction. Understanding the various emotions emerging from a perceived negative experience is also important for creating appropriate company responses to different situations (Svari *et al.*, 2011). It is also noteworthy that when it comes to preventing online value destruction the speed at which a problem is attended to is more critical than solving it. Showing care and seriousness about consumers' problems gives them reassurance that a resolution can be reached and accordingly, a better perception of the company (del Río-Lanza *et al.*, 2009). Businesses should also keep the consumer informed by communicating to them that the problem is being resolved. Businesses should also ensure that consumer service personnel are empowered and competent and have

enough authority to offer compensation which will contain consumer problems, and not let things escalate to the level where the consumer wants to harm the business. Even if the problem cannot be resolved, the attention and care manifested during the process can calm the consumer down, and the fact that the business cares about the issue but the problem is impossible to solve should be communicated.

Consumers expressed the opinion that sometimes engaging in online value destruction was their last resort after exploiting other ways to contact the business and resolve a problem. It is therefore recommended for businesses to open communication with consumers and give them a fast, convenient and reliable form of communication and problem-handling system. When they have this, consumers can seek their own well-being by going to the business rather than resorting to social media to get their attention. This may aid in the containment of online value-destroying behaviour and reduce its spread to other consumers.

7.4.2 Handling Strategies in Online Value Destruction Engagement

The consumer at this point has already taken value destruction into the online context by creating and sharing negative brand-related content for others to engage with. There are several ways for the business to deal with this. The current study recommends several approaches depending on the outcome of the business assessment to the situation. However, the overarching strategy at this point is mitigating the impact of online value destruction. Strategies in this part will be directed towards the main consumer with the problem as well as the readers engaging with the content.

Assessing Destruction Potential

Generally, to be able to handle and mitigate online value destruction between consumers, businesses need to start by implementing an effective social listening strategy to monitor and analyse consumers' feedback, brand mentions, discussions and brand-related content on social media. In addition, it is also important to constantly monitor the relevant review aggregators that can contain reviews and feedback for their brand. However, managers might have some resource constraints such as budget, staff and time, which may not allow them to monitor

all consumer-created pages and review aggregators. It is therefore recommended that they select the most relevant and active ones using Kozinets's (2010) website selection guidelines for netnography. Many businesses are also concerned with fake negative content online. The current study's findings show that it does not matter if the content is fake or not. What matters most is readers' perception of it, and whether they are convinced and affected by it. This is what businesses should be concerned about when it comes to online value destruction between consumers. Businesses then need to assess the destructive potential of negative content to prioritise their responses and handling of issues online.

The current study's findings provide some consumer-related insights that can be used as guidelines for businesses to know what to look for to assess negative content from the consumers' perspective. This study proposes that readers assess the content they engage with in terms of perceived credibility, perceived risk and prior experience. Although these factors are highly subjective, they can still help identify content with higher potential for online value destruction. According to the findings, some sources appear to be more credible than others and therefore, companies should assess the source credibility just as consumers do. They can do so by assessing the website or platform in terms of number of users, popularity and engagement. The reviewer's profile can also be assessed in terms of their number of followers, the content of their other written reviews if any. Businesses can also assess the genuineness of the consumer profile by looking at things like the username, profile picture and general activity.

The business should also analyse the quality of the review itself in terms of detail and wording, because the quality adds to its credibility. Also, the presence of any evidence from the reviewer about the problem, whether real or fake, is threatening to the company because it is convincing for readers. Additionally, the company should analyse review engagement through response-related aspects such as the number of likes, interactions and responses agreeing with and supporting the content. The less attention the negative post or review is getting, whether positive or negative, the better. This will give a hint of the destructive potential of the content. Another important aspect is the risk presented in the content itself and the severity of the issue it addresses. Although this is highly

subjective, the findings show that there are issues consumers associate more risk with, such as health, safety, fraud, hygiene and those involving children.

Handling and Engaging with Online Value Destruction

Following a situation and destruction potential assessment, companies sometimes need to engage with online value-destroying content and most third-party websites allow businesses to respond to consumer-created content. It is recommended that companies provide a tailored response to each consumer that addresses the specific problems raised in their post or review. In addition to that, the speed of response on popular social media pages and review aggregators is important. It reflects care for consumers and supports the brand in front of potential consumers. Even if the response does not involve a resolution to the situation yet, it is sometimes calming and satisfying for consumers to feel from the consumer service representative's quick response that there is willingness and ability to solve the problem.

The current study's findings reveal four forms of online value-destroying behaviour and accordingly suggests a different approach for handling and responding based on the type of post created, because as mentioned above, tailored responses are appreciated more. Posts that involve consumers exposing the business are the most aggressive and may seem irreparable. In this case, it is recommended that businesses show empathy and respond with an appropriate apology. Businesses should also leave a window for consumer value recovery by offering the consumer a resolution or compensation, because as counterintuitive as it may seem, there is also a chance that this consumer wants to get the attention of the business and is engaging in this aggressive behaviour to get it to solve the problem. It is important that if the post contains false accusations, the business responds by defending itself and clarifying the misunderstanding to discredit the reviewer.

