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HOW ONLINE BEHAVIOUR INFLUENCE VALUE FORMATION IN ONLINE SERVICES

Master's Thesis in

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TIIVISTELMÄ:

Sosiaalinen kanssakäyminen on kasvanut olennaiseksi osaksi tietojärjestelmiä. Niin sanottu sosiaalinen komponentti löytyy yhä useammasta ohjelmistosta, puhumattakaan videopeleistä, joissa sosiaalisuus on kasvanut huomattavasti. Moni pelien kehittäjä integroi erilaisia sosiaalisia kommunikointimahdollisuuksia peleihin. Tällaisia ominaisuuksia voivat olla esimerkiksi keskustelumahdollisuus toisen kanssa. Sosiaaliseen interaktioon voi liittyä myös kuuluminen johonkin tiettyyn pelaajayhteisöön, joka voi kattaa koko pelaajakunnan tai vain tietyn kaveriporukan, jotka pelaavat yhdessä.

Tämä tutkimus pyrkii selvittämään, onko sosiaalisella kanssakäymisellä merkitystä arvonmuodostumisen kannalta. Tutkimuskohteena ovat internetin välityksellä pelattavat videopelit, koska nämä usein käyttävät sosiaalista kanssakäymistä osana pelikokemusta. Sosiaalinen kanssakäyminen voi olla positiivista tai negatiivista. Tutkimuksen tavoite on selvittää arvon yhteisluonnin ja yhteistuhonnan näkökulmasta, voivatko pelaajat yhdessä luoda tai tuhota pelin arvoa sosiaalisella käytöksellään.

Tutkimustuloksissa ilmeni, että sosiaalisella kanssakäymisellä on merkitystä arvon luonnin kannalta. Tutkimusdatassa ilmeni, että jokainen tutkimukseen osallistunut henkilö on pelannut videopelejä enemmän, mikäli hänellä on ollut sosiaalisia kontakteja pelissä. Sosiaalinen interaktio siis kasvatti pelien arvoa pelaajalle. Vastavuoroisesti negatiivinen interaktio ei yhtä poikkeusta lukuun ottamatta koskaan ollut yksin syyllinen pelaamisen vähenemiselle tai jonkin pelin pelaamisen lopettamiselle.

AVAINSANAT: Arvon muodostuminen, sosiaalinen vuorovaikutus, verkkopalvelut, videopelit

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ABSTARCT:

Social interaction has grown to be an important part of the information systems. The so-called social component is present in many programs, let alone in videogames, where the social aspect has grown rapidly. Many game developers integrate different social interaction tools in online video games. These tools can be variable, most often being ways to discuss with others while playing the game. Social interaction can often be associated to a membership of certain social community. This can be anything from being composed of the whole player base of certain video game, to being just a small group of friends playing games.

This study aims to find out if social interaction has any influence in value formation. Research will focus to the online video games, because these often incorporate social interaction as part of the gaming experience. Social interaction can be both positive and/or negative, and the goal is to find out using the value co-creation and co-destruction framework if players can co-create or co-destroy the value of an online video game through social interaction.

Research results suggests social interaction is important regarding to value formation. Research data states that each research participant have spent more time with the game because of positive social experiences, while only one reported having stopped playing certain game because of negative social experience. Besides this one case, research data suggest negative social interaction is never the sole reason to stop playing the game. Usually there are other reasons influencing this as well.

1. INTRODUCTION

Internet was started as a military project to fulfil the need to be able to communicate more reliably and have a judgment day proof communication line between various missile bases operated by the United States of America. All though the development was not fast, the rudimentary ground work eventually leads us to the modern-day internet. (Ryan 2010: 14-16.)

Although internet has been a new way of data sharing and communicating, the most of the media internet presents is old and already familiar to us. Marshall T. Poe points out that the internet is just a service which brings all old types of media and data to one place, available from one platform. Speech, text, music, sound, pictures and video are all known to us before. (Poe 2011: 228-229.) Videogames can then also be seen as an old media, computers and internet just have helped to refine them. We used to play board games with our friends, like we still do, but now games can also be played using computers and internet, enabling us to play with friends who are in different city or even in different country.

Research for the nature of internet has revolved around the concept of Web 2.0, and it is used to describe the new kind of nature of the internet. If we look back in 1990s, the internet was more or a less static place. You could read text, view pictures and send E-mail, but there weren't many ways to contribute to these things. If you wanted to set up your own home page and publish your own thoughts or pictures, you had to know what you were doing. So, generating content to the internet was not something everyone could do, at least not easily. O'Reilly describes well the difference of old conventional Web 1.0 and new 2.0 and states how difficult it is to describe Web 2.0 as a concept, since it does not have clear boundaries what belong in this concept and what does not (O'Reilly 2005). In the scope of this thesis we can say that the most interesting part of Web 2.0 is the social aspect and how internet has begun to be more "from users for users" kind of platform, rather than being maintained by the select few.

Social side of the internet is rather hot research topic in academic world, because as a way of socially interacting with other people, internet offers a staggering array of possibilities to socialize. We have discussion forums, online chat rooms, instant messaging, e-mail, video conferencing and so on. And these are only for direct interaction. Other

ways are writing blogs, putting pictures in photo sharing sites for others to comment or capturing video and sharing it through video streaming sites like Youtube.

The previous studies of the social side of the internet have lately focused on social media and on social networking sites. These studies reveal both good and bad social behaviour in online environment. Christofides, Muise and Desmarais focused on their research how adolescent users of social media encounter risks online. In this case, Facebook was the selected form of social media. They found out adolescents, who encounter negative behaviour online are more likely to moderate the information they share in their social media profiles, such as Facebook. They also found out adolescents who did not have any negative experiences often did not enforce their privacy simply because they did not need to. (Christofides et al. 2012: 725-727.)

Christofides et al. had a sample group of 256 adolescents who answered to a survey. 26,7% out of this sample group reported to have encountered negative behaviour while using Facebook. Survey answers gave four different kind of negative experiences: Bullying/meanness, unwanted contact, exposure/unwanted disclosure and misunderstandings. Bullying and meanness was clearly the most encountered type of bad experience out of the sample group who reported bad behaviour. Bullying and meanness was reported 52% out of the negative experiences. These experiences were negative and offensive comments encouraging others to bully individual through Facebook discussion group or getting access to participants Facebook account and doing something unwanted that way. (Christofides et al. 2012: 719-723.)

Unwanted contact was the second most frequent of all the negative experiences, and 23% of negative experiences where related to it. These experiences were mostly friend requests and other contacts from strangers and unwanted messages from both friends and/or unknown persons. (Christofides et al. 2012: 723.)

Exposure and unwanted disclosure was 17% of all negative experiences. These experiences happened when either user himself or someone else posted something unwanted information on Facebook, like pictures. These occurrences usually caused regret and problems with other people. It was also possible that a user uploaded content to Facebook and only later started to regret on doing this. Last category was misunderstandings, which were reported 7 percent out of all negative experiences. These where usually caused by misunderstandings of information users posted by themselves or if they

understood something wrong. These experiences usually caused problems with others. (Christofides et al. 2012: 724-725.)

It was positive to find out from the research findings that some of the survey participants who had experienced negative behaviour on Facebook also took measures to prevent it. Unwanted friend requests where declined, offending pictures were untagged and/or reported and perpetrators sending negative and/or offending comments were blocked from friends list. (Christofides et al. 2012: 724-725.) It is good to hear adolescent Facebook users won't just accept negative behaviour as a necessary evil, but will take active measures to prevent it.

The research itself in this thesis is going to focus on video games and how other players can influence the user experience. In theoretical framework there are also topics of social media and other discussion channels so it is easier to understand different types of online social interaction. Research will be conducted through face-to-face interviews or using skype, if a long distance to a participant is a problem. Interview method was selected because compared to online questionnaire interviewing users will grant more precise answers to questions. The possibility of a test subject not understanding the questions can also be eliminated since additional explanation during the interview can be provided. Data analysing methods, research preparation matters and such are discussed more in chapter 3.

The core theme of this research is how the social behaviour of a user in online services influence value formation. These experiences can be both positive and negative, or also neutral, meaning user has not encountered social behaviour that could be categorized as either positive or negative. Positive experiences can be crucial part of user experience and value formation since negative experience can drive users away from the product or service. This is also a fresh approach to study both the value formation and social interaction online, because there does not seem to be previous studies which combine these two topics together.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This part of the thesis will focus on the theoretical background of value formation and online social behaviour and how these two influence one another. The goal is to find out different perspectives of how to analyse and look into research problem. As stated earlier, the effects of user social behaviour to value formation is not well documented in scientific literature, so there is no clear specific theoretical tool to use in this study. This thesis will focus on two core theoretical frameworks, which are Value Co-Creation and Co-Destruction framework and User experience.

Value Co-Creation and Co-Destruction framework and User experience both measure and model how users interact and form different opinions when using services. This study is trying to understand social interaction between users. This interaction can be person to person –type of interaction between two users. Other option is communication between a group of people, and on the internet these groups can be open or closed discussion groups in social media or, for example a team of players in team based online video games.

This thesis is going to study the effect of social user behaviour and how this can influence value formation of online service. On the theoretical part of the study will focus for different types of community driven online services, like discussion boards, social media and online video games. Goal is to formulate how interaction is carried out in these types of services, what causes people to use them and if social interaction has any impact in user experience and value formation for users.

2.1. Literature review and prior research

Cole and Griffiths conducted research about the social interactions encountered in massively multiplayer online role-playing games, abbreviated as MMORPG. Their study focused on if players have ever gotten friends form MMORPGs and met them in real life. They also tried to find out if playing MMORPGs had any effect in social relationships of players, did players share real life issues with other players, and what was the motivation and reason to play the game. Study had sample of 912 MMORPG players who participated through online questionnaire in their own time. 70% were male and

29% female, one percent did not declare their gender. Mean age of participants were 23,6 years. (Cole et al. 2007: 575-579.)

Cole et al. found out over 76,2% of males and 74,7% of female players had made good friends by playing the MMORPGs. They also found out females were more likely to meet these friends in real life than males. Interesting point was that the results of how playing games affect relationships. 20,3% believed playing MMORPGs have negative effect to other people who do not play same games, and 67,4% thought playing the same game with others have positive influence to friendship. (Cole et al. 2007: 577-579.)

Notable article about anti-social behaviour in online games is the research carried out by Kou and Nardi, where they studied the effect of anti-social behaviour in online video game called League of Legends. The game itself is a team based game, where two teams consisting five players battle against one another and try to win the match. They had a big sample of research material, which included chat logs from the game, blog posts and discussions obtained from League of Legends themed sites, interviews conducted through an instant messaging tool and had in-depth interviews with ten players. (Kou et al. 2013: 616-617.)

What Kou et al. found out was not surprising. Players reported that toxic anti-social behaviour clearly weakens the odds of winning the game, and affects the mood of every team mate, even if negative discussion is taking place between two players (Kou et al. 2013: 618). To reduce this kind of behaviour Riot Games, the developer of League of Legends, published the Tribunal System which gives other players a tool to judge reported cases of bad behaviour from the game. This system seems to have helped the situation since roughly 50% of players, who got punished from the Tribunal System, corrected their behaviour and did not end up to the Tribunal System again. (Kou et al. 2013: 619-620.)

The social aspect of internet and online services is an interesting topic and many researchers have conducted many different research projects to understand better, why social aspect of the internet is important, how it affects users and what can we do to improve and develop it further. Social interaction can also be a crucial part of user experience and big part of value formation. Video games for example are products intended solely for recreational use, so value formation and customer satisfaction is a paramount.

Satoru Iwata, late CEO of Nintendo, has said: "Video games are meant to be just one thing: fun. Fun for everyone." (Kamen 2015).

Online social interaction as a component of value formation is not extensively covered in research literature. Many online services today rely on social interaction and social behaviour of other users. This can have a big influence of how others feel about using these services. Value formation from this point of view should not be disregarded as a minor subject considering the freemium aspect of recreational online services today. Social media sites like Facebook does not charge anything when registering to use their service since the money flow is achieved from advertising (Williams 2015).

Most of the social media services have grown to be a part of our everyday life, so it is possible occasional bad social experience will not drive users away from the service, or positive experience make them love it or use it more that they normally would. In social media users can keep in touch with friends and family, share pictures and videos, partake discussion groups and so on. Video games however are a different kind of product and the recreational side is also different when compared to social media. Video games are goal and experience driven products, where social component exists if the co-operative aspect of a game requires it, meaning players must work together to achieve goals and progress in the game world.

2.2. Value Co-creation and Co-destruction framework

Value Co-creation and Co-destruction framework is new method for information systems research. Since this is new and developing theory, the discussion about it in scientific literature is somewhat fragmented, although recent articles have worked to remedy the issue and formulate comprehensive models and concepts to explain the theory better (Tuunanen, Myers & Cassab 2010; Vartiainen & Tuunanen 2016; Lintula, Tuunanen & Salo 2017).

Principal idea behind the co-creation and co-destruction framework lies in the Service-Dominant (S-D) logic, presented by Vargo and Lusch. They claim marketing has relied on Goods-Dominant (G-D) logic, which puts emphasis on the manufactured products while neglecting the service sector. S-D logic tries to remedy this by shifting the focus to services and thus pointing the focus on skills, knowledge and processes. (Vargo &

Lusch 2004: 1-2.) They also want to point out S-D logic is not trying to undermine goods or claim that the services are the winner in "goods versus services debate". Rather there is no winners or losers in "goods versus services" debate in S-D logic, but the point is to highlight the relationship of the two, where a goods are an appliance in service provision. (Lusch & Vargo 2006: 282.)

