

**The Creator's Hub: Opportunities and Capturing Value Through Co-creation in HAMK's Valkeakoski Digital Studio**



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The aims of this research were to collect data regarding a completely new digital studio and its utilization, as well as the building process to provide a thorough guide revolving around co-creation of digital content to simplify and create an efficient way of utilizing digital studios to maximize the amount of value, ranging from gaining new competences to promoting stakeholder's businesses, or broadening the online presence of all the stakeholders involved. The theoretical part of this thesis included aims to broaden the perspective and insight of the reader to further understand the research methods and results, as well as the terminology used in this research.

To begin, it was necessary to understand the concepts of co-creation and value co-creation mixed with the history of digital studios and how they have evolved to what they are now, to understand how to proceed with the research due to the nature of digital studios and their uniqueness. Furthermore, the research then showed that for co-creation to work as efficiently as possible, the stakeholders involved in the processes need to be treated as unique individuals with different needs. All in all, this research revolves around stakeholders and their individuality, and aligning that individuality with digital content creation in an environment of co-creation and maximizing the value derived from it. Moreover, the value that stakeholders gain from the process is subjective and ranges from digital content produced to competences gained from producing it and operating in the space of the studio.

The outcome of this research was a thesis that acts as a guide with background information about processes such as co-creation and capturing value through it, as well as history and the future of digital studios and examples of what someone might need to create a new studio somewhere. All in all, the conclusion of this research was that by following the ethical co-creation presented in this research mixed with the insight from the interviews, with the involvement of the stakeholders around the studio and their competences, value can be captured in the process for all the stakeholders involved.

Keywords Co-creation, Digital Studio, Value Co-creation, University of applied sciences

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Työn nimi Creator's Hub: HAMK Valkeakosken digitaalisen studion mahdollisuudet ja arvon valjastaminen yhteiskehittelyn kautta

Ohjaaja Ricardo Galiot

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Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli kerätä tietoja täysin uudesta digitaalisesta studiosta Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulun Valkeakosken toimiyksikössä ja sen käytöstä sekä rakennusprosessista ja luoda opas, joka pyrki yksinkertaistamaan ja luomaan tehokkaita käytänteitä digitaalisen yhteistuotannon ympärille kyseisessä tilassa. Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen osa laajentaa lukijan ymmärrystä tutkimuksen menetelmistä ja tuloksista, sekä siinä käytetystä terminologiasta.

Aluksi oli tarpeen ymmärtää yhteisluomisen ja arvon yhteisluomisen käsitteet sekä digitaalisten studioiden historiaa ja miten ne ovat kehittyneet nykymuotoonsa, jotta tutkimuksen vaiheet, sekä studioiden ainutlaatuisuus ja tutkimuksen tulokset olisivat paremmin ymmärrettävissä. Seuraavaksi teoreettisen lisätutkimuksen kautta osoitettiin, että yhteiskehittelyn tulisi toimia mahdollisimman tehokkaasti tapahtua ympäristössä, jossa mukana olevia osapuolia kohdellaan ainutlaatuisina yksilöinä, joilla on erilaiset tarpeet. Sen jälkeen tutkimus käsittelee osapuolia ja heidän yksilöllisyyttänsä brändiyhteisöjen sisäisessä yhteiskehittelyssä ja siitä saatavan arvon maksimoinnissa. Lopulta tutkimus käsittelee yhteiskehittelyn tulevaisuutta ja miten yhteiskehittelyn prosessi tulee muuttumaan, jotta se voisi jatkua myös tulevaisuudessa, sekä digitaalista studiota Hämeen Ammattikorkeakoulun Valkeakosken kampuksella haastatteluiden kautta.

Tämän tutkimuksen tuloksena oli opinnäytetyö, joka opastaa taustatiedoillaan prosesseista, kuten yhteiskehittämisestä ja arvon talteenotosta, sekä digitaalisten studioiden historiasta ja tulevaisuudesta ja tarjoaa esimerkkejä siitä, mitä digitaalisen studion rakentamiseen tarvitaan. Kaiken kaikkiaan tämän tutkimuksen johtopäätös oli, että seuraamalla tässä tutkimuksessa esitettyä eettistä yhteisluomista yhdistettynä tutkimuksessa olevien haastattelujen näkemyksiin, studion ympärillä olevat yhteisöt ja heidän osaamisensa luovat arvoa, jota voidaan valjastaa yhteiskehittelyn kautta kaikille mukana oleville osapuolille.