Posts involving warning and recommending against the brand or alternative brands are more others-directed. Consumers creating such posts no longer seem concerned with the business and just want to inform other consumers and guide them and therefore, they may not even be expecting a response. Warning and recommending are less aggressive than exposing posts, but are harder to deal with

because there is a greater chance that the business has lost this consumer to a competitor. Moreover, these posts are also more convincing for readers because they show less prejudice towards the business and more concern for readers. Accordingly, businesses should respond empathetically by acknowledging the expressed dissatisfaction with an apology for the unpleasant experience and provide some evidence to reassure readers that future experiences with the company will not involve similar problems. This can decrease potential risk and uncertainty that accompany negative brand-related content. The strategy here is to try to minimise the value destruction impact or reduce the effect of the negative content on potential consumers who do not have any experience with the business. Opening room for a conversation in those cases can rebuild trust and help recover value for readers.

Evaluating posts are the most useful kind of online value-destroying behaviour for businesses. The business strategy towards those kinds of posts should be value recovery and involve embracing them to harvest constructive criticism for improvement and future innovations. Responses can involve thanking the consumer for taking the time to provide a detailed evaluation and communicating that their opinion and comments will be considered for business improvement. Evaluative posts that take the form of a complaint should be responded to by expressing willingness to help by finding a solution to the problem, or perhaps compensation if the problem cannot be solved, with a proper explanation why. This is because consumers airing their complaints online might be seeking attention and quick resolution or were unable to reach the business in another way. Therefore, they should be dealt with as consumers with complaints rather than as value-destructive content that needs to be eliminated.

General Online Practice Recommendations

In addition to content-specific strategies and responses, the findings of the current study also help provide businesses with recommendations to guide their general online practices. Consumers normalise engaging in negative online behaviour, and having only positive reviews appears suspicious and unnatural in the online context. However, businesses sometimes deal with negative online content by deleting negative reviews and posts from their official brand pages or

websites. Some businesses have also disabled the reviews on their social media pages, but the current study proposes they should do otherwise. This of course comes with exceptions, where businesses have the right to delete reviews that contain offensive language, irrelevant or inappropriate content. Keeping the reviews, complaints and negative brand-related content in one place will make it easier for the business to monitor and respond. Censoring and silencing consumers can be more destructive (Dineva *et al.*, 2017) and push them to use a different platform or page and risk more spreading because they are going to write a review anyway. Keeping track of different platforms and pages is harder for businesses and requires more resources. Additionally, potential consumers may appreciate content that shows them how the company handles consumer problems, because it reassures them and helps reduce risks associated with uncertainty. Therefore, this offers a value recovery medium for businesses where they can provide potential consumers with the reassurance they need by showcasing care and willingness to help, consumer handling techniques and ability to resolve issues and stand behind the brand.

Based on the concept of consumer collegiality, consumers are also looking for each other's support, not just that of the business. Reviewers seek support and help from other experienced consumers and many report they felt better when others responded to their reviews. Also, readers seek the experience of reviewers for uncertainty and risk minimisation. Therefore, the current study proposes that it is also useful for businesses to seek platforms that better reflect the consumer sphere, which involves the business and other consumer engagement as well. Seeing the full picture also reduces uncertainty for the business because this gives them access to what is going on in the consumer sphere that was beyond their control. More specifically, seeing other consumers' responses to negative and positive content gives businesses a hint about how other users are being affected by the content and gives them a chance to interact with those who are enquiring, disappointed, doubtful or not buying.

Moreover, disabling comments on reviews deprives the business of the chance of having other satisfied consumers defend them, which is perceived as more credible than the business defending itself. Businesses can also benefit from consumers supporting the positive content as well. Open platforms increase both

positive and negative content, not just the negative. Moreover, the data and insights that the business gets from this is more valuable than dodging a few negative comments. If consumers do not express themselves on this platform, they will find another. Businesses should therefore allow consumer interactions on their pages and sites because it is a gateway to consumer feedback and perception of the company.

Furthermore, this study also proposes that businesses would benefit from a unified strong interactive platform that gives the openness of amazon.com but for all sorts of products and services. Google reviews is the closest model for providing this, and would be ideal if they adjusted their strategy to allow organic interactions and comments from readers. In doing so, they could be more useful and reliable than Facebook and other social networking sites because they are a unified source. Social networking sites have the inconvenience of having too many sources, where information can be scattered with thousands of unofficial brand pages, anti-brand communities and consumer-created groups and discussions that activate and deactivate every day. It is therefore suggested that Google reviews should give consumers the tools to fully experience consumer collegiality and not limit responses only to business, as this could be a game-changer for businesses, consumers and accordingly, beneficial for Google. Google has the capacity, reach and technologies in terms of locations and translations that could help create the strongest review aggregator. Businesses could benefit from this because having a reliable and relatively unified source could decrease the pressure on businesses of social listening activities if such a site eventually drew consumers away from other sources.

An important perspective that the current study offers to business by introducing the concept of consumer collegiality is that consumer-to-consumer interactions are mostly built upon and guided by mutual well-being. Consumers refuse and criticise any behaviour that contradicts that, whether it comes from a consumer or a business. Therefore, businesses should not engage in practices that may tamper with this organic consumer system, and should acknowledge that they are in the consumer sphere, not vice versa. It is therefore recommended that businesses cultivate this system and use it to contribute to the well-being of their consumers and themselves. Instead of sponsoring positive reviews for example,

businesses can encourage positive content by engaging with positive content as well and thanking and encouraging consumers who write positive reviews.