S-D logic also mentions the concept of co-creation of value. G-D logic states value is created as the product is manufactured, and the value exchange takes place when consumer buys the product. In other words, the price of the product is the sole value here. The value co-creation in S-D logic changes the point-of-view, and argues that the value is created during the consumption process of the product. (Lusch & Vargo 2006: 284.) This brings whole new ways to see things in terms of this thesis, and the value creation during the consumption process is one of the key points of this research.

Grönroos discussed how so-called "hidden services" can be seen as a value enhancing for products or services. Hidden services can be anything from upgrading software, offering the engineering, invoicing or complaints handling (customer service). Grönroos claims these services are not seen as part of a service aimed to customer, but rather they are more administrative tasks that must be taken care of. This way of seeing these hidden services can potentially be a nuisance to customer, if customer's perspective is not taken into consideration when planning these services. (Grönroos 2007: 3-4.) Video games are a service, where these hidden services are numerous. Examples of this are updating the game after the game is released, the way game is distributed (physical copy vs. digital distribution), or how easy the game is to access and play (like how many different services does the player need to log in to play).

In this theory chapter the topics "co-creation" and "co-destruction" will be discussed under separate headings, even though they belong to the same concept and supplement each other.

2.2.1. Value Co-creation

The value Co-creation model is a new framework for modelling value formation and creation in information systems. Tuunanen, Myers and Cassab have noted, how information system research focuses more and more to the consumers. Information systems

are more targeted to "consumers" instead of the users. "User" has this far remained the standard definition for a person using information systems. Tuunanen et al suggest that the proper and better way to describe these modern information systems is to use the term "consumer information systems". Users are described to be interested only in how effective and efficient the information system is, while consumers are also interested the hedonistic value of service consumption. (Tuunanen et al 2010: 48.) Figure 1 presents the co-creation model, which lacks the co-destruction component. Co-destruction is a concept which relies on the contradictions of co-creation, meaning how consumers can simultaneously destroy the value of a product they are also creating. Co-destruction concept will be explained better later in this theory chapter.

Co-creation framework consists two different parts of how the co-creation of value is achieved and these are System Value Propositions and Customer Value Drivers with each containing three components needed for value co-creation. System Value Propositions consist three different components, and these are Construction of Identities, Social Nature of Use and Context of Use. Customer Value Drivers in turn are Participation in Service Production, Service Process Experience and Goals and Outcomes. (Tuunanen et al. 2010: 52.) Value co-creation framework is presented in figure 1 and the components for the co-creation of value are further explained next.
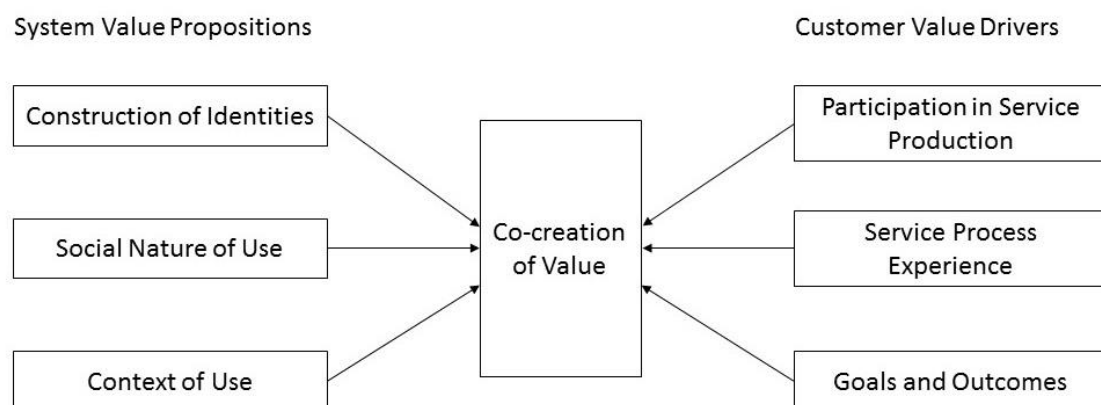

Figure 1. Value Co-creation framework (Tuunanen et al. 2010: 52).

The system value propositions are generally defined by the system developer. Previously this was done by analyzing the user data and trying to find out the system require-

ments of the organizations. This however is not enough anymore since the nature of the information system use is more and more collaborative, where work is carried out in groups. Even the everyday life is connected and networked by social media. That is why in the system value propositions the voice of the users must be heard. Tuunanen et al. propose three different components when analyzing consumer requirements for the information system. (Tuunanen et al. 2010: 49.)

The first one is the social nature of system use. Today consumers rarely use any information systems alone without any social connectivity. Social media sites and different discussion forums are a good example of how easy it is to stay connected with others. (Tuunanen et al. 2010: 49-50.) Videogames are also relying on social interaction nowadays, since online games played with other players almost always feature some kind of messaging tool. Single player games are generally played alone, but even them can contain high-score leader boards which are synchronized over internet. Single player game players can also discuss games in chatrooms or discussion boards, so although the game does not offer any way to interact with others, players will most likely discuss and share experiences from the game somewhere else.

The second system value proposition by Tuunanen et al. is the construction of identities. Tuunanen et al. uses Apple's products as an example. Apple has managed to implement the so-called coolness factor in their products, causing them to be an extension to the social identity of consumer. (Tuunanen et al. 2010: 49-50.)

The third system value proposition is the context of use, which more or less means how the original system developer cannot predict how and where the system will eventually be used. Tuunanen et al. used text messaging as an example in here. Originally the text messages where intended for service messages between cell towers. However, the text messages eventually became used as a communication method between regular consumers and thus the originally intended context of use turned up to be a lot wider than what was planned. (Tuunanen et al. 2010: 49-50.) System value propositions are listed in table 1.

Table 1. System Value Propositions (derived from Tuunanen et al. 2010: 50).

Consumers' Requirements and Value Propositions	
Aspect of consumer behavior	**Examples**
Social nature of use	Social networking services such as Facebook, MySpace etc. Text messaging has been widely adopted and is more popular than email in some parts of world.
Construction of identities	Customization of Mobile phones with unique services and accessories; applications that provide services such as Apple's AppStore
Context of use	The accidental start of text messaging: Test messaging was developed for a limited purpose - as a technical service-messaging tool between cellular base stations. Yet today billions of text messages are sent every day.

The other portion of value co-creation framework is the customers value drivers. These are more personal aspects and more difficult to measure, since different consumers might expect different things. Important note here is that the customer value drivers usually are not only related to pure utility, but are also hedonic in nature. (Tuunanen et al. 2010: 50-51.)

The first one of customer value drivers is service process experience, which means how to encourage consumer participation in the process of system development. Tuunanen et al. describes well how this is still difficult in the information systems development, and how it gets even harder when dealing with the consumer information systems development. This is because the consumer information systems have two different target groups, and these are normal consumers and members of some organization. A regular consumer usually uses the consumer information systems for achieving personal ambitions, while a member of organization usually uses systems as a tool when working for organization. Thus the motivation to contribute in service production may vary. (Tuunanen et al. 2010: 50-52.) Involving consumers in the systems development who only use the consumer information systems as a part of their job can be difficult, because the extra questionnaires or interviews can be seen as a nuisance and distraction for the work itself.

The second customer value driver is the customer participation in the service production. Tuunanen et al. uses on-demand video streaming sites as an example where a consumer can have an effect in programming in real time (Tuunanen et al. 2010: 51-52.)

The third customer value driver is customer goals and outcomes, and this tries to model and measure, how consumers experience hedonic benefit from using consumer information systems and how these systems could be developed further (Tuunanen et al. 2010: 51-52). The customer value drivers are listed in table 2.

Table 2. Customer Value Drivers (derived from Tuunanen et al. 2010: 52).

Consumers' Value Drivers	
Challenge	**Examples**
Service Process Experience	The development of Halo III video game by Microsoft, which used the flow concept to ensure smooth game experience with extensive in-game data analysis.
Customer Participation in Service Production	Co-creation of on-demand video streaming services when consumers actively affect the TV service content real time, such as voting for political candidates.
Customer Goals and Outcomes	Fluid iPhone application that does not have any functional utility, yet provides hedonic benefit to users.

2.2.2. Value Co-destruction

All the points mentioned above have concentrated on value co-creation, but the research literature has also addressed the other side of the co-creation model, which is the value co-destruction. Lintula, Tuunanen and Salo formed a propositional framework for value co-destruction by conducting literature review of 31 articles discussing the value co-destruction. Lintula et al. states there has not been lot of research regarding the value co-destruction, and how science literature lacks any common notion on the topic. After the review three overlapping dimensions of value co-destruction were found. These three dimensions of the value co-destruction are orientation, resources and perceptions, and these three parts also contain individual components. (Lintula et al. 2017: 1632-1635.) These are discussed further bellow. Value co-destruction framework is presented in figure 2.
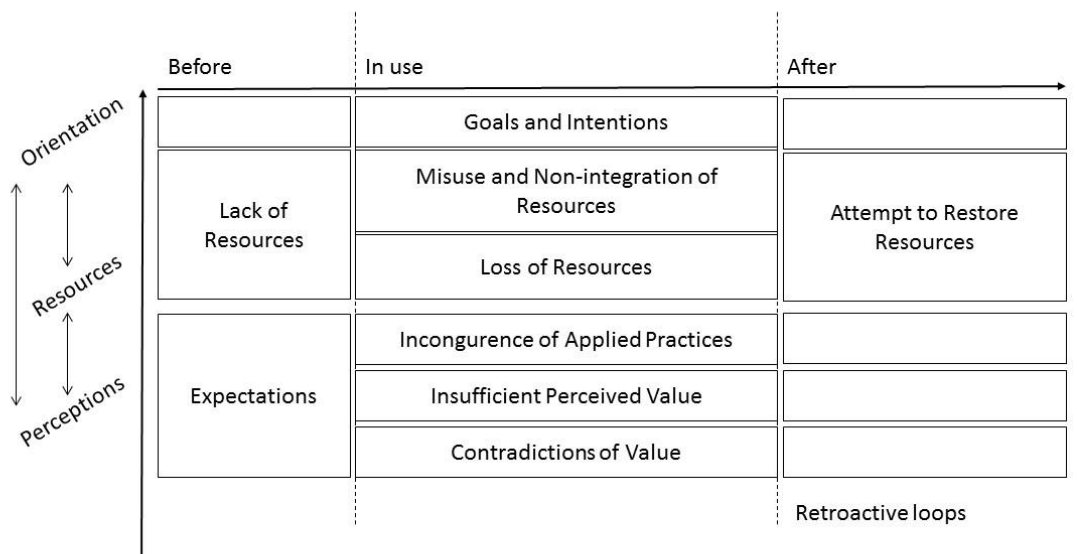
Figure 2. Value Co-Destruction framework (Lintula et al. 2017: 1635).

The first dimension is orientation, which includes intentions and goals as a component, and these evolve while the service process is ongoing and after it has ended. The co-destruction in this component may be the result of both intentional and unintentional behavior of parties involved in the service process. Examples are discussed below. Value co-destruction can also happen if service providers and consumer's goals are con-

flicted. (Lintula et al. 2017: 1635-1636.) Regarding this thesis, an example of this is when a player intentionally wants to sabotage the gaming experience of others who are playing on the same side in online videogames. This can be done by for example intentionally letting the enemy know positions of allies in the game map by telling this via the integrated chat component of the game. The different communication methods in online videogames are discussed in detail later in this thesis.

The second dimension is resources. The value co-creation is a process where resources are used by all parties participating in the service process. Lack of resources means one or more parties cannot participate in the value co-creation process because company could for example have shortage of staff. This leads to the value co-destruction. The misuse of resources could occur when the service provider promises to deliver product on certain time and fails to do so. Non-integration happens when a consumer tries to use an online service, but fails to achieve the desired goal when he or she simply does not understand the instructions or does not have the required know-how to use the system. The loss of resources occurs when one or more parties involved in the service process feel they did not achieve the amount of value they were expecting, for example when consumers feel they have "wasted their time". An attempt to restore resources occurs when consumer tries to gain back some value from the wasted time by for example complaining in social media how bad experience the service process was. (Lintula et al. 2017: 1635-1637.)

The third dimension is perceptions, which consists the following components: the expectations, the insufficient perceived value, the incongruence of practices and the contradictions of value. Expectations are, as the term suggests, expectations of service process. If some party involved in the service process fails to meet the expectations of others it will cause value co-destruction. The insufficient perceived value is different from expectations because perceived value is linked to previous experiences, so failure to provide same level of quality in the service process to a consumer will lead to the value co-destruction because the consumer did not get the same value he or she was expecting based on previous experience. The incongruence of practices is caused when something unexpected happens. The contradictions of value are caused when two parties get different amount of value from the same service process. (Lintula et al. 2017: 1637-1638.)

The retroactive loops are important part of the value co-destruction model, because value co-destruction might not be just one single process with start and end points. Such

process could be for example a situation, where consumer had too high expectations for the service resulted for the lack of knowledge (lack of resources in the model). Since value co-destruction took place, consumer might start a new value co-destructive process by complaining how he was not satisfied about the experience, thus leading to retroactive loop where co-destructive processes could follow one after another. (Lintula et al. 2017: 1635.)

Lastly it is important to point out how, the presented components from the model can happen both linearly or inter-dimensionally since they are interrelated (Lintula et al. 2017: 1635). Below is presented some positions from other researchers regarding the value co-destruction as a concept.

Echeverri and Skålén suggest the value co-creation and co-destruction are important parts of interaction between parties involved in the service process (Echeverri & Skålén 2011: 355). Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres present in their research article, how value co-destruction is interactional process between two parties, and how this co-destruction process deteriorates value at least from one side of the interaction. This deterioration can affect both individual consumers or organizations, depending the nature of the service and what is the information system used for. Interaction between parties can be either direct, when two persons or organizations are communicating with each other directly or indirect interaction, when interacting through products or goods. (Plé et al. 2010: 431-432.)