Avainsanat Yhteiskehittely, Digitaalinen studio, Arvon yhteiskehittely,  
Ammattikorkeakoulu

Sivut 32 sivua ja liitteitä 2 sivua

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Appendix 1 Photos of the Creator’s Hub

## 1 Introduction

In today's environment, which is mostly revolving around digital content, it is very important to have the resources and competences to provide accessible content. The content must also be accessible in terms of inclusive marketing for those with disabilities, as well as widely and easily available to the targeted groups. International Business students are involved in more and more projects with requirements for creating digital content related to different purposes in their studies, for their own personal use, or for work placement periods that require resources for digital content creation that the students might not have. This thesis focuses on the real-life cases of the new digital studio at the Häme University of Applied Sciences in Valkeakoski (hereby referred to as HAMK Valkeakoski) and maximizing the potential of this new digital content creation facility at HAMK Valkeakoski.

Firstly, this thesis has the main topic of connecting the students studying International Business from HAMK Valkeakoski, HAMK Valkeakoski as an institute, local businesses, and entrepreneurs, as well as the city of Valkeakoski in co-creation of content and collaboration when it comes to digital content creation for different purposes. Secondly, managing the space of the digital studio through the organized booking of the space, tracking the equipment, and what to do with the equipment that has arrived after being taken out of the studio for content creation purposes. Lastly, this thesis focuses on the process of building the digital studio, why the equipment placement is done in the way it is and why that specific equipment has been purchased, as well as how the availability of a digital studio might affect student's workflow and provides suggestions as a guide to co-creation in the space.

Furthermore, this research has the importance of providing theoretical resources that can be used by all stakeholders involved in the content creation inside the digital studio, as well as providing guidance for the creation, planning, and usage of similar digital studios. However, the core of the research is Häme University of Applied Sciences (hereby referred to as HAMK) as a whole, as well as students undergoing the International Business programme at HAMK Valkeakoski.

## **1.1 Research question**

At the time of writing this thesis, the research question focused on the new digital studio being built at HAMK Valkeakoski from different points of view. Those points of view investigate the facility from the viewpoints of each of the participating stakeholders; the students of HAMK Valkeakoski in the International Business program, HAMK Valkeakoski as an organization, local businesses in the area, and the city of Valkeakoski. Furthermore, these viewpoints are included in the thesis because each stakeholder might require unique treatment and responsibilities when it comes to working together to enhance and further develop the local networks as well as systems around the digital studio.

Looking more closely at the research question: “How could HAMK Creator’s Hub with its facilities and equipment be used in capturing value through co-creation with the community revolving around HAMK Valkeakoski?” gives an overall frame to the thesis.

## **1.2 Research objectives and benefits**

To begin with, the research objectives of this research are mainly following the research question in researching and planning ways in which the new digital studio with its facilities and equipment would create unique and meaningful value for the community revolving around HAMK Valkeakoski in the co-creation of various kinds of digital content. The value would be in different forms, ranging from possible work placement periods and future careers for the students, as well as gaining new insight and competences related to digital content creation, to businesses and entrepreneurs gaining more content for their own purposes without having to invest a significant portion of their budgets to outsource different content or build their own digital studios. The content can be related to, for instance, from new marketing material for the stakeholders to personal digital content creation when it comes to the stakeholders, students, undergoing the International Business degree program in HAMK Valkeakoski. Moreover, in the process, every stakeholder involved would gain the most value possible in a specific situation, be it the stakeholder group of students or the stakeholder group consisting of entrepreneurs or small and medium-sized businesses and the rest of the stakeholder groups. Furthermore, the value gained ranges from cheaper content for businesses to future career paths for students and a favorable

position for HAMK Valkeakoski to engage in co-creative events and produce more high-quality content for students online through the digital studio and host more events online.

Moreover, the objectives focus on details such as equipment placement, what equipment is available and why, as well as how to manage the overall space of the digital studio from booking it to taking out equipment to various locations if needed and returning them back to the facilities of the studio.

Finally, these objectives have the benefits of giving a frame for the digital studio at HAMK Valkeakoski when it comes to utilizing the space and the equipment in the form of a guide. This guide then provides a basis for the usage of the studio and for improving the studio in the future to best benefit the stakeholders, as well as guides the users of the space towards completing their projects as effortlessly as possible with the help of three different elements. These three elements consist of the content, the processes and the facilities being the core of this thesis and creating an easy-to-follow framework that is referred to later in this thesis.

### **1.3 Research methods**

The author of the thesis conducted mixed research with a more specific focus on the qualitative side of the research method. Quantitative data derived from the qualitative interviews were used in the possible stakeholders willing to take part in projects within the digital studio when focusing on the co-creation of content and collaboration. Qualitative data was used in framing the studio with resources for the stakeholders to use when it comes to management and utilization of the space and equipment, as well as aid in the creation of similar spaces on other campuses in the form of interviews.