Businesses can also encourage consumers who respond to negative posts on their behalf by engaging with them, thanking them and encouraging their behaviour and perhaps putting them into a special loyalty programme. Those genuine responses from consumers are a more credible testimonial for potential consumers and have more potential for value recovery. From the consumers' perspective, these are more organic ways to promote positive content and value recovery without sponsoring or engaging in suspicious behaviour.

Moreover, consumer experience is key here because the more loyal and satisfied consumers the business has, the more likely it is that someone will advocate and speak on their behalf. The findings of the current study show that consumers with positive experiences with the brand sometimes engage in value recovery when they respond to negative online content by defending the business or even helping the reviewer with the problem, while consumers with negative experiences can also engage in value destruction by supporting the negative content or criticising the business even more. Accordingly, investing in positively perceived consumer experience is also important for handling online value destruction, not just for preventing it.

7.4.3 Damage Control Strategy for Post-Online Value Destruction

This study proposes ways for business to minimise the impact of online value destruction on readers as much as possible, and engage in value-creating strategies to aid in value recovery. The main challenge with this stage is that it is very hard for the business to determine the amount of destruction and the number of readers affected, because most of the users engaging online are silent and are only 'lurking' (Madupu and Cooley, 2010; Takahashi, *et al.*, 2007) and do not actively engage with content. Unlike consumers who interact by leaving a comment or even a like, it is impossible to tell how it affected those silent readers who just engage by looking at content without reacting to it on the given online platform. This is what makes consumer-to-consumer online value destruction more challenging for businesses, because it occurs out of their sphere and is

relatively unmeasurable and uncontrollable.

The current study therefore recommends that businesses monitor comments and responses to negative content to make full use of the data already available for them online and help give a rough estimate of value destruction and what consequences they are potentially facing. For example, they should pay attention to comments involving consumer gratitude towards the reviewer and consumer enquiry because they show interest. Also, readers explicitly mentioning that they will not buy, criticising the business, expressing anger and disappointment towards the business, and most importantly those who express the intention to share negative content with others, because these comments reflect influence and intentions. The current study therefore recommends that businesses respond to some of the readers who engage with the negative content by leaving comments.

More specifically, businesses can answer some consumer enquiries that are seeking brand-related information. This will open a window for interaction with consumers and create or recover value by showing care. Moreover, businesses can communicate by apologising and expressing empathy with those who share emotions like disappointment and anger towards the brand and encourage them to try the product or service for themselves by promising a positive experience and providing evidence for it. Businesses can also respond to consumers who express intentions to delay or change a purchase decision by acknowledging their concerns, provide reassurance by standing behind the brand and perhaps encourage them by offering a discount, a sample or a free trial depending on the type of business offering. However, businesses should beware of over-engaging because this may backfire and hence, they always need to make sure that the content of their response reflects support and confidence in the brand rather than desperation. They also need to make sure their responses add value and remember that not all comments require responses from them (even if negative) to avoid being perceived as intrusive and provocative and trigger more value destruction than creation.

The current study proposes cognitive, emotional and behavioural consequences to value destruction. Recognising those consequences can help businesses understand the risk and value destruction from the consumers' perspective. Those consumer-centric consequences can translate into business-related consequences

depending on how they affect the business. For example, doubt affects brand trust, negative image and sharing affect brand online reputation, usage affects brand loyalty, and purchase behaviour affects sales revenues. By understanding the consequences of online value destruction and their equivalent business implications, this study suggests that they can be used as guidelines to provide more focus for business strategies aimed at mitigating the impact of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction. Accordingly, this study recommends that businesses set adequate value-creating and -recovering strategies for potential consumers who might have experienced online value destruction. For example, businesses may need reputation and image management to improve the damaged brand image. They may also need sales boosting and promoting strategies to make up for lost sales and to re-attract delayed purchases. Businesses can also engage in consumer reassurance practices for readers who are doubting the brand or disappointed in it.

Overall, by understanding the types of consequences that they are facing, businesses can tailor their communications accordingly and recover value in the areas where value was destroyed, such as brand trust, loyalty, revenues or reputation.

7.5 Limitations

The current study acknowledges some limitations despite the contributions and implications mentioned above. This section addresses the limitations of the current study in addition to the methodological limitations (covered in Sections 4.2.3, 4.4.3 and 4.5.1). These limitations mainly concern the scope of this study and the online context as a medium of a highly dynamic nature.

The current study only addresses text-based communications between consumers and there are other aspects of the context such as videos and images that can potentially destroy value as well. Another aspect is that by interviewing and observing those consumers who chose to share their negative experience online and engage in online value-destroying behaviour, the current study does not include information on those consumers who did not engage in online value

destruction. Although experience sharing among consumers is becoming more popular and is being normalised, there are still consumers who choose not to engage in such behaviour and may have other types of online or offline coping or well-being-seeking behaviour that is not necessarily online value-destroying behaviour. In addition to that, the current study only accounts for the responses of active readers who expressed their opinions, intentions and emotions while knowing that they only represent a percentage of the silent majority of consumers and may not fully reflect all the potential consequences and reactions to online value-destroying content. By focusing on value destruction in the online context, this study may overlook other offline behaviours that are related to online value-destroying behaviours, such as engaging in negative word-of-mouth with close friends and family members (Smith, 2013).