Plé et al. also point out how value co-destruction might not be on the same level with everyone. This is most likely due to the fact that different parties involved in service process experience this value destruction differently. (Plé et al. 2010: 432.) For example, a negative social behavior can have a different impact for different people. Person A can be deeply offended by something that person B can disregard as a minor nuisance. This could as well apply to value co-creation, where different things can influence to the value formation in various ways for individual consumers.

When talking about value co-destruction, Plé et al. refer to the misuse of resources. A good example of misuse of resource is when a car owner does not maintain his vehicle. This can therefore lead to early car failure and if the car owner blames the manufacturer for the self-caused problems, the car owner misuses the resources of both parties involved in the service process. Plé et al. state how this misuse of resources can be either

unintentional or intentional. They also use term "accidental misuse of resources", which describes well the notion of the unintentional value co-destruction. (Plé et al. 2010: 432-433.)

A good example of the unintentional co-destruction is so-called co-innovation events, where companies invite consumers to innovate and design new products and services. While these kind of events are intended to be value co-creating, they might as well end up being the opposite. This can happen, when consumers with different backgrounds are grouped up to innovate, and while others can have great and truly innovative ideas, someone could feel the opposite simply because they do not have enough knowledge or experience to recognize good ideas. Thus, this can lead to the value co-destruction to the company, when good ideas are left in a dark and the company will not have new innovations to compete with the competitors. Innovators in their part can feel frustration and failure for not being able to provide meaningful and good innovations. Eventually both parties ended up with deteriorated value from process where misuse of resources was clearly unintentional. (Plé et al. 2010: 433.)

The intentional value co-destruction is a process which is actively carried out by the one or more parties interacting in value co-creation process. Intentional value co-destruction can occur in situations where other party seeks to increase its own well-being without considering others. A good example of this is the call centers, where employees are interacting with the customers. If employees are instructed by the firm to only allocate certain amount of time for each customer, there is a chance some customers are left with an unfinished call because the employee has to hurry and serve the next customer. This can lead to an intentional value co-destruction when the firm is misusing its own resources. (Plé et al. 2010: 434.) Another example is when in online video games one player choses to use cheating programs for a better performance in game. This will lead to the feeling of satisfaction to the cheater, but at the same time it deteriorates the mood of the gaming experience for those who play fairly. The cheater is intentionally destroying the value of the game by breaking the norm of fair play and thus destroying the value of the game.

Vartiainen and Tuunanen have good examples of how the value co-creation and the value co-destruction can occur at the same time through the contradictions of the processes. They open this theory up via the opposite poles of contradiction. Two of these opposite pole contradictions will be presented below. In their research the focus was in

geocaching. Geocaching is an outdoor activity, where players try to locate hidden treasures using modern information systems like GPS. Locations of these treasures are uploaded to global database and these treasures are also hidden by players, so it is safe to say geocaching is activity of which value is co-created by the community. (Vartiainen et al. 2016: 1266.)

The first contradiction is "hedonism vs. nature values". Geocaching is an outdoor activity and the geocaches, or treasures, are hidden in nature. Players look for the geocaches and at the same time will be able to enjoy the nature and get good exercise, among other things. This most likely will lead to a sense of enjoyment and create value for players. The negative side is if geocaches are placed disregarding the damage caused to the nature. This will obviously destroy the value. Geocaching is made possible by modern IT appliances such as internet, computers and mobile phones, and maintaining and producing these consumes natural resources that directly contradicts the purpose of geocaching, which is to enjoy and experience nature. (Vartiainen et al. 2016: 1271-1272.)

Second contradiction is "socializing vs. competition". Geocaching is non-work-related hobby, where a big part of the process is to socialize with others and to be part of the community. After all it is the community that keeps the geocaching rolling by hunting and placing the caches. Some people do see geocaching competitive, where players might compete for example with the amount of caches found and comparing this to others. Competitiveness is contradicting the communal nature of geocaching, and if players do take hobby to seriously, the competitiveness could potentially deteriorate value leading to value destruction. (Vartianen et al. 2016: 1271-1272.) Online video games often pose the same kind of competitive nature, where players try to improve their status in leaderboards and such. Online video games also usually have strong communities. They can be built around discussion forums or they can be groups like guilds, which can be found in massively multiplayer online role-playing games, abbreviated as MMORPGs. In online videogames this kind of social vs competition contradiction is present, but often in the competitive online videogames the competition is accepted as part of the game, and it is not seen as a value destroying factor.

2.3. User experience

When talking about user experience (UX), it is important to distinguish the user experience and usability as two separate concepts (Norman & Nielsen 2016). The usability defines whether or not product is easy to learn, efficient to use, prone to user made errors, easy to start using again even after a long break and whether it is pleasant to use the product or not (Nielsen 2012).

The user experience goes further than this and is much broader concept than usability. UX does not include only the usability, but also integrates how the product looks, how it is marketed, and what kind of feeling the company selling the product gives to the customer. Norman and Nielsen give a good summary of user experience: "User experience encompasses all aspects of the end-user's interaction with the company, its services, and its products." (Norman & Nielsen 2016.)

It is also important to note that the user experience is not mere abstract academic concept, since it is defined by the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) in their ISO 9241-210 standard Human-centred design for interactive systems. Per standard the UX is "person's perceptions and responses resulting from the use and/or anticipated use of a product, system or service". Standard also adds: "User experience includes all the users' emotions, beliefs, preferences, perceptions, physical and psychological responses, behaviours and accomplishments that occur before, during, and after use." (ISO 2010: 3.)

The usability and the user experience is also discussed from the video game perspective in scientific research. Video games are a product, where emotions and enjoyability are paramount, and are considered a great example of a product with a good user experience (Sinkkonen, Kuoppala, Parkkinen & Vastamäki 2006: 229).

2.3.1. Hassenzahl's Definition of User Experience

Hassenzahl begins his definition of user experience by defining what experience is. He states the experience is a reflection of events we are going through, and this process is happening all the time. These experiences can be qualitatively rich or not. One thing Hassenzahl points out is the experience of momentary feeling of either pleasure or pain, and the level of intensity of these emotions can vary. During the event person can study

his feelings. Whether he feels good or bad emotions during the event he steers his behavior for either carrying on or quitting events. Hassenzahl notes user experience does not focus on the good experience itself, but rather the good experience achieved by the interaction with a product. (Hassenzahl 2008: 11-12.)

Hassenzahl has split his definition of user experience into two sections. First one is: "*User experience is momentary, primarily evaluative feeling (good-bad) while interacting with a product or service.*" Therefore, the user experience as a theory tries to move the focus from products and materials to subjective side of product use, which is feelings and experiences. (Hassenzahl 2008: 12.)

The second part of the user experience definition by Hassenzahl is: "*Good UX is the consequence of fulfilling the human needs for autonomy, competency, stimulation (self-oriented), relatedness, and popularity (others-oriented) through interacting with the product or service (i.e. hedonic quality). Pragmatic quality facilitates the potential fulfilment of be-goals.*" (Hassenzahl 2008: 12.)

Above mentioned be-goals is one of the two types of dimensions consumers interact with products. The pragmatic qualities refer to "do-goals", where the focus is on the product and its usability for certain task, like making a telephone call with a phone. Hedonic quality on the other hand focuses to "be-goals", where persons experiences like "being competent" or "being special" are important. The earlier mentioned autonomy, competency, stimulation, relatedness, and popularity are these so-called be-goals and Hassenzahl claims if consumers can experience success and fulfilment of be-goals with a product, they will attach hedonic properties to the product. (Hassenzahl 2008: 12.) This is an interesting remark with this thesis in mind, when the goal is to find out if positive or negative behavior in videogames have any effect on value formation.

Hassenzahl also points out how this definition puts a lot of emphasis on actively seeking good experiences from the interaction process with the product, and not focusing on to the positive experience as it is. Hassenzahl uses relaxation as an example. Behind the motivation of interaction with a product could be just the will "to relax", but the way this goal is achieved might be irrelevant (watching movies, listening music, etc.). The purpose is to just have a good time. However, the fulfillment of basic psychological need such as the need to relax is achieved by fulfilling the be-goals. It is also natural for

the consumers to express their needs through simple goals, rather than forming explicit requirements such as "I want to be special". (Hassenzahl 2008: 12-13.)

2.3.2. Hassenzahl's Model of User Experience

Hassenzahl has developed the model of UX aiming to understand better the aspects and different parts of UX. Figure 3 displays Hassenzahl's model and different perspectives of viewing UX.
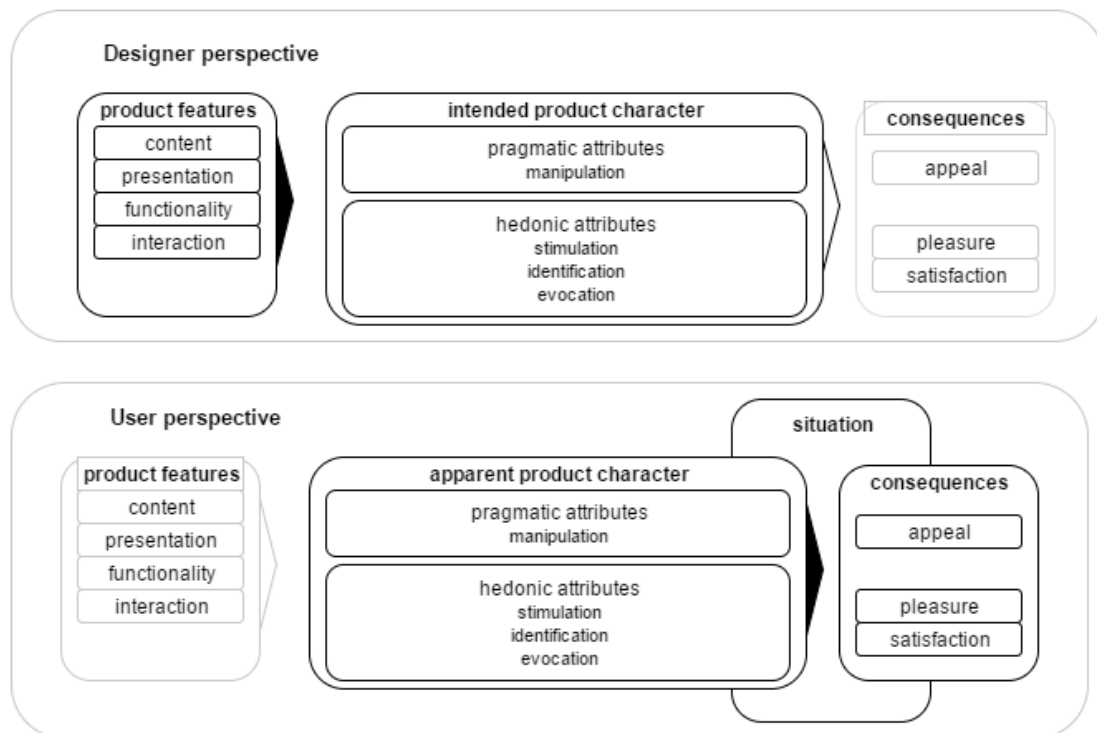
Figure 3: Key elements of the model of user experience by Hassenzahl (Hassenzahl 2003: 2).

Hassenzahl's model tries to look the UX from two different perspectives. The first one is the designer perspective, where product is designed with certain features in order to achieve certain intended product character. The intended product character tries to trigger the process, where user formulates strategies for using the product. After this we move to the user perspective, where the intended product character changes to the apparent product character. The apparent product character is formed by each user indi-

vidually and can vary between users. This leads to consequences, where user makes judgment whether the product is good or bad. The consequences will vary, since they are linked to the usage situation. (Hassenzahl 2003: 2-3.) This is important statement regarding to UX research in video games since social behavior and overall social atmosphere in online video games can vary a lot between different matches and different games.

Video game developers should consider this point of view since the video games are a good example of a product where consumers might simply seek relaxation, much in the same way as watching a movie. However, if this wish is disturbed by a negative experience, which could be a negative social experience, player might switch to another game, since the relaxation as a goal was not achieved. If player has some other motivations as well, such as the will to improve his or her skills in a certain game, the tolerance for a negative experience from interacting with other players might be higher as long as the primary goal of raising the own skill level is achieved.

2.4. Communication channels in online video games

This chapter will cover all the basic communication methods, or channels, present in online video games. The purpose is not to make a comprehensive list of every single different variation of these methods, since different games have diverse ways for implementing same ideas. Some variations will be explained with examples.

These communication methods can be split into two different categories, which are the internal and external communication channels. Internal channels are located within the game, and are accessible while playing the game. The external channels are accessible when game is not played, and are usually located in the client application intended for launching the game. Some external communication channels can also be used to contact friends who are playing the game, like Battle.net -client software. All example pictures are made by the researcher. The basic concept behind every illustration comes from certain games or programs. Originally it was intended that this thesis would use original snap-shot pictures from games. However, at the time of writing this thesis it was not possible to obtain permission to use these pictures from the copyright owners (in this case, the game developers).

The external communication channels like discussion boards are left out of this chapter, because these kind of communication channels are used outside of the gaming process. These cannot be the source of positive or negative social interaction while player is playing the game. This is important factor because this research aims to study on the effects of social interactions which are conversed while gaming. However, the research participants elaborated their social experiences on a larger scale and many times mentioned communication methods outside the gaming process, but these were simply treated as supplementary information while analyzing the research data.