Moreover, this study focuses on cognitive, emotional and behavioural drivers of online value-destroying behaviour. However, there may be some other consumer characteristics that can also affect online value-destroying behaviour, such as demographics, cultural differences, personality, attitude towards value-destroying behaviour that are not accounted for in this study due to the capabilities of the methods employed. Furthermore, this study does not take an industry-specific outlook on online value destruction, but the findings hint towards potential differences between industries regarding the potential and susceptibility towards online value destruction. For example, consumers mentioned that there are some products and services they would not take risks with if they read any negative content about them, such as healthcare, beauty and cosmetics, food and beverages and children's products and services.

Another limitation is associated with the online context of the study. The internet in general is a dynamic field that comes with very high levels of innovation and change. Third-party websites such as social networking sites and review aggregators have undergone many changes throughout the course of the current study and are expected to continue to evolve and change. Changes in trends, security, terms and conditions, profiles, news feed can change the type of consumer behaviours on such media. Younger generations' reviewing behaviour seems to be moving towards more video content rather than text-based content for example, and the top YouTube earner for 2019 according to Forbes was a child

reviewing toys in a trend called “unboxing” (Berg, 2019). Researchers adopting internet-based research and examining social and consumer behaviour in the online context should acknowledge its dynamic nature, accept the limitations that come with it, and accordingly adjust their methodologies and approaches.

7.6 Future Research

This study’s findings, contributions and limitations offer several opportunities for future research to build on and further expand the current knowledge of online value destruction. It identifies a process for online value destruction and constructs a speculative conceptual model that proposes several relationships connecting themes throughout the process of online value destruction. Therefore, the first recommendation for future research is to statistically analyse and test the relationship propositions within the conceptual model using large samples to increase generalisability. More specifically, future research could test linearity in online value destruction drivers. It can also test if there is a relationship between the type of well-being and the forms of online value destroying behaviour as the model proposes. Moreover, the moderating role of perceived risk, perceived credibility and prior experience between the online value-destroying content and its impact on consumers could also be examined. Furthermore, the relationship between those intervening factors and consequences could also be tested.

A second recommendation is for future research to explore some relationships that the model does not explicitly propose, such as the possibility that specific emotions can be linked to a specific type of well-being-seeking, for example, if anger is more associated with seeking one’s own well-being through revenge and harming the business. This can also shed light on the possible indirect links between emotions and forms of online value-destroying behaviour, for example, linking anger indirectly to exposing. In addition to that, research might also explore the possibility of linearity in the cognitive, emotional and behavioural consequences of online value destruction, since it is proposed for the drivers. If some specific consequences are linked to others, this could help businesses better understand the potential impact of online value destruction on consumers and accordingly the business.

Moreover, the current study also proposed that online consumer-to-consumer communications are multi-actor and iterative in nature where readers share and respond to reviewers and businesses and those responses can aid in value creation, recovery or further value destruction. Future research can therefore examine the online value destruction process as potentially iterative rather than just a linear process as the model suggests. This can help illuminate and integrate the value recovery and creation elements within the online value destruction process.

Third, research could examine online value destruction in specific industries and sectors and explore industry-specific aspects of the process and the implications associated with it. The current study takes a more general outlook when it comes to industries due to the novelty of the concept in the online context. Fourth, since the current study focuses only on text-based reviews, future research could replicate the study on other growing social media platforms that contain reviews, such as YouTube and Instagram, hence exploring video and image-based online value-destroying behaviour. Additionally, differences between consumer-to-consumer online value-destroying behaviour could be compared between different platforms to investigate if one platform particularly fosters more online value-destroying behaviour.

The current study explores and identifies experience-related drivers to online value-destroying behaviour. Thus, an additional interesting aspect to explore is the presence of other consumer-based factors that may encourage online value-destroying behaviour such as personality, culture and demographics, like age and gender. Future research could also examine the role of business engagement and responses to online value-destroying behaviour in value recovery and further value creation to enhance business strategies towards online value destruction. Moreover, further research needs to be done on the intentionality of online value destruction behaviour and its associated consumer expectations from the business to guide business strategies in analysing and dealing with different types of content.

Finally, research can also look more closely into the positive side of online value destroying behaviour and examine the dynamics of what the current study referred to as the consumer information-based economy under the concept of

consumer collegiality. In addition, consumer-to-consumer incivility can also be examined as a potential online value destroying behaviour in consumer-to-consumer interactions within their realm. This can include behaviours such as trolling, shaming and cyberbullying where consumer deliberately harass and provoke others online through expressing hatred and hostility (Bacile *et al.*, 2018). Those behaviours work against the idea of consumer collegiality in online communities and spaces, which is why examining them can be important in demonstrating how can consumers destroy the value of online communities built on collegial activities and consumer-to-consumer mutual support as well as value creation through sharing information.

7.7 Chapter Summary

This thesis has explored online value destruction in consumer-to-consumer online interactions. This chapter has provided several contributions, implications and recommendations for future research and practice. By merging together three research streams, the current study has identified the drivers, forms, consequences and intervening factors for online value destruction. The main contribution is in the conceptualisation of consumer-to-consumer online value destruction and the proposal that there is a positive element within the process of value destruction that is built on consumer collegiality and well-being. Other key contributions are in the development of a process for online value destruction and the revelation of the roles of the consumer engagement dimensions (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) within the process of online value destruction. This thesis has also offered a set of strategies and practices for managers to help mitigate, deal with and control online value destruction, acknowledged the limitations of the study as well as suggesting future research avenues.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide and Schedule

Introduction

The interview starts with informing the participant of the purpose of the research and the ethical criteria applied as well as establishment of rapport.

Part 1- The experience

Q1. Can you think of a time when as a customer, you had a dissatisfying experience with an organization that you shared it on social media?

Q2. Which organization was it?

Q3. Can you tell me about it? (the participant can describe in their own time and words)

Part 2- Further questions for clarification

Q4. Over what period of time did this happen?

Q5. What specific circumstances made you share this on social media? (ask which SNS in case the participant doesn't mention)

Q6. What do you expect to gain from this?

Q7. What else did you do about your issue other than the social media post?

- a) Did you tell people (friends/family) about it?
- b) Did you contact the organization to complaint?
- c) Did you boycott this organization?

Q8. How did you feel about the experience?

- a) During

b) After

Q9. How did you feel about sharing this on social media?

- a) During
- b) Later/after

Q10. What thoughts came to your mind when you were sharing the issue on social media?

- a) Did you think you were getting back at the organization and this will make things even?
- b) Did you think of boycotting them or make them lose other customers?
- c) Did you think this will expose them by letting everyone know about the incident?

Q11. Did anything unexpected happen after?

- a) Someone contacted you from the organization
- b) Your post went viral
- c) Your friends and followers overreacted /or did not react at all

Q12. Do you come across posts like this on social media?

Q13. What do you feel/think about them?

Q14. Do they affect you in any way? (feelings, thoughts and behaviours) / OR if you come across a negative post just like the one you shared, what do you do about it? Why?

Part 3- Review Aggregators. This part starts by explaining what are review aggregators to the participant.

Q15. What do you think of review aggregators? Do you ever look at reviews? When/Where?

Q16. Have you ever taken a decision based on reviews? Can reviews change your mind about something?

Q17. Do you remember a time when you came across many negative reviews on something?

Q18. How did this affect you? Did you think differently about it? Did you feel differently about it? How?

Q19. What did you do after reading those reviews?

- a) Did you ignore them?
- b) Did they change your mind or made you refrain from something?
- c) Did you share what you read in the review with others?

Q20. Have you ever given a negative review about something? Why? Can you tell me about it?

Personal information

Gender: Age Band:

Source for parts 1 and 2: Smith, A., 2013. The value co-destruction process: a customer resource perspective. *European Journal of Marketing*, 47(11/12) pp. 1889-1909.

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet



University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

Exploring Value Destruction in Online Engagement Experiences: A Customer-Based Perspective

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

This study aims to explore value destruction in the online customer engagement experiences with brands. It will therefore explore the possible problems with the customers' online engagement experiences with brands and other consumers that can diminish or reduce the value for them. The study will also propose possible consequences of the value destruction between customers in the digital context. If you decide to participate in this research you will be asked to take part in a 20-30-minute interview over Skype. You are also free to withdraw from the interview at any time without any consequences and the data you provided will not be used in the research.

Your personal information will be kept confidential and will not be revealed in the research. Each participant will be allocated a code or an ID that only the researcher can understand. All the data will be kept safe and only the researcher will have access to it with a password.

Statement on confidentiality as required by University Ethics Committee:

Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. If this was the case we would inform you of any decisions that might limit your confidentiality.

Data Usage:

Data collected from the interviews will be used during the research and will be stored safely for possible use in further research. It will be produced in the form of a PhD thesis and will be used in journal or conference publications.

Further Details:

I am a sponsored PhD student by the Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport however this organization is not interested in the data or the findings of the research itself.

Contact Details:

If you have any questions, or concerns and need clarifications please feel free to contact the researcher Noha Refaie at the following email n.refaie.1@research.gla.ac.uk

If you have concerns or complaints regarding the conduct of the project please contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

_____End of Participant Information Sheet_____

Appendix 3: Consent Form



University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: Exploring Value Destruction in customer online engagement: a customer based perspective

Name of Researcher: Noha Ismail Ahmed Refaie

I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement/Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent / do not consent to interviews being audio-recorded.

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research
- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
- I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

I agree to take part in this research study

I do not agree to take part in this research study

Name of Participant Signature

Date

Name of Researcher Signature

Date

..... End of consent form

Appendix 4: Ethical Approval Letter

24/04/2018

Dear Noha Ismail Ahmed Refaie

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: Exploring Value Destruction in Online Engagement Experiences: A Customer-Based Perspective

Application No: 400170125 «Principal_Investigator»

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 24/04/18
- Project end date: 12/02/20
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences. Permissions you must provide are shown in the *College Ethics Review Feedback* document that has been sent to you.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research: (https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf)
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The *Request for Amendments to an Approved Application* form should be used:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/>

Yours sincerely,

Dr Muir Houston
College Ethics Officer

Appendix 5: Coding Start List

Research Objectives

1. To understand the reasons that drive consumers to engage in online value destroying behaviour.
2. To examine how is value destroyed during consumer-to-consumer online interactions.
3. To explore which online engagement dimensions (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) are active when consumers engage in online value destruction.
4. To define online value destruction in consumer-to-consumer online engagement experiences.
5. To explore the consequences of online value destruction.

Initial Coding Frame/Starting List

Camilleri and Neuhofer (2017) adopted the value destruction frame from Echeverri and Skálén (2011). The rest of the codes are based on the research objectives.