2.4.1. Internal communication channels

The three main formats of internal communication are a text chat, a voice chat and a pre-determined emote system (also called the quick chat in some games). The **text chat** is a regular chat which is executed in different ways in the games. The core idea, however, is that the player will be able to discuss with both team mates and enemies using the text chat. With their team mates the players can plan tactics and the so-called "all-chat", which is visible to everyone in the match (including enemies). "All-chat" is more suited for general discussion. Figure 4 presents how the text chat is executed in the online video game called Overwatch. In Overwatch the green color of the text that indicates those messages that are visible to players who play in the same group (for example, three players who are friends and are playing together as a group). The blue color indicates that the chat is visible to players who play on the same side as the message sender and purple is direct message to one individual player. The orange color is "all-chat", where everyone who are playing in the same match can see the messages. Yellow is reserved for automatic notifications from the game itself. Not every text chat follows the same "syntax" like presented below, so the way to implement the text chat might differ in different games. Figure 4 is an illustration of text chat syntax found in online video game Overwatch.
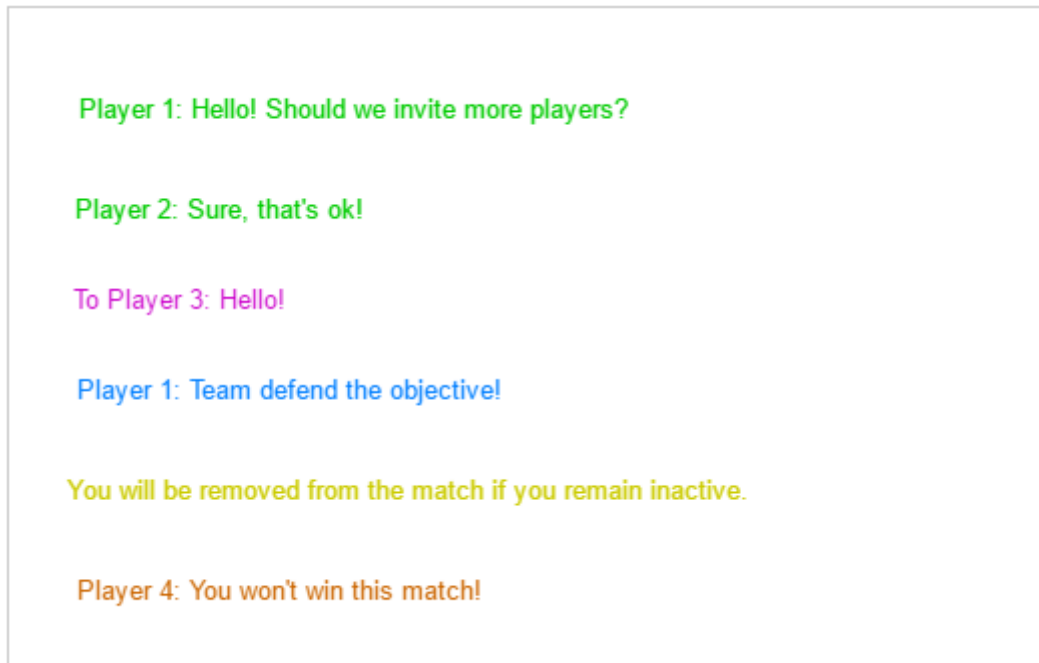
Figure 4: Illustration of text chat component in Overwatch.

The voice chat is available to players equipped with a suitable microphone. The voice chat is usually used only to discuss with players on the same team, so usually enemies cannot hear what players are talking on the opposing side. The voice chat is usually displayed as some sort of icon in the user interface of the video game. This icon is displayed to other players, so they can know who is actually talking in the game. Rust is an online video game which features a big open map which players can explore. Rust does not feature teams, so each player is playing as an individual (however, if players chose to play as a team they are free to do so). Rust uses the voice chat in a way that everyone can hear the speaking player if speaker is in close proximity, simulating a real world scenario. In this case players can have social interaction through a voice chat with every player on the same server, if players are close to each other in game world.

The third interaction channel is predefined **emote system**, where players can convey simple gestures to other players. These gestures are usually really short commands or statements like "Hello!", "Well played!" or "Take cover!". This type of communication is naturally very limited when compared to a text or voice chat, so the possible negative or positive social experience through this channel could be less probable than through other channels. The negative social behavior means using emotes in inappropriate mo-

ments in game (such as saying "well played" even when it would be obvious the the other player made a mistake) or spamming same emotes over a short period of time for the purpose to annoy other players.

2.4.2.   External communication channels

External communication channels that are relevant to this study can be divided into two different categories and those are the text chat and/or voice chat that are integrated to external software (and not part of the game itself). Text chat clients are usually integrated to the gaming clients, where it is also possible to make micro transactions, download updates for the game or other activities related to a game or gaming community. Battle.net client, developed by Blizzard Entertainment, is a good example of this. Battle.net client allows player to launch games, to download updates and to discuss with other players, who are in the player's friend list. Adding friends is possible by either sending or receiving friend requests and then accepting them, so player is also free to choose not to add people to their friend list.

The text chat integrated to Battle.net client allows friends to talk to each other, regardless whether they are playing or not. If the player is playing a game while he receives a message from someone else he can respond to this message by using the integrated text chat in the game, so external text chats can also be used to communicate players while they are playing and vice versa. Figure 5 displays general illustration of external text chat.
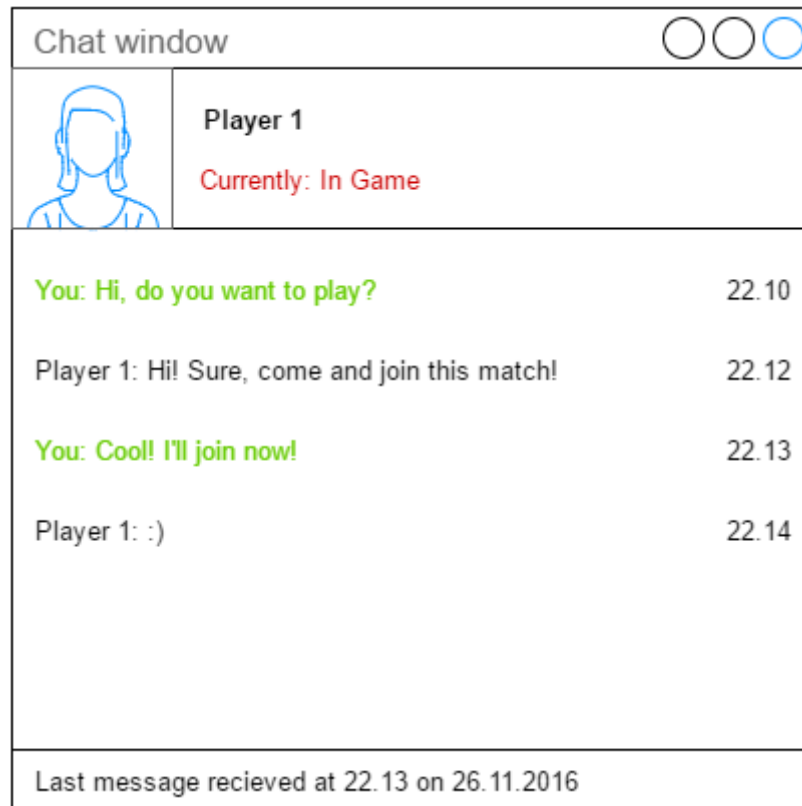
Figure 5: General illustration of external text chat.

The external voice chat can be found from the same game service clients. These voice chat tools can also be separate programs not integrated in the game in any way. For example, Skype allows to have group calls so players can discuss with everyone on the same group. The other possibility is a server based voice chat program such as Teamspeak, which requires of having a separate server, and players connect to this server using Teamspeak client software.

It is more likely to encounter the negative social experience through the internal communication channels, since the players using them can be complete strangers to each other and do not know each other. The external communication tools are more often based on friends lists, so players have the power to moderate who can contact them and block unwanted persons. Research results should yield more information weather or not this presumption in valid and hopefully also yield sources for positive social experiences during the interviews.

3. RESEARCH METHOD AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on presenting the research method and the research questions used in the data gathering interviews. Some attention is also paid to the research participant selection criteria and how the interview process is carried out.

3.1. Research method

The phenomenography will be used as a research method and thus this will be a qualitative research. Reason for using this method is the need to understand human behaviour and the experiences of people, so phenomenography is most suitable for this kind of research (Marton & Booth 1997: 111). The goal is to keep the gender distribution even, to make sure this study can also take possible gender differences into account. Uljens (1992: 82) states phenomenology has acted as a general frame of reference for phenomenography, rather than being directly developed from it. Some of the philosophical background of fenomenography lies in phenomenology (Uljens 1992: 82).

Fernández-Vara discusses the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative analysis. She suggests that, when studying the gaming communities, the bigger sample groups should be analyzed in the quantitative way, while the smaller groups should be analyzed with the qualitative method. She states that the qualitative method is believed to convey more personal take on the topic (Fernández-Vara 2015: 195-196.) Fernández-Vara (2015: 197) also suggests that using the mixed methods when analyzing the gaming communities, and while this research does use a couple questions which return numeric data, the primary nature of this research is still a qualitative. Research questions are discussed in chapter 3.3.

The research method selected for this study is the interview method, because the goal in this research is to find out how consumers, or in this case, the players feel when playing games and interacting with other players through them. Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2008: 34) state how interview as a data gathering technique is flexible and how direct contact with the research participant can yield much more than was originally even anticipated.

Hirsjärvi et al. present out some other good points why interview process is good option. Most important is when the person as a subject is important. By interviewing it is

easy to give room to answers and make sure person can give his or her opinion on the matter freely. During the interview process it is easier to ask the interview subject to go deeper and explain further his opinions and feelings. The negative side of the interview method is that it can be time consuming and it can be difficult to analyze subjective data since the reliable and solid models for this kind of data study does not exist. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008: 35.)

As mentioned above the downsides of interview process are taken in to account while planning this research, and goal is to allocate as much time for the interview process as possible. This gives the researcher enough time to transcribe the interviews. The transcribing process will be simplified, and interviews will not be transcribed word-for-word. The important content of the answers has been taken into account and if necessary, important direct quotes were highlighted. This selective transcribing method is also mentioned by Hirsjärvi et al. (2008: 138). The transcriptions will act as a manuscript when the data analysis phase will commence, and the data itself is always derived and analyzed from the interview recordings.

The facial expressions and emotional cues were not taken into account since the interviews themselves will be recorded with sound recording only. Video recording methods were not used. The researcher however may take notes on the physical appearance if the research participant portrays some clear emotions. Hirsjärvi et al. (2008: 138) say transcribing process might not be necessary, if interviews are short and there has not been many research participants. However, the interviews will be transcribed as stated earlier. A separate transcribing software will not be used. The average duration of the interviews was roughly between 25 and 70 minutes. Gillham (2005: 123) recommends that the transcribing process is carried out as soon as possible after the interview. Since the researcher has still got a fresh memory of the answers, the transcribing will be a lot easier. Also, if the transcribing process is postponed and interview recordings start to accumulate the task might seem overwhelming. (Gillham 2005: 123.)

To make sure the collected data is as easy to analyze as possible, some of the research questions will be formulated as "rate your opinion on the matter on a scale one to ten". These are supplementary questions for the actual "how you feel about something" questions where the research participant can explain better his or her emotions in their own words.

Interviews are going to be semi-structured. Semi-structured interview means that the same questions are presented to each research participant and that the questions are formulated in a manner which makes staying on topic possible. The research participants are also asked some additional questions if all desired aspects in the response are not covered. Furthermore, all the research participants get roughly the same amount of time while answering, but the research participants are not rushed in their answers. Some questions in this research will also contain the elements of unstructured interview in order to make sure, that the research participant can speak his mind openly without too much of guidance from the researcher. (Gillham 2005: 70.)

3.2. Research participant selection criteria

Although the age group of this study for the research participants is between 20-35 years of age, it is still important to note that all research participants should be over 18 years of age to avoid any processes to seek the parental permission. The next criterion was the amount of time the research participant had spent time playing online video games. Since the initial impression of a product or a service can be judged quite fast, it was determined that if research participant has spent more than few hours playing online video games per week, he or she was qualified for the interview. All participants had played video games more than ten hours per week in some point of their lives, so this criterion was fulfilled by all participants.

3.3. Interview questions

The research questions were delivered to the research participants in advance few days prior to the actual interview. This was to ensure that the research participants had time to familiarize themselves to the actual research and to avoid any "surprise" effect. In short, research participants knew, what to expect. Questions were delivered as a PDF document to the participants and the document contained some initial explanation about the interview process and stated how the gathered information was going to be used. Since all the research participants had Finnish as their native language, the delivered document was written in Finnish. The Finnish and the English version of this document are both presented in the appendixes (Appendix 1 and 2). Research questions are presented below.

Before the actual interview and the "hard" questions were presented, some basic infor-
mation was gathered from the research participants in order to "warm up" the interview
process. These basic questions related to the age and the gender. The research partici-
pants were also asked to give a rough estimate of the time spent playing online video
games.

In the first question research participants were asked to name some online video games
they have played. The purpose of question two is to stimulate research participant to
think the positive and the negative social experiences associated to the online video
games. The third question is the so-called core question of this interview, since the third
question is aimed to provide the answers to the actual research question if the social
interaction has any effect on the value formation in online video games. The term "val-
ue" was not used during the interview, since the researcher could not be sure if the re-
search participant would understand the concept of value as intended. In the worst-case
scenario, the "value" could indicate monetary value of the game, and this thesis treats
value as a much broader concept.

The fourth and fifth question give us the data in numbers, which is intended to provide
the more solid and "hard" results from the research. The purpose of the numerical data
was to give more statistical view of how important the gaming community is to the
player. The fourth question is intended to discuss the topic on more general level, and
the fifth question in turn makes the research participant to choose one game that holds
some significance to the participant.

The sixth question was intended to be as a closing question, which gives the research
participant a chance to speak out his mind and give suggestions and opinions. All of the
research participants had quite a lot of online gaming experience. Additionally, some
had experiences for running gaming community related activities, and two participants
even had some level of experience of actual gaming development. Thus, it felt im-
portant to tap into this knowledge and give the research participants a chance to share
their opinions, knowledge and suggestions. Actual research questions are presented be-
low:

1. What online video games have you been playing? Name a few, but you do not have to list every single online video game you have been playing. A few that come in to your mind first are enough.

2. Have you ever encountered positive or negative social interaction in online video games? Has this interaction been directed specifically at you, or has the interaction been between two other parties?

3. Do you feel positive or negative social interaction has somehow influenced the fact weather you like some video game or not?
    a. For example, have you gotten more interested at playing certain video game because of positive social interaction? Can you describe this briefly?
    b. On the other hand, have you reduced playing, or even stopped playing altogether some online video game because of negative social interaction? Can you describe this briefly?
    c. Can you specify the different communication channels where positive and negative social interactions are relayed? (Example: different text chats, voice chat, external communication programs like Skype or TeamSpeak, etc.).

4. Evaluate on scale 1-10 (1= not important at all, 10= very important) how important the social atmosphere and player community is to you for positive gaming experience? **Please evaluate only the social atmosphere and player community and disregard factors like graphics, playability, story, etc.).**

5. Pick an online video game you have been playing at some point in your life.
    a. Describe briefly the overall social atmosphere and player community of this game.
    b. Evaluate on scale 1-10, how important the social atmosphere and player community is to you for positive gaming experience when playing the chosen game? (1= not important at all, 10= very important). **Please evaluate only the social atmosphere and player community and disregard factors like graphics, playability, story, etc.).**

6. Who do you think is responsible for the improving and maintaining the overall mood of the gaming community?
    a. In what way, should the gaming community, player behavior and mood of the community be policed or regulated?
    b. What are proper sanctions for players who behave badly? What about good behavior, should it be rewarded?

3.4.Interview process

The research was conducted in a peaceful environment, where there were no external interruptions. This was to ensure a relaxed and peaceful state for the interview and to make sure that the recoding process of these interviews was possible. The recording equipment used in this research picked up extra sounds easily, so quiet and separate interview space was required. The face-to-face interviews were recorder using a laptop computer as a recording device, and the interviews conducted over Skype where recorded with a separate recording software.

The time for each interview was allocated for between 30 to 60 minutes. The questions however were not timed to maintain the semi-structured nature of the research interviews. Interviews were carried out in Finnish, since all research participants were Finnish nationals with Finnish as their native language.

3.5. Data analyzing method

The phenomenographical data analysis will be used as a method to analyze and to categorize data gathered from the interviews. Vartiainen (2005: 65) used a phenomenographical analysis in his doctoral dissertation as the data analyzing tool. He began his data analysis by reading and studying the source material. Then he coded the main points which manifested from the data and categorized similar topics to the groups. (Vartiainen 2005: 65.) This thesis will also use same method.

Gillham (2005: 135) proposes same kind of approach when trying to analyze data gathered from interviews. Gillham states, how each of the interview situations are unique, but the researcher can guide it by carefully structuring the interview in general (Gillham 2005: 135). However, the strictly structured interviews go against the phenomenographical logic, since the purpose is to understand how people experience, perceive and understand the different phenomena of the world (Uljens 1992: 85). The goal is to give room to the thoughts and feelings of the research participants, while still maintaining the structure in interviews to make the data categorization and analysis possible. Since every person is unique and thus every interview and answers to questions are also unique, no pre-formatted categorization has been formulated. Thus, it is up to the researcher to fabricate suitable categories for the data (Gillham 2005: 138). It is also

worth of noticing that the extensive categorization system is suitable to large data sets (Gillham 2005: 139-140), and since this research has six research participants it is safe to claim relatively simple data categorization is needed in this research.

To analyze the data, the interview recordings are transcribed so that the key points in each question will be easier to notice. If the questions have repetitive answers, a simple color coding system is used to make the analysis easier. The questions 4 and 5b will give numerical values, so averages of these values will be calculated. Also, numerical values between the genders have separate average values to make the analysis of gender differences in the answers possible.

After the transcription process is done, the research results will be categorized by different themes (Kananen 2008: 91). In this study, these themes are derived from the emergent topics from the interviews and the research questions will provide a basic structure, and the additional themes will be derived if necessary. Kananen suggests that the quantification could provide extra help in the analyzing process, but since the sample group in this research is small, the quantification is not necessary (Kananen 2008: 91).

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

This chapter will address the research results and divide them to different themes. The themes are derived from the research questions and emergent topics, as stated in chapter 3.5. Some background information and statistics are presented at the beginning, and after this the chapter moves to present the research findings. The positive and the negative social interactions are first defined and explained generally in section 4.2. This section covers the answers in question 2, and although this question was intended to be only yes or no -type of question some research participants elaborated their experiences a little on the general level. The role of different communication channels is also discussed in chapter 4.2.

The theme 2 will discuss the importance of social community of online video games. The research participants gave numerical scores for how important they considered the social community, and these results are analyzed and discussed in chapter 4.3. The theme 3 in chapter 4.4. shares the opinions of research participants on how the social communities should be maintained and developed. Note, that the content placed in brackets in the quotations are from the researcher, so that the quotes make more sense when taken out of the original context.

4.1. Background information

The goal was to get an even number of the research participants, and to keep the gender distribution even. This was achieved, and the total number of research participants was six (N=6), where half of the subjects were male, and the other half female (Females N=3, Males N=3). The age distribution was between the ages of 22 and 37. Total average age was 29,7 years, the average age for females was 27,7 and for males 31,7. Table 3 presents information about the research participants individually.

Table 3. General information about the research participants.

Research participant	Age	Gender
F1	34	Female
F2	27	Female
F3	22	Female
M1	37	Male
M2	31	Male
M3	27	Male

The research participants were asked to name a few of the online video games they have played. Some of the games players reported were League of Legends, Heroes of the Storm, Hearthstone, Guild Wars 1 & 2, Left 4 Dead -franchise, Star Wars: the old republic, Terraria, Rust, World of Warcraft, Counter Strike, Diablo -series, Travian, Doom 1, Command & Conquer, World of Tanks, Subspace, Call of Duty -franchise, Paladins and Chivalry: Medieval Warfare.

It is good to notice the diversity of game genres these games represent. Genres include first person shooting (abbreviation FPS) games (Call of Duty -franchise, Counter strike, Doom 1, Left 4 Dead -franchise, Paladins), massively multiplayer online role-playing games (World of Warcraft, Guild Wars -series, Star Wars: The Old Republic), multiplayer online battle arenas (League of Legends, Heroes of the Storm), online collectible card video game (Hearthstone), multiplayer survival video games (Rust, Terraria) and massively multiplayer online games like Subspace and World of Tanks.

The research participants reflected their social gaming experiences mostly to these games. Some research participants concentrated more to one game, while others gave answers and examples from a wider set of online video games. The researcher did not see this as a problem, because the focus of the research was in the social experiences, not in the amount of video games these experiences originated from.

4.2. THEME 1: How social interaction influences value formation

The first major theme was social interaction and how it influences gaming experiences. Since the research questions made clear distinction between the positive and the negative social interaction (these were asked separately), the themes relating to social inter-

action were also polarized between these two sides, although the topic of gaming groups did have both positive and negative aspects.

4.2.1. Themes related to positive social interaction

The themes related to the positive social interaction had a big emphasis on forming and maintaining friendships through online video games. This "friendship" category was further branched out into three subcategories, which where befriending with foreign players, forming groups (clans, guilds, etc.), and friendships formed through online video games. Another theme besides making friends was the motivational boost that the positive social interaction gives to player. Figure 6 presents different sub-themes related to positive social interaction.
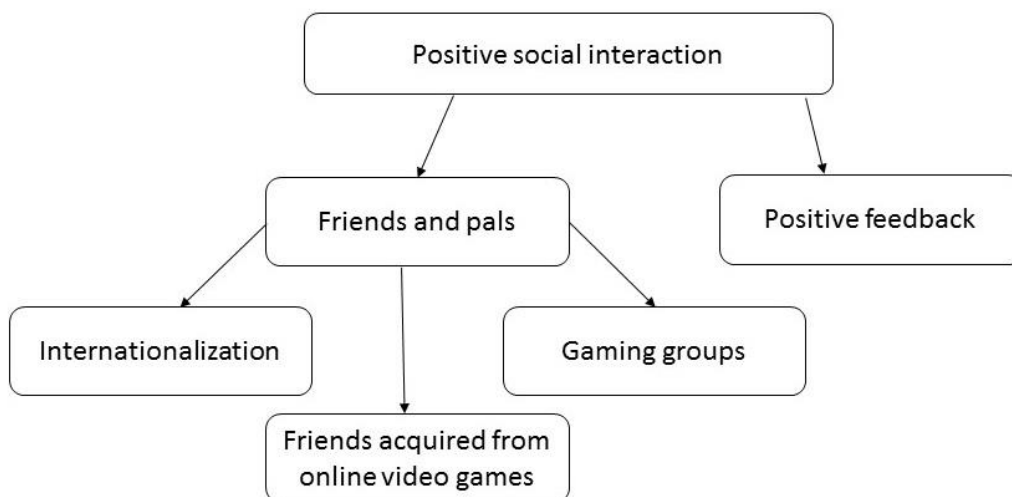
Figure 6. Sub-themes related to positive social interaction.

Friends and pals (in general) were the most frequent theme when discussing the positive social interaction. This theme eventually branched to several sub-themes and is discussed in detail further in this chapter. Acquiring friends, being able to play with others or being able to socially interact with like-mined people in online games was mentioned in one way or another by every research participant. Friends could be either those who person had met in real-life and started playing together, or friends could have been acquired from the gaming community. Whatever the case, playing games with

friends or like-mined people definitely boosted the value of the game, enhanced gaming experiences and increased the time spent gaming.

> *"The game (Subspace) is really simple and straight forward which is enjoyable as it is, but the big part of the gaming experience comes from the interaction of other players in spectator mode, where you don't actively play the game, but rather just watch when others are playing while you talked with other players in spectator mode. – if the social community had been absent from the game and one have no means to communicate with others, I probably wouldn't have played the game for more than couple days." (M1).*

In some cases, the game acted as a discussion client, and like the quote above, the social community was crucial part for the research participant. It is safe to say social community alone was a major force that brought player back again and again to play the game.

> *"At the moment I play pretty much the same games as my friends want to play – then you have that same trustworthy team with you which you do not need to be worried about." (F3).*

> *"For example in Rust it is quite a lot of work if you go to play alone – like building bases and such." (F3).*

Playing with friends was also seen as comforting and reassuring factor, since the player already knows the playing partner a little. In games, which allow players to work together towards common goal, it may be easier to share responsibilities and tasks with the people you already know.

> *"The reason why I play online video games is the company. I would not play those games if there were no chance to play them with friends – social aspect is what drives (me) to play" (M2).*

All the quotes regarding friends gives us clear message of how important factor social aspect in online video games is. The nature and gaming type of the online video game dictates what kind of interaction video game enables. For example, MMORPGs simply cannot function without the social component, because the goal is to accomplish quests together and spend hours playing the game. In lightweight mobile games the main goal is to kill time for few minutes and take quick matches against the unknown players, so the social component might not be necessary. This however does not mean small mobile games do not need or benefit social interaction. What is meant here is to show some games might need social component less than others.

The first sub-theme in the friendship category was the **internationalization**, which simply means getting friends around the world. The internationalization was considered as a positive "side effect" by many research participants, and reasons for this varied. Thinking globally and getting to know new interesting cultures was an example. Meeting and discussing with people from different cultural backgrounds might not be as easy in hobbies taking place in one (physical) place. Online video games and internet in general is global forum located around the world.

> *"Our guild has these real-life meetings each year in some member's home country – these experiences are kind of internationalization and "global way of thinking" – if you think (some other hobbies) like going to gym or something else, you probably don't have same chances at meeting people from so many different cultures – all this is open to everyone if you have a computer and are willing to play. Requirements to participate are low." (F1).*

The quote gives a good example of how online friendships can also turn out to be real-life friendships, despite people living far from each other. Playing with foreign friends can encourage thinking differently and more openly.

> *"It's nice you have players from different parts of the world – it is really nice and interesting that you are able to play with people you otherwise would not meet any other way." (F2).*

> *"Well while playing Left 4 Dead -video game I met other players from different European countries, and then just kept adding them to my friends list on Steam. After that I did not need to wait for my Finnish friends to come and play, but I was able to go and play with the international group. So this alone added at least tens of hours of game play to, well, for example to Left 4 Dead." (M3).*

Being able to play with foreign players was seen as a nice "bonus", which enriched the gaming experience, brought added value to a process of playing the game and increased the time spent playing online video games.

The second sub-theme in the friends category was **friends acquired through online video games**. Many research participants told how they have found new friends by playing online video games and noted that they most likely would not have encountered these people in any other way. Some told these friends have become important persons in their lives, while others told friends from online video games were more acquaintances, who they talk occasionally.

"I have found many friends by playing online games – I probably wouldn't have met these people any other way." (M2).

"Game is a good way to relief stress. (In the game world) you have your friends, who you probably would not meet any other way – you can forget your everyday-life matters for a moment since you are in game world which you find pleasant and likable." (F1).

Some research participants gave the impression that these friends are only available through online video games, meaning any further contact information is not exchanged. Some kept contact with these friends by social media or other online communication tools existing outside the video game itself, and some have even met these new friends face-to-face. A research participant told that social interaction has brought positive things in her life (like stress relief in the quote above), and because of this, participant was also more likely to get back to playing games. Regarding value formation this is an important discovery because co-creation of the value emphasizes how value for a product is created together in many ways

The third sub-theme for the friends category was the **gaming groups** formed by players of certain online video game. This sub-theme overlaps also to the negative side of the social interaction. The negative sides of this theme are discussed further in chapter 4.2.2. The gaming groups can be, for example, a group of friends who play a game together, a guild formed by the group of MMORPG players or a clan in online FPS game.