Label	Code	Research Objective
Online Value Destruction	OVD	1,2,4
Expressing Feelings	OVD-EF	1,2,4
Evaluating Reviewed Object	OVD-ERO	1,2,4
Helping and Interacting	OVD-HI	1,2,4
Recommending	OVD-REC	1,2,4
Engagement	ENG	3
Cognitive	COG	3
Emotional	EMO	3
Behavioural	BEH	3
Consequences	CON	5

Appendix 6: Sample of Interview Transcript

Interview 12 Transcript

Interviewer: Can you think of a time when as a customer, you had a dissatisfying experience with an organization that you shared it on social media?

Int12: Yes, I can remember three incidents actually.

Interviewer: Ok, can you tell me about the most significant of them or the most interesting or whichever you like?

Int12: I was staying at a hotel in Bali, and my hotel safe was stolen and a couple of hundred dollars were taken from the safe some jewellery so I went... I didn't realize until I was at the airport, so, I called the hotel, I complained, they're like no, nobody entered your room, your safe is intact, you must've dropped the money somewhere, but I was sure that I had left the money in the safe, because this was like my emergency stash and so after chasing the hotel for I think around week, with no avail, I had to take it to social media so, I went on trip advisor, I went on booking, I went on all the major travel groups warning people not to stay at the Fashion Pluvin hotel because apparently it's not safe, and they wouldn't respond to any of my social media posts or complaints, they wouldn't respond to my emails, and after making it clear that I'm going to take it to social media, they didn't even bother reprimanding the incident nor compensating me in anyway until maybe a month later, they emailed me and they told me that they're happy to give me a free night on my next visit (that's not going to happen) and that was that, that was the one with the hotel.

I also had a bad experience with a local piercer, where I had gotten my collarbone pierced, at a piercing tattoo studio in Alexandria, and I had to chase her for I don't know how long because my piercing got infected and she wouldn't help me, she wouldn't rebook me and the problem is the piercing studio only operated upon bookings so I couldn't just go there, I had to call her and book an appointment and she wouldn't rebook me nor help me and I had to take out the piercing after being severely infected, I posted online, I posted on my own personal Facebook, I gave them a bad review on their page that has gotten quite a few likes as well, and again no, I haven't received any... I don't think it was worth the hassle of

posting online but I just felt like I needed to warn people not to or at least reconsider before picking this piercing studio

Interviewer: Over what period of time did this happen?

Int12: I usually take to Facebook straightaway, within a couple of days or maybe three four days because that's when you're most angry and that's when you really know how to put your words you know.

Interviewer: What specific circumstances made you share this on social media?

Int12: 100% of the time it's a bad response or no response at all from the person I'm complaining to.

Interviewer: What did you expect to happen? what did you expect to gain out of this?

Int12: So, with the hotel incident, I expected at least some sort of compensation or at least they'd say we checked surveillance and nobody entered the room, they were totally negative or passive or not even taking any action at all. With the piercing studio, I was hoping that she would book me an appointment to get it checked you know, because it was really infected but still she never even replied altogether. So I had to pull it out myself, I wanted to book an appointment to take it out because it's a collarbone piercing and you can't just snatch it out, it's not like an ear piercing so, somebody needs to take it out, I had to go to this very weird underground shop with the weirdest 40 year old virgin and I had to snatch it out of my chest in a very bad way so it was such a bad experience so I was hoping to get some sort of first of all, is to get a positive action either a compensation, refund, actually my most recent bad experience with customer service was yesterday with amazon.

Interviewer: Ok, what happened?

Int12: My husband ordered a helmet online to his hotel in the US, and the helmet was never received. And after chasing them for almost every other day, for the past week. They kept telling me you have to fill an online police form. The online police form, you can't fill it unless you're a citizen, and I keep telling them that and they just wouldn't understand until just yesterday, one of them was like yea you're right, you can't really do that, alright I'll refund you the 100\$, I'll give

them to you and you are right, I also checked with the courier and the helmet was never delivered anyway. This was after a week and after speaking to at least 10 customer service agents so basically the first thing that I usually expect from doing something like that is a) to get a compensation of some sort, b) is to warn others not to use this service, not to harm the business but just to warn them not to spend their money on something that is not worth their money or their time or their effort or whatever. It's like doing charity, it's like helping people.

Interviewer: What else did you do about the issue other than the social media post?

Int12: Yes, I usually don't just take it to social media, I usually email the company or email the entity itself, I email them, I tell them where they went wrong, I tell them that I've taken it to social media, I tell them that... most times in amazon when I have a problem with amazon, I am a customer since 2012, so I always tell them that no I'm not going to... actually, its 2007 not 2012. I tell them that I am not going to deal with you again because this is not the customer service that I expect. So, I reach out to them in many ways possible. With the piercer, I gave her a bad review, I texted her on her Facebook page and I texted her privately as well. so, I try to reach out in all the possible ways before or after or during and it's not just social media because sometimes social media is just not enough.

Interviewer: How did you feel about the experience? During and after the incident?

Int12: It makes me very angry. During the incident, I'm usually furious, and then when I rant on social media, it makes me feel a little better because I feel like I've taken some sort of revenge. So that vengeful feeling to a certain extent calms me down, and then when they respond, I remove the review, if they responded in a good way, meaning that if they give me a positive response, or the response I expected, I remove it. Usually I don't turn to social media first, to give them the chance for them to correct their mistake or to provide me the right customer service instead of going and exposing them right away you know what I mean. If they don't, then social media if they give me the response I want I remove the social media review or I write an update or an edit saying ok after all so and so happened, this is how they responded and they refunded me or they reprimanded the problem.