"(in our guild) we had sort of military ranks, where each member had clear role and responsibilities – there was kind of social pressure to benefit the guild and act towards common goals." (M2).

The social pressure can seem to be a negative aspect. The same principle can also be seen in some other hobbies, like team sports, where every member of the team wants to give their best in order to make the team succeed in whatever goal is pursued together. A football player wants his own team to win and, because of this, trains to be better player. The same way a member of a video game guild or a clan could spend hours improving both his personal skills and team tactics and strategies. Of course not everybody is partaking hobbies involving team work because of this, and this leads us to the negative side of gaming groups -theme, which will be discussed later.

"I had a good clan in World of Tanks, and after the "clan wars" -mode were in-troduced in the game and we went to play as a group in certain time -- game itself relies to "grinding" levels, but the social component and clans is what brings players back." (M1).

"We have the active guild founded 11 years ago. If this guild would not exist, I wouldn't have played Guild Wars nearly as much as I have now." (F1).

The research participants gave an idea of how important the gaming group was, and how it was a big motivator to return to play the game. A gaming group can be seen as any other social group formed around the same interests, gaming groups just happen to be established for gaming and bringing like-minded players together. A research participant brought up a point, where guilds dedicated to same game can have different characteristics. In MMORPGs, a guild can be focused on more to player-versus-player type of gameplay, or player-versus-environment, where the point is to explore the game world together and not to battle against other players.

"Well if someone gives positive feedback then I often get: "Yay, let's play another game!" -kind of feeling – it is the same in online video games as in real-life: when you get positive feedback, it will encourage you." (F2).

Positive feedback was the second theme related to positive social interaction. Positive feedback was seen to be encouraging and empowering, and research participants clearly demonstrated, how overall positive feedback and positive social interaction in online video games encouraged to play more. This encouragement also boosted more impulsive continuation of the playing process, where the well played match and the positive feedback often drove research participants to keep on playing.

"Positive interaction tends to be less, because people don't usually say it out loud". (F3).

The problematic side in positive feedback is the high threshold to say it. The gaming experience benefits a lot from the positive social feedback, so in order to co-create value online video game players should be directed to more positive attitudes and encouraged to give positive comments to increase the co-created value for everyone. Interviews did not reveal any concrete ways of how this "positive shift" would be achieved, but the ways of rewarding for positive behavior is discussed further in chapter 4.4.3.

4.2.2. Themes related to negative social interaction

The positive themes were heavily focused on friendship and team building, whereas the negative themes related to the negative social interaction were more diverse and also more difficult to spot from the research data. Some themes also overlapped with each other. Some of the sub-themes were reported separately by the research participants, while others reported these same themes to be more "cause and consequence" -type chain of events. For example, negative feedback was discussed separately and it was also seen as a consequence of competitive nature of online video games. Figure 7 will elaborate more hierarchies and relations of these sub-themes related to negative social interaction. Dashed lines illustrate the vaguer relation between these themes.
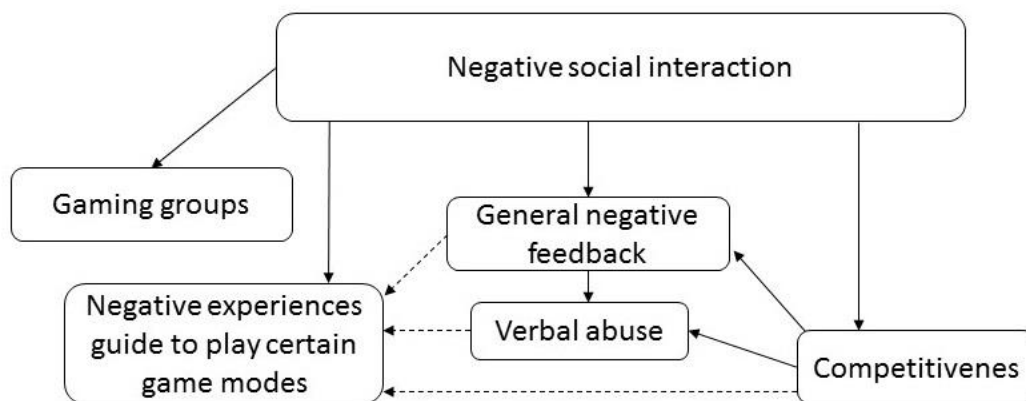
Figure 7. Sub-themes related to negative social interaction.

"Of course every (online) video game has those players who are sharing their "expert" opinions in every situation." (F3).

"If you are playing in certain role in a game, and you play it as general consensus thinks how the role should be played, you'll be fine in most cases. – If you don't stick to the "rules" it will cause irritation among other players." (F2).

The Negative feedback was the most frequent negative theme in research data. The nature of negative feedback varied between the research participants. In the most cases participants reported the negative feedback as something that has to do with the way participant is playing the game. The quotes mentioned above clearly show how some

research participants felt how trying out new things was a bad idea, and how gaming communities shunned the idea of someone trying something new. What is considered as negative feedback depends a lot on the person. However, clear difference between the good and the bad feedback was what kind of content the message contained. The tendency to point out the mistakes and the criticism towards the player's playing style were seen in the negative way. The researchers own remark here is that the constructive criticism can be interpreted as negative. While other players may value advices from others, some players may think they know better than anyone else and thus regard this kind of feedback as a negative, even when adviser's original motive was to help others. So it is important to keep in mind that positive messages can be understood in negative way!

> *"If there were new players asking for advice, others often willingly helped and answered those questions." (F3).*

The friendliness towards new players was one of the key points where the negative feedback was brought up. The research participants made clear distinction between games and their player communities. The participants reported that at times there where huge differences between different games on how "beginner questions" where treated and what kind of answers you got to those questions. This can be a damaging factor for game's value, if new players feel they are not welcome, or if they are driven off some other way.

The Verbal abuse was mentioned usually at the same time when research participants discussed about the negative feedback in general. The verbal abuse often was more personal, with the intention to offend others.

> *"Basic name calling and trolling are most often part of the game". (M2).*

> *"I'm sure there has been situations where heated conversations are directed towards me and between other players too". (M1).*

The first quote gives a bit gloomy message of how players have grown to accept the negative social behavior and direct verbal abuse as part of the gaming experience in some games. This was also demonstrated when later in the interview many research participants were eager to discuss what kind of measures should be taken to prevent negative behavior.

The positive side that came up during interviews was that no one gave any examples of verbal abuse. Rather everyone who brought verbal abuse up gave only general characterizations about the issue and acknowledged the presence of the issue. During interviews researcher did not ask research participants to give any specific examples of verbal abuse in online video games. This was mostly because while composing the research questions the goal was to get research participants to give emergent and distinctive answers with no outside pressure or guidance.

However, when discussing the verbal abuse the research participants did not convey any strong feelings of being hurt deeply. This could mean the verbal abuse has not left any long time mental scars to the participants, otherwise participants would most likely remember and point out these occurrences. While the quote below discusses the negative behavior in general, it could also support the theory that negative feedback and verbal abuse are forgotten quickly.

> *"that (negative interaction) may make me to not want to play the game for a while if negative feedback has been plentiful, but after that you usually forget about it and return to play." (F2).*

Some research participants brought up the **competitiveness** and the competitive nature of video games as one cause of the negative social behavior. The competitiveness is playing against other players while having competitive component present in game. Most often this component was the possibility to advance in the leader boards and/or scoring points and acquiring rating. This rating is most often seen as a representation of player's skill level, so higher the rating level, the better skilled player.

> *"I have noticed how the mood can get heated when playing hardcore player versus player –type game mode, which is really competitive in nature". (F1).*

> *"Of course you will get negative feedback if you are playing ranked (game mode) and do something wrong, like you will then hear about it immediately." (F3).*

The competitiveness was presented as one of the causes for the negative feedback and the verbal abuse. The quotes mentioned above give a good insight to the issue. When playing competitively the players most often take gaming more seriously, because a competitive play offers a way to measure your own performance in the game. This can therefore lead us to a conflict of motives, where one player might be aiming to improve his play style and becoming the best player, while other has humbler goals and is only

seeking to find out how high or low he can score with his present skills, and might not necessary be looking to improve or advance his skills or rating. These "casual" players might also be looking to have more well balanced teams, which is usually the case in the competitive game modes, where the players are matched per their current rating. The casual game modes are usually more casual, where gaming habits and rules of game play can be more loose.

These types of conflicts are an extremely potent way of causing heated arguments and outright verbal abuse, when hopes, goals and intentions are not meeting between players playing on the same side. The level of emphasis in team play is also important to note here, since many team based online video games truly require players to work together towards common goals, and possibility to so called "solo play" or "carrying" (players' ability to bring team to victory all by himself) is nonexistent. It is also important to note how in some games the competitive mindset of playing could "bleed" into more casual game modes too, leading the overall mood to be tense in every game mode.

From the value co-destructive perspective, we can see a clear conflict in goals and intentions here. The original goal with having more competitive way of playing is to give players more "serious" game mode, and this way allow "hardcore" players to have an increased value from the game. However, the conflicts in the goals and the intentions may seriously destroy the value of the game from players.

Noteworthy is that the competitiveness was not a negative factor in online video games as it is, according to research participants. Rather the competitiveness was seen a reason for negative social behavior, so having a competitive component in video games should not be the value destructive factor. A lot depends on how this competitiveness is executed and how the game mechanics and the gaming community support diverse motives to play competitive game modes. Nevertheless, the role of competitiveness in the negative feedback can be much more substantial than it originally might seem to be.

> *"Negative social experiences have not pushed me away from any game, but it has guided me to play more certain game modes. – I have consciously avoided these player-versus-player –game modes because of negative social experiences." (F1).*

While not the most prominent theme, the social experiences have **directed the research participant towards certain game modes** while avoiding those game modes that provide, or have provided negative social experiences in the past. A research participant did

declare that the negative social experiences have guided to select or choose certain game modes. This matter, however, could be much more prominent issue if research participants were asked specifically how they select the preferred game mode in one online video game. Now this is only an emergent point from one research participant.

As mentioned before, in figure 7 the relations between verbal abuse, competitiveness, negative feedback and guided selection in gaming modes are not clear, since the research participants did not provide a clear cause and effect –chain between the themes. However, since the competitiveness, the negative feedback and the verbal abuse are to some extent related to each other, it is safe to assume that these are also the factors that can guide and drive the game mode selection process.

The value co-creational and co-destructional view in mind this type of effects of social behavior are not wanted, but it can be argued how severe the effects in value formation are. The original goal was to find out if players have stopped playing certain games if they have encountered a negative social interaction. If the players outright stop playing and never return to play the game, or significantly reduce the time spent playing the game because of the negative experiences, the value reduction is obvious. However, if players select certain game modes within the game because of the negative experiences, the possibility of value deterioration is up to debate, because players are still playing the game.

When players feel they are forced out from the game mode they would like to play, we can assume value destruction has occurred. If players on the other hand feel they can move between game modes and keep on playing the game they like, despite the fact some parts of the game provide negative experiences, the value destruction is not happening or it is not as severe as if players are forced out of the game mode they prefer or simply quit playing the game completely.

Video games that rely solely on online play should aim to provide a good amount of different game modes, should we want to consider this problem and have solutions to it in the game. This however does not remove the need to address the problem of negative social experiences, but at least the players have an option to keep playing the game even if they get tired of playing some particular game mode.

The last theme related to the negative social infarction was **gaming groups**. The gaming groups were discussed earlier in themes related to positive social interaction, but during the interviews gaming groups presented also the negative side of themselves.

> *"the social pressure around the game grow too big for me – clan and the social community was so tightly knit together -- the game would have required much more intensive attitude and more time to play, and I just didn't see a point why continue anymore." (M2).*

The quote mentioned above is clear example of how the gaming community can be a negative factor in the value formation and creation. A research participant reported the time required to play the game by the clan was one of the reasons why he eventually stopped playing. While most of the time the changes in life can be the simple explanation to why people don't have time for hobbies as they used to, it can also be that the community around the hobby is too demanding, and wants participants to spend more and more time and resources with the common hobby.

Most often MMORPG- and MMO-type games have more than just one clan or guild to choose from, and these communities usually have an emphasis on different things, so solution to peer pressure from one clan could be fixed by changing to other clan more suited to player's preferences.

The negative side of gaming groups is important factor to consider when analyzing the negative social experiences in online video games, while at the same time remembering in most cases positive factors usually outweigh the negatives. This was also pointed out by the research participants. For game developers clans and guilds as a value creator and value destructor are in most cases out of reach, since especially the bigger gaming groups have own external websites, organizations and they communicate through discussion boards and external communication programs.

Gaming groups are a good example where value co-creation and co-destruction can occur at the same time, even though some sources in theoretical framework discussed if simultaneous value co-creation and co-destruction is possible. Gaming groups are also good example how some factors not directly accessible or controllable by the producer of service can significantly enrich or hinder the value co-creation or co-destruction process. Since these emergent factors existing outside of the producers' range can be difficult to control or develop, further research on the topic would be in order. This problem

is also addressed further in the research results chapter (in section 4.4.1.), since one of the themes is revolving around the development and control of gaming communities and here research participants had a lot of good and valuable points to give.

4.2.3. Communication tools and nature of social interaction

Different communication channels were presented in chapter 2.4., where they were divided into internal and external communication channels. Because the topic of this thesis is all about the communication and social interaction, research participants were also asked what different communication methods have been used for positive and negative interaction from their perspective. This information is useful for researchers, if they in the future wish to study further the ways of communication in video games or find out if the lack of certain communication tool (for example a voice chat) has any effect on social interaction. The game developers should also benefit from this knowledge. They can develop further communication tools in the games and try to address problems caused by the negative behavior form a certain channel, or boost positive experiences even more.