Interviewer: What about your thoughts? While you were sharing this on social media, what thoughts came to your mind what were you thinking?

Int12: As I told you, I feel like I need to tell people about this even if, I am not the type of people who are like share this and expose the company and all that. But the first thought that comes to me is like ok fuckers, I'm going to take revenge, vengeful feelings, vengeful thoughts, that's the first thing. Number two, is that I want to help people seriously because I see a lot of people doing these mistakes. For instance, it was a famous tattoo or piercing studio, for this to happen to someone else, its bad. Same with the hotel, it's a very famous hotel, also, for this to happen to someone else, its bad. So, empathy, vengeance, and angry, these are all the thoughts.

Interviewer: Did anything unexpected happen after you posted?

Int12: In those three incidents, no, but there was this other time I posted a bad review about a certain AC company, York for air conditioning, I bought five ACs from them and all five of them were not working. They were each working differently, one had computer errors and the other one was like an icemaker spitting out ice and I wrote the funniest review so, the unexpected response was the I had people contacting me personally and they're like I was just about to buy the York AC but I didn't, people I don't know they're texting me and they're like I didn't but this AC because a) you're funny, b) I can't believe this happened to you in five, not one but five ACs

Interviewer: Do you come across posts like this on social media?

Int12: Yea all the time.

Interviewer: How do you feel about them?

Int12: If it's a post where I feel it's like "Expose them!!!" and stuff like that, just like the girl for example that was complaining about Gourmet's manager, if it's something like that, I feel like it's silly, get a life. But If I feel like it's an honest review, just like the posts written on the social media pages for example the club, where someone for example was eating there and found pebbles in the food then NO, I take it seriously because I feel like what the hell is this. So, it depends on the way the post is written, and it depends on the size of the issue, how big the

problem is, if it's a stupid issue, I usually don't take it seriously and I just scroll by. But if it is something important like if someone found a cockroach or hair or pebbles in the food then I stop and I read and take it into consideration, it becomes in the back of my mind.

Interviewer: If you come across a negative post just like the one you shared, what do you do about it?

Int12: My friend Dina Shaaban just posted recently about espresso lab in Cairo, the she stumbled on one of the steps and she broke her ankle and she is an athlete, and it really fucked up her ankle and she couldn't train for month and until now she's undergoing physiotherapy and the managers reply was like you weren't looking where you're going it was very silly and I got angry for her, I felt like are you serious? When is this going to stop so I shared it, and Dina is not like my best friend, she's like my friend but she's not my best friend. So, I shared it because I felt that if this happened to me, I would want to really take action, especially that it was something big. But as I told you, if the issue that's being complained about is stupid or small, or in my opinion it is something small, I just like it or I comment and that's it.

Interviewer: What do you think of review aggregators.

Int12: I really like them because, just like Yelp for example, I am a very frequent user of yelp and I use it when I'm abroad, also the same thing with TripAdvisor, most of my hotel bookings are based on extensive research on TripAdvisor. It could be a hotel that took a very low rating, in general on other like for example Agoda, but on TripAdvisor it scored well so, I usually go with, I trust customer reviews, especially customer reviews that are accompanied with pictures so, review aggregators are really beneficial if they, of course if they're honest reviews it shows, so I kind of check the comments if it's a fake account, Chinese accounts, verified users or not, verified buyers so I definitely, reviews are definitely, definitely, a great help.

Interviewer: So, you check the reviewer first...

Int12: Yes definitely, I check the reviewer's profile, make sure if its' an amazon review for example, I go check if it is a verified purchase, I make sure that it is not a sponsored review, or it is not a sponsored product, just to make sure that

this is a good review. And almost 90% of my purchases, are based on reviews. I entered to buy a whitening cream, I bought the one that had higher reviews and not the one my doctor prescribed

Interviewer: Do you remember a time when you came across many negative reviews on something?

Int12: Yes

Interviewer: How did this affect you?

Int12: It put me off, seriously I don't come near the thing that had negative reviews even if it is just 2% or 3% negative reviews

Interviewer: Even if they're few?

Int12: Even if they're few. But I read the negative reviews if the issue in the negative review is something like for example, and I face that a lot in amazon for example, If I am checking a review on amazon and I see the negative review saying for example this product's fit is not good or a problem with delivery or a problem with the quality or so then no, even if they're just three reviews, I don't buy it I stay away. So, again it depends on the quality of the review, what is the complaint about, and where was the negative experience. If it is someone complaining about packaging for example or something of that sort, I ignore. I buy it anyway if I really like it.

Interviewer: What would you do after reading those negative reviews? Do you share them for example?

Int12: No, it's for my decision, unless one of my friends talked in front of me in an outing for example and said or spoke about something, just yesterday we were talking about air pods and stuff, I told her that I read like a research online that air pods, they're starting to link them that they expedite cancer and stuff like that. So, I would share it if a friend of mine wanted to take a certain purchasing decision and I read a negative review on that thing

Interviewer: Does the source of the review matter?

Int12: Yea.

Interviewer: Does the type of the product matter?

Int12: Meaning what?

Interviewer: Meaning that some people for example would get affected if the review is about food or beauty products for example. Does that matter to you?

Int12: It matters as long as it is something that I paid money for, then it matters irrespective of even if it costs one pound because at the end of the day I'm paying that pound by all means so I might as well pay that pound on something that got higher reviews than spending it on something that got a low review. So, it matters even if it is not something serious.

Gender: Female Age: 32

Appendix 7: Examples of Text Files for Amazon Posts Analysis

Screenshot from text file for Amazon product 3, review 85 and responses 1-5:

AP3R85

1.0 out of 5 stars I liked it till it stopped working.

 [Verified Purchase](#)

I liked it when I bought it and I used it once. When trying to use for second time, it wouldn't work. I tried all the settings to no avail. Tried to get a replacement, but now it is too late. I have even purchased extra accessories for the unit. I am very disappointed with the product and with the company. I will not recommend this item, since it stopped working after one time using it.

49 people found this helpful

AP3R85C1

Hello there,

We are sorry to hear your issue with  Please contact our support team at 

We'll try our best to resolve the issue for you.

AP3R85C2

Please follow up with us on how this worked out. Nice that the company contacted you here. Hope it is sincere!

AP3R85C3 In reply to an earlier post

[Report abuse](#)

Yes, it was really good of the company to step up. They have replaced the [units](#) base without any problems. Thank you for your help. 

AP3R85C4

Many thanks for letting us know how the company responded to you. As an Amazon customer, I especially appreciate reviews that follow up the original review, for good or bad. I hope you'll consider updating your review to tell us how your replacement works.

AP3R85C5

I was thinking to buy this product but after reading your review I would rather wait for some more time. Please share your opinion with me.

Many thanks,

Appendix 8: Examples of Text Files for Facebook Posts Analysis

Screenshot from text file for Facebook page 1, reviews 17-18 and responses 1-3:

FB1R17

████████ DOES NOT CARE!!! This has been the worst experience for us. My son's phone was run over by a truck and was of course in pieces. We have insurance and sent everything in to ██████████ as per instructed and paid our deductible.... TWO weeks later... we still have no status and have spoken to approx 8 people from technical support to Customer relations and not one of them can tell us where the phone is and what the status is.... No-one will call us back and we are so frustrated with the lack of care, communication and professionalism. What is going on???? Just beyond disappointed!

FB1R17C1

██████████ did you try turning it off & back on? 🙄🙄

FB1R17C2

██████████ support has been nothing but rude and u helpful, getting a callback is impossible and 3 months later I'm still waiting on a battery label to get a new ██████████ that stopped working after 1 1/2 weeks

FB1R17C3

██████████ sucks. I'm switching everything to Android

FB1R18

██████████ has the worst customer service

FB1R18C1

██████████ I disagree. They answer right away and have spent hours on the phone with me!

FB1R18C2

That's your experience

FB1R18C3

██████████ is right. We spend thousands on these products and they continue to get worse with every generation. It's interesting that ██████████ isn't listening to its constituents. They must think that those of us speaking are just the minority.

Appendix 9: Preliminary Observations Sample

3/12 Mini Cases for Value Destruction

1- Ratings and reviews

Case 1- Movies Ratings and Reviews

Consumers nowadays take movie ratings on websites like IMDB and Rotten Tomatoes very seriously. Before going to the movies many consumers (especially young) check the ratings and reviews that the movie got from other consumers as well as critics and accordingly, they evaluate whether the movie is worth watching in the theatre or just wait for it and get it online. This is even more common in the case when consumers are choosing between two movies to watch or attend, the ratings and reviews become the choice maker.

3- Anti-brand pages

Case 2- Apple Vs. Samsung

There Facebook pages for those who hate Apple and those who hate Samsung brands customers join these pages and share the things they hate about the brand and post. There is more than one page for apple haters such as “Apple Sucks” and “I hate Apple”, in their description they state the following “**Just a bunch of guys devoted to the downfall of Apple**”. This statement is the perfect example for intentional destruction of value online. On the other hand, a similar page about Samsung called “Samsung Sucks” it is less intense in terms of the severity of the content compared to apple but still it contains destructive content. If potential consumers come across any of these pages, there is a very big chance that they will not buy any of their products.

3- Personal social media

Case 3- Facebook Profile Posts

Sometimes when a person is upset about something, he\she would want to share it with others. Consumers tend to express their feelings and thoughts on social media. Many Facebook users use their posts or statuses to share their bad experience with a brand. They would want everyone in their social circle to know about their unpleasant experience. Sometimes they can make a post available to

the public, which means that people from outside their social circle will be able to view their post regarding a specific matter. The point is this is not only about sharing the experience, it is a form of payback or revenge that the consumer does to intentionally harm this brand's image in the eyes of as many people as possible. With the right hashtags and the right number and type of followers, some posts can become viral and cross borders within minutes. An example on this is: recently one of the users of Uber shared a post regarding his dissatisfaction with their service recently. He mentioned that their quality of service is deteriorating and the drivers are not as they used to be. He ended his post by wishing them all the best, he did not tag Uber in the post so they can see it and do something about it. His post however, triggered a stream of comments by others who expressed higher level of dissatisfaction than he did some regarding service, drivers flirting, fare always higher due to surge, and taking longer than a trip should take because drivers didn't know directions. One of the comments was even a recommendation to use "Careem" (competitor) instead. It was like these people were just waiting for a trigger before they exploded with all their comments. There are many more similar cases to this one on other products and services but it just becomes more intense when it is about a daily used service by many people so everyone will simply have something to add.

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