> *"Text chat has proven to be effective channel for negative communication to some players." (M3).*

The internal text chat in online video games was reported most frequently when discussing the negative social interaction with the research participants. Thus, we can say most of **the negative communication** is conducted through the internal text chat. The purpose of the quote above is to display how many participants felt that the text chat seemed to be the easiest way for the negative players to express their negative attitudes. Few participants believed the text chat was the most frequent source of negative behavior because it is easily available, it is fast to use (provided negative person can type quickly), and its nature is anonymous. Online video games are in most cases played using nickname, and this nickname is used to indicate who the sender of this message is. The nickname can be whatever the player choses and thus the text chat can be an anonymous way of communicating. The quote below also elaborates further this anonymous nature and fast usage.

> *"It is quick to just press one button, write your message and then send it. – When compared to the fact you would have to speak your message using your own voice (in voice chat) – it is surely something that limits what you say (in voice chat).".*

(M3). (Participant compared the nature of internal voice chat and text chat in this quote).

In few cases, the internal voice chat was mentioned also as a source of negative feedback, but as the quote above elaborates, it is much less anonymous since the negative player must use his own voice. This was seen as a limiting factor for its usage. However, some research participants reported that the internal voice chat was also used to negative communication if internal voice chat was present in game. Still, the internal text chat was by far most frequent source of the negative feedback.

One participant also mentioned how he had noticed the internal voice chat is often used in **neutral communication**, where players want to give an advice to others or to plan out basic tactics with other members of a team who they probably do not know. The neutral communication was a concept which was not presented to research participants. This is something future researchers should take into consideration when planning out research on the communications topic.

While the negative communications concentrated mostly on the internal communication channels and more specifically on the internal text chat, the **positive communication** was far more spread out to different communication channels. The most prominent of these channels was the external voice communication programs used with friends. Many reported using external communication programs more frequently with friends, or other players they knew somehow. Some research participants also reported that they had joined in voice discussion groups where they only knew one player prior to joining the group, but even in these cases the communication tone ranged from positive to neutral.

"it (the communication) gets more positive when you get to speak with others (using voice communication)". (M2).

Although some research participants did not make a clear distinction between the internal and the external communication channels, it was still clear most of the negative interaction was received in the written form, while the positive communication was expressed and received vocally. Some research participants also brought up that the most positive messages have come from friends. Even though the earlier text chat was categorized heavily as a source of negative communication, some research participants expressed they have got positive comments and messages through internal text chat.

In the end it is not possible to make a clear distinction which communication channel is explicitly the source of either the positive or the negative interaction, since according to the research data all mentioned communication channels have provided both positive and negative messages to sample group. The text chat and internal communication channels in general were clearly on the more negative side, so this knowledge should help developers to improve further these channels to promote the positive interaction better. This should also help to increase the value and to improve the user experience of the game, when the players are behaving well.

While not fitting to research focus, some participants also reported ways to communicate outside the gaming process. These included using external discussion programs utilizing IRC-network, discussion boards affiliated to a game in question or forums used by bigger gaming groups, like clans of guilds. Meeting face to face was also one way of communication occurring outside the gaming process, and participants also mentioned that they had discussed with other players while gaming if members of the same gaming group were in same space, such as LAN-parties.

Lastly it is important to note nobody in the sample group mentioned an emote system as a negative or positive source of interaction. The research data does not provide any good reason for this, but one explanation could be the fact that the research participants do not see it as a noteworthy communication method because of its limited nature. One research participant did mention the emote system while discussing the nature of the social community of a certain game, but did not give the impression he considered it as a proper way of interaction. His example included how some players were combining different emotes together to get an amusing combination out of them.

4.3. THEME 2: Importance of the social community for online video games

Questions 4 and 5b sought to find the answer on how important the social community for the video game actually is. The goal was to measure how high or low the research participants value the social community of video games and thus how much the value of the game depends on the social community. Table 4 below presents the average results from question 4 and 5b.

Table 4. Averages for questions 4 and 5b.

Averages to question 4		Averages to question 5b	
All	7,83	All	7,67
Female	8,00	Female	7,67
Male	7,67	Male	7,67

Question 4 was intended to be as general question, where research participants evaluated the importance of the social community in online video games in general. The goal was to find out how much the research participants value the social community in general and also what they expect when starting to play new online video game.

On scale 1 to 10 (1= not important at all, 10=very important), the research participants valued the importance of a social community on the average of 7,8, which is quite high score. Females valued social community a little higher than males, but the difference was not even half a point, so it is debatable if this is a significant anomaly.

Question 5b was intended to be a more directed question, since question 5 asked the research participants to select a game and to describe the social community of this one game in detail. The goal was to get the participants to give answers which are more concentrated to their possible favorite game, or a game they have spent a lot of time with, although it was not emphasized the selected game must hold significant importance to them. The results did not provide any new significant information, since the average answer from all the participants was 7,67. This is hardly any different form earlier 7,8 score, meaning research participants value the social community in online video games regardless whether it is their preferred game or if the discussion is more general. Notable is averages between males and females in question 5b did not fluctuate at all. The most notable difference between questions 4 and 5b was average scores of females, but even this variation was smaller than half a point, so the importance of this variation is more or less insignificant. Table 5 presents the individual answers to questions from research participants.

Table 5. Individual answers to questions 4 and 5b from research participants.

Individual answers form research participants			
	Gender	Question 4	Question 5b
Participant 1	Female	9	10
Participant 2	Female	7	7
Participant 3	Female	8	6
Participant 4	Male	10	8
Participant 5	Male	7	9
Participant 6	Male	6	6

As mentioned earlier, the research participants think that the social community is quite important part of the game, since the overall average of all answers (both questions included), was 7,75. On scale 1 to 10 it is safe to say 7,75 is quite a high score, so the research participants clearly care and value the social part of the video games. We can also assume that the social community is an important factor for value formation and overall user- and gaming experience.

Other factors like the game play, the story, the graphics, etc. where not measured in this research, and in fact, it was heavily emphasized that the research participants evaluate only the social community and its importance. This is a crucial factor to consider, because the video games are entertainment products composed from various parts. Taking the results from this study into consideration, it is safe to assume that the social community of online video games is important part to players and thus developers should pay a close attention when integrating social components to games. A great user experience influenced by a good social community can significantly increase the appeal and overall value proposition to customers (in our case, the gamers).

4.4. THEME 3: Improving the social communities of online video games

Theme 3 was derived entirely from the answers obtained from question 6. Question 6 was originally intended to be a closing question for the interview where the research participants were given the chance to give their own opinions and input on how gaming communities should be maintained, developed and controlled. During the interview it turned out that the research participants had really in-depth thoughts, ideas and opinions on the matter, and thus it felt important to report some of the findings here.

4.4.1. Who is responsible for the well-being of social communities?

"Of course the game developer has to have some part in this, but also they simply cannot monitor everything and see everything, so players have big responsibility too to give feedback. Otherwise the developers cannot know what is happening all the time". (F3).

"I'd say the players are mainly responsible in many way, but there are some cases where game developers should also take responsibility -- like cheating and hacking which clearly destroys the community of the game". (M3).

The quotes above clearly state that the opinions which were reported by all the research participants in one way or another. The clear result was that players are always responsible for their actions and that the game creator should provide some tools to give power to players. One of these tools was a simple reporting system, where the players are able to report negative players to the game developers. Many research participants acknowledged how game developers simply cannot monitor everything, since many bigger online video games can have thousands of matches ongoing at the same time, and sometimes concurrent players are counted in millions. The research participants suggested that players should have more power and possibilities to influence the gaming experience by being able to report players who misbehaved.

One participant looked the issue from the gaming group point of view, and stated how important the leadership of the guild is to build up and foster the good community. Therefore, it is important to know what includes in the concept of social community. The guilds, the clans and the other gaming groups can be hard or impossible to monitor or to control by the game developer, and it can be argued if the developer should even be responsible for the actions of individual gaming groups. As stated earlier, a sample group suggests that a game developer should be the party which gives tools to players to monitor gaming communities and if needed, takes actions against misbehaving players when it is necessary. If the gaming community is outside of the developers reach (like clan or guild), it should be up to the gaming group itself to monitor and to control behavior.

4.4.2. How player behavior should be monitored?

> *"Players should be able to collectively monitor the social community by them-selves". (M3).*

> *"Moderators should be able to monitor text chat, and there should be the report-ing system, enabling players to report misconduct. There also should be relatively swift action to these reports and not the case where someone might read through these reports maybe a week later". (M2).*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the most recurring opinion from the research par-ticipants was the desire to give more responsibility to players themselves. The most prominent way of doing this was the reporting system. The players could give instant feedback from the player's actions and thus be able to have an impact on the develop-ment and maintenance process of social community. Some of the research participants argued that giving players more ways to influence social community would solve the resource problem, when the monitoring of social community happens alongside the gaming process.

However, if these tools and mechanics are deployed, they must not be compulsory so that the monitoring process will not become a burden. Additionally, if these monitoring mechanics are used in the game, they must be designed in a way they do not turn against their purpose. For example, the self-monitoring tools can be used to bully by reporting innocent players, leading innocent players to be punished from bad behavior even if they have not done anything wrong.

The reports could also be reviewed by players themselves, and this type of monitoring mechanic was also supported by research participants when the idea was presented. When presented by the research of Kou & Nardi (2013) (also presented in the literature review), the idea of "democratic" judgement system was received positively.

> *"I'll admit this is something that probably is really hard to implement in practice, but I'd say there should not be monitoring or control at all. Not any kind." (M1).*

The quote above was a clear exception from earlier answers. Research participant (M1) based his answer to MMO-games and how it is important to have less control if the goal is to achieve emergent phenomena within the game. By this he meant natural occurrenc-es which are present in the real world. He also stated that if the player base is big

enough, the unwanted players, such as those who misbehave, will eventually drift into sidelines when the big community starts to shun the behavior which does not fit the greater morale.

> *"Different games might benefit when they have distinct social communities, that's why I think, instead of game developers saying what is acceptable and what is not, it would be good if the community is able to shape itself and thus be perfect for the particular game. (M3).*

The quote above from M3 is a good summary for this chapter. While discussing with the sample group it was clear how much earlier experiences and preferred games influenced the ideas and opinions of monitoring and control. This is important to note, because online video games should not be treated as one single entity when developing models and theories out of them. Online video games span into a wide array of different game genres, and the whole nature of the game might be totally different from another. However, the social component and ability to play with other persons is always present in the game. That is why the game communities can differ from each other and also the set of rules, of what is acceptable and what is not, are different.

The chances to influence the social community could be seen as the value co-creational feature, where the players can literally co-create, or rather, co-increase the value of a game by improving, shaping and developing the social community to fit the game better, while at the same time rejecting the unwanted behavior and thus avoiding the value co-destruction. The game developers' responsibility therefore is to set up these self-shaping tools in a way they do not turn against the intended purpose and start to deteriorate the value.

4.4.3.   Sanctions and rewards for negative and positive social behavior

> *"Either complete ban from the game, or temporary block of some sort, depending what kind of offence is in question". (F1)*

Before the interview ended, the research participants were asked opinions about rewarding and punishing for the positive and the negative social behavior. When discussing the appropriate **sanctions for negative social behavior**, most recurring option was banning the offender from the game, either permanently or for a set period of time, depending on the nature and gravity of the offence.

The alternative option to ban the player from the game was limiting the game experience for certain time. This was presented as a light option, when the offender must have some sort of punishment as a wakeup call for his actions, but does not necessary deserve full ban from the game. Ways to limit the gaming experience were also suggested. One way was limiting the interaction possibilities. For example, if the offender misbehaves in the text chat of the game, the offenders access to text chat could be denied for certain time period, while he still is able to play the game. The other option for limiting the game was to deny the access to the certain game modes or limiting the game-play experience some other way. For example, in racing games access to higher tier racing cars could be prohibited.

The second option was to forget the manual banning altogether. Instead, the game should have the sanctioning mechanisms built-in, in a way of "your deeds have consequences". This could also be called the **social rating system**. When a player misbehaves, his co-players are able to rate his performance and give negative points to the negative player. When the player has accumulated enough negative points, game starts to automatically deal sanctions. The sanctions can be the same kind in nature as presented previously. The sanctions can also be subtler, for example, when socially misbehaving the player would in time find himself playing with other players who are also socially negative. In other words, negative points would eventually match you up with the same kind of players. The game could also count the negative points automatically. In racing games if player collides considerably more with other players, the game can assume the player is intentionally trying to sabotage the gaming experience of other players and thus, will start to limit the gaming experience or match the player with other intentionally colliding racing drivers.

The research participant who suggested this kind of built-in sanctioning mechanisms also underlined how important it would be to design these mechanics individually to every game, and not to try and have "one-size-fits-all" -type of all-around solution. Otherwise the risk of mechanism working wrong (like punishing innocent players) is too high.

The opinions for **rewarding the positive social behavior** were much more divided among research participants. Some research participants thought it would be a good idea to share "positivity points" to the players, while others said the positive behavior should not be rewarded.

The persons who supported the rewarding of positive behavior also suggested that the positivity would have some real benefits. One suggestion was that when players accumulate enough of these positivity points they would obtain some in-game content not available in any other way as a reward. The examples of these suggestions were the custom cosmetic enhancements for player characters, custom avatar pictures, etc. These cosmetic rewards would be purely aesthetic in nature, and would not give any performance boost in the game.

Another suggestion was how the positive behavior would be visible to others. This was seen as a benefit in situations where players are assembling gaming teams, so visible behavior score would act as an indicator of player's social habits. The player who has a lot of negative social points would be a less preferable player compared to the player with a high social score.

> *"This is only my opinion, but I think rewarding players from good behavior is not necessary." (M3).*

> *"Sometimes (if game has rewarding system for good behavior) players share positivity points to others even if players simply were not utter nuisance to each other – like in real life people do not come and thank you for not being horrible to others!". (M3).*

Some research participants felt the positive behavior should be seen as something that is expected as a standard from all players, not something that should specifically be rewarded from. One example of this is how positive and healthy gaming community and good gaming experience should be enough of a reward itself. One participant used World of Tanks as an example, and stated that in the game good behavior is when players try to work together to win the match. This is something that is expected from everyone. Hence some participants felt good behavior is something every normal person should be capable of and thus should not be rewarded from.

As a summary, the sanctions for bad behavior were strongly supported by the sample group. While some suggested more traditional ways of punishing players, like banning and blocking from the game, new ways such as limiting the gaming experience or having "deed have consequences" -type of automatic game limiter were also proposed. Rewarding positive social behavior did divide the sample group more, where the others liked the idea of rewarding positive players, some on the other hand disliked it for valid reasons.

As stated earlier, games are different, and variation between the gaming genres is great. This leads us to point out how important it is to acknowledge limitations and possibilities of each gaming genre and each game when designing and implementing ways to promote and enhance the social community. As pointed out in chapter 4.3., sample group reported how social community is an important part of the game. Thus, the positive and negative effects of social community to gaming experience can be assumed to be in big role in value formation process. Therefore, it is important to find out appropriate measures deal with both the positive and the negative social behavior in online video games.

5. DISCUSSION

The contribution of this thesis is that the social interaction does influence the value formation in online video games. The positive social experience is also much more possible factor to increase the overall value of the game, when compared to the negative social experience, which alone can have some consequence to value destruction. The negative experiences however will not outweigh the benefits of positive interaction.

From the theoretical point of view, video games are quite a lot different software products if compared to the regular software products and services used as tools in workplaces. The software made for certain task and used as part of a job is most often designed to be easy to use. Video games, however, are the software products made for recreational usage in mind, where the players want to use these products and are ready to spend hours with them. The theoretical framework discusses hedonic and pragmatic drivers for using products, and in video games the drivers most certainly are hedonic in nature.

Lintula et al. (2017: 1638) noted how scientific literature is divided on the matter if the value co-creation and co-destruction can occur in the same process and thus be contradictory. Regarding the data gathering process of this study, it was evident co-creation and co-destruction can be contradictory, since the players can encounter both positive and negative social interaction at the same time while gaming. For example, a friend over external voice chat might be praising the player's actions, while an unknown team mate is verbally abusing the same player over the internal text chat.

Hassenzahl (2003: 2) argues in his user experience model (figure 3) how the user's perspective in the user experience can vary depending on the situation. According to Hassenzahl (2003: 2), the consequences of apparent product character can be different depending on the usage situation, and this was also evident from the research data of this thesis. When sample group reported playing games with people they already know, the social experience was always described to be at least somewhat positive. However, it was not studied if the presence of friends helps players to cope with negative experiences, so further research on the matter would be in order.

The goal of this research was to find out if social behavior has any influence in value formation of online video games. Only one research participant reported he has stopped

playing online video games only because of the bad social experiences, and this was more related to increased social pressure to perform better, not from verbal abuse and such. If social experience was the influencing factor to stop playing certain video game, research participants reported there was other reasons influencing the decision to stop (like getting bored playing the same game, gaming pals moving to play other games).

5.1. Implications for research

For further studies one good topic would be to find out what are the reasons that drive players away from video games and/or deteriorates the value of the game? In the view of this study social interaction and social community does not seem to be the most severe reason to stop playing so it would be valuable to find out what the other reasons to stop playing are. When asked if the social community has made research participants to spend more time and resources to games (and thus increased the value of the game), the answer was always yes. To summarize; social community and interaction does promote the value co-creation of online video games through social communities, but according to this study, social interaction is not severely co-destroying the value. At least not as a single reason. Also there were no significant differences between genders.

In the future studies the role of communication channels should also be addressed more thorough way. This study only focused on finding out what communication channels where used for the positive and the negative communication, but the nature of this communication was not studied. For example, positive communication can be anything to saying "Well played" to another player or trying to help other players, to form deep social relationships with other players. The prominent factor in positive communication might also be the good feeling caused by the social community, which is then associated with the positive communication. In other words, what makes the communication process itself positive might not be only dependent on the communication process itself, but other factors could also influence this positive sensation.

While gathering and constructing the theoretical framework for this study, it was evident how similar topics emerged from both the value co-creation/co-destruction and user experience literature. For example, both discussed the hedonic and pragmatic nature of information systems and the software in general. As a suggestion; the future researches of both theoretical concepts should cross-explore these theories and concepts

more and see if the software research, the information system studies and the usability research could have something to offer to each another.

5.2. Implications for practice

For the practice research results clearly show how important the social community is for the gaming experience, when talking about online video games. The game developers should do everything they can to ensure the existence of a healthy gaming community in and around their games, since as shown in the research results, the positive social experiences will increase the time spent playing the game.

For the game developers the research data had one prominent proposition for moderating the user behavior in online video games, and it was the social rating system (presented in chapter 4.4.3.). Many competitive online video games feature the so-called skill rating, which measures the skill level of a player. The social rating would in turn measure the player's overall behavior in video game, and depending on the game either limit the gaming experience or match the players according to their social rating. This is also a good topic for further academic studies.

5.3. Limitations

It is important to note the answers given by the research participants are tied to the moment the answers were given. This is because participants gave answers based on their previous experiences, and these experiences in all the cases expanded to a timeline of several years. If the participants have acquired new experiences which would somehow alter their answers, then the outcome based on research data could also be different. The research participants had been playing online games for several years, so it is safe to assume the likelihood of them acquiring experiences which could alter the outcome of this research is unlikely.

The quotations from the research participants in chapter four are more or less direct translations from Finnish to English. Translating the data from one language to another can expose to the "lost in translation" -effect, where the original nature of the message gets altered. However, all the quotes in chapter four are as close to exact word-for-word

translations as possible to prevent this effect and to offer the research data as unaltered as possible.

All the research participants were confident at giving answers during the interview process, and all had a lot of experience at playing online video games prior to interviews. Thus it is safe to say the data is descriptive in nature and valid. The researcher also has long history (over ten years) of playing online video games and following the gaming industry trends as a hobby, so this fact also should increase the trustworthiness of research data analysis. The researcher did not have prior experience on the research interviewing, but to minimize the reliability risk caused by this factor, the researcher studied the research interviewing methodology in advance and planned the research interviews according to these previously studied theories.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Interview questions form in Finnish

HAASTATTELUKYSYMYKSET

Ennakkotiedot haastattelusta:

Tämä haastattelu ja siinä esille nousseita asioita tullaan käyttämään tutkimusmateriaalina keväällä 2017 Vaasan yliopistossa työstettävässä Pro Gradu -tutkielmassa. Tutkielmassa voidaan käyttää suoria lainauksia, mutta haastateltavien nimiä ei tulla tutkielmassa esittämään. Ainoita **yksilöiviä henkilötietoja tulevat olemaan henkilön ikä ja sukupuoli.** Näin ollen henkilöstä voidaan puhua tutkielmassa mallilla: "Nainen, 25". **Tutkielma tulee olemaan julkisesti saatavilla tiedekirjasto Tritonian tietokannasta. Haastattelut nauhoitetaan.**

ENNAKKOTIETO: Netin välityksellä pelattavia videopelejä -termillä tarkoitetaan PC- tai konsolipeliä, jota pelataan toisten pelaajien kanssa internetin välityksellä. Toiset pelaajat voivat pelata joko kanssasi samalla puolella tai sinua vastaan.
ENNAKKOTIETO: Pelaajayhteisöllä voidaan tarkoittaa sekä koko pelin pelaajakuntaa yleisesti, tai vastavuoroisesti tietyn pelaajaryhmän muodostamaa pelikiltaa tai muuta ryhmää.

Perustiedot:
Ikä: Sukupuoli:

Karkea arvio nettipeleihin käytetystä ajasta:

Luonnehdi lyhyesti millainen pelaaja olet? (casual-pelaaja, enemmän peleihin panostava, jotain tältä väliltä, ym.):

Haastattelukysymykset:
1. Mitä netin välityksellä pelattavia videopelejä olet pelannut? Pelejä voi olla yksi tai useampia. Sinun ei tarvitse listata jokaista pelaamasi peliä, vain merkittävimmät tai muuten mieleen parhaiten painuneet.

2. Oletko koskaan kohdannut positiivista tai negatiivista sosiaalista kanssakäymistä netin välityksellä pelattavissa videopeleissä? Onko tämä kanssakäyminen kohdistunut nimenomaan sinuun vai ollut kahden muun pelaajan välistä?

3. Oletko kokenut, että positiivinen tai negatiivinen sosiaalinen kanssakäyminen olisi jollakin tavalla vaikuttanut siihen, pidätkö videopelistä tai et?

    a. Oletko esimerkiksi innostunut pelaaman peliä enemmän kuin normaalisti positiivisten sosiaalisten kokemusten vuoksi? Pystytkö kuvailemaan näitä kokemuksia lyhyesti?

    b. Oletko vastavuoroisesti vähentänyt pelin pelaamista tai lopettanut pelin pelaamisen kokonaan negatiivisten sosiaalisten kokemusten vuoksi? Pystytkö kuvailemaan näitä kokemuksia lyhyesti?

    c. Pystytkö erittelemään millaisia kommunikointikanavia pitkin negatiiviset ja positiiviset sosiaaliset kanssakäymiset yleensä välittyvät? (Esim. normaali teksti-chat pelissä tai pelin ulkopuolella, voice chat, erilliset kommunikaatiovälineet kuten Skype tai Teamspeak-tyyppiset sovellukset, ym.).

4. Arvioi asteikolla 1-10 (1=Ei lainkaan tärkeä, 10=Erittäin tärkeä) kuinka tärkeä netissä pelattavien videopelien sosiaalinen ilmapiiri ja pelaajayhteisö on juuri sinulle miellyttävän pelielämyksen kannalta? **HUOM! Arvioi vain sosiaalista ilmapiiriä ja yhteisöä, älä pelin muita asioita kuten grafiikkaa, pelattavuutta, tarinaa, ym.**

5. Valitse jokin netin välityksellä pelattava videopeli, jota olet pelannut.

    a. Luonnehdi lyhyesti pelin sosiaalista ilmapiiriä ja pelaajayhteisöä.

    b. Arvioi asteikolla 1-10, kuinka tärkeä kyseisen pelin sosiaalinen ilmapiiri ja pelaajayhteisö ovat sinulle miellyttävän pelielämyksen kannalta? (1=Ei lainkaan tärkeä, 10=Erittäin tärkeä). **HUOM! Arvioi vain sosiaalista ilmapiiriä ja yhteisöä, älä pelin muita asioita kuten grafiikkaa, pelattavuutta, tarinaa, ym.**

6. Kuka on mielestäsi vastuussa peliyhteisön ilmapiirin kehittämisestä ja ylläpitämisestä?

    a. Millä tavalla pelaajayhteisöä, pelaajien käytöstä ja pelin ilmapiiriä pitäisi valvoa peleissä?

    b. Mitkä ovat mielestäsi sopivia sanktioita huonosti käyttäytyville pelaajille? Entä pitäisikö hyvin käyttäytymisestä palkita jollain tavalla?

Appendix 2: English translation of the interview questions form

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Preliminary information regarding the interview:
This interview and all highlighted matters will be used as research material in Master's thesis worked at the University of Vaasa, which is scheduled to be ready in spring 2017. Thesis may use direct quotes from the interviews, but names of the research participants will not be published. Only **specified information collected about the research participants will be age and gender.** If research participant is addressed directly in thesis, it will be formatted as: "Female, 25". **This master's thesis will be publicly available from the online database of the science library Tritonia. Interviews will be recorded.**

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION: Term "online video games" indicates either PC- or game console-games which are played with other players. Other players can play on the same side or against you.
PRELIMINARY INFORMATION: Player community can indicate the whole player base of a certain online video game, or members of a smaller gamin group organized by the players of certain online video game.

Basic information:
Age: Gender:

Rough estimate of the time spent playing online video games:

Describe briefly what kind of video game player are you? (Casual player, enthusiast, something in between, etc.):

Interview questions:
1. What online video games have you been playing? Name a few, but you do not have to list every single online video game you have been playing. A few that come in to your mind first are enough.

2. Have you ever encountered positive or negative social interaction in online video games? Has this interaction been directed specifically at you, or has the interaction been between two other parties?

3. Do you feel positive or negative social interaction has somehow influenced the fact weather you like some video game or not?
    a. For example, have you gotten more interested at playing certain video game because of positive social interaction? Can you describe this briefly?
    b. On the other hand, have you reduced playing, or even stopped playing altogether some online video game because of negative social interaction? Can you describe this briefly?
    c. Can you specify the different communication channels where positive and negative social interactions are relayed? (Example: different text chats, voice chat, external communication programs like Skype or TeamSpeak, etc.).

4. Evaluate on scale 1-10 (1= not important at all, 10= very important) how important the social atmosphere and player community is to you for positive gaming experience? **Please evaluate only the social atmosphere and player community and disregard factors like graphics, playability, story, etc.).**

5. Pick an online video game you have been playing at some point in your life.
    a. Describe briefly the overall social atmosphere and player community of this game.
    b. Evaluate on scale 1-10, how important the social atmosphere and player community is to you for positive gaming experience when playing the chosen game? (1= not important at all, 10= very important). **Please evaluate only the social atmosphere and player community and disregard factors like graphics, playability, story, etc.).**

6. Who do you think is responsible for the improving and maintaining the overall mood of the gaming community?
    a. In what way should the gaming community, player behavior and mood of the community be policed or regulated?
    b. What are proper sanctions for players who behave badly? What about good behavior, should it be rewarded?