The data used in this research was mostly primary data with some secondary data included in the theory parts of this thesis to frame the topic and provide insight as to what digital studios are, as well as how they work and insight in co-creation and the value linked to it. The data is descriptive, as experimental data would only be available later in the future as the studio has only been in use for a few weeks as of writing this research.

Data in this thesis is analyzed via thematic analysis, as it is the best fit for the data collected in this thesis. Lastly, the qualitative data collected for this thesis was collected using interviews with the stakeholders involved in the creation of the digital studio and the management of it, with most of the focus on data received from an interview with Mikko Uimonen and some data from other interviews, such as one conducted with Senior Lecturer and Work Placement Coordinator Sanna-Maaria Mäkelä, who is heavily involved with entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized businesses. Furthermore, since Uimonen is the person who oversaw building the digital studio at the Hämeenlinna campus of HAMK and has years of experience as a Media creator, Uimonen was the person in charge of planning the layout and working with the students involved in the project and HAMK in building the digital studio, as well as equipment placement inside the studio at HAMK Valkeakoski. An interview was also conducted with a local entrepreneur and the founder of Bittivirta, a small business that provides services in the field of livestreaming services, game servers and website design, Juuso Korhonen who is also a student in the field of business administration to broaden the research around entrepreneurs, as well as small and medium-sized businesses.

Consequently, the interviews were conducted to see the digital studio from the point of view of the stakeholders in question. (Hannabuss, 1996, p.22). The interviews conducted in this research also gave room for reviewing the information attained while altering the answers with the literature in this research for the sake of connecting subjects with others (Hannabuss, 1996, p. 23). Moreover, the in-depth interviews were informal discussions in nature to avoid the respondents' feelings of being obliged to answer the interview questions in the form of a set template with specific questions, this way the results were reliable (Hannabuss, 1996, p. 24). In addition, avoiding biases and working ethically while conducting the interviews in question was approached by interviewing in an informal setting while avoiding the interview to shift into a chat with the other party. This was obtained through different methods, such as not interrupting the other party, pacing the interviews, using questions that cannot be answered with a single yes or a no answer and always keeping on discussing so that the focus of the interviewee or the interviewer did not shift to something else than the interview. (Hannabuss, 1996, p. 26). In addition, supporting the original comments provided by the interviewees without altering their views of the discussed subjects was a part of approaching the interviews ethically.



## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Digital studios and their history**

Digital studios have been around for quite some time now, dating all the way back to at least 1983 when teachers from Tarrytown's school district purchased multiple microcomputers and held a workshop to introduce the student participants to the computers (Field, 1983). This was the start of making those students "computer literate" as Field states and later in a report for the Congress in September 1983 was prepared by the Office of Technology Assessment (Field, 1983). This report and its contents predicted that in the future the use of information services on computers as well as computer services would be present everywhere and so as a basic skill, computer information services and computer services would be required for most jobs (Field, 1983). Field also stated that the report had added that computer literacy had been the first proper instructional use of the computer and that was reinforced by many schools as a high priority (Field, 1983). Overall, at that time there were around 1,500 microcomputers all around the US county schools and some school districts were also using them for programming courses at a higher level of education, high school (Field, 1983). That was the start of an era of digital studios, and it started off with computer literacy and has evolved throughout time to what it is today in universities and other schools.

### **2.2 America's Technology Literacy Challenge**

In 1996, Bill Clinton, the president of the United States of America stated "In our schools, every classroom in America must be connected to the information superhighway with computers and good software and well-trained teachers.... I ask Congress to support this education technology initiative so that we can make sure this national partnership succeeds." (Clinton, 1996). This led to the launch of a mission in the United States to promote the use of computers and technology in literacy and make all children technologically literate, as well as prepare them for the 21<sup>st</sup> century with skills such as communication, math, and critical thinking in preparation for the "Information Age" (Clinton, 1996). After the launch, four distinctive pillars were built and these pillars included necessary training and support for the teachers to help all the students' learning processes

through computers, software development for effective online learning resources, access for all teachers and students to modern computers, as well as connecting every American classroom, as well as school to the “information superhighway” (Clinton, 1996).

The Technology Literacy Challenge at its core was a program proposed by President Clinton, lasting five years and costing \$2 billion. It was a necessary program, catalyzing and leveraging efforts from local, private, and state sectors so that all the children had a considerably better opportunity in learning the skills needed to prosper in the next century (Clinton, 1996). States were given maximum flexibility in accomplishing four objectives and there were only three objectives that states needed to meet to receive the funds for the Technology Literacy Challenge (Clinton, 1996.) These objectives were divided into a State Strategy, Private Sector Partnership and Matching Requirements as well as an Annual Progress Report to The Public and all these objectives strived to motivate and create support for the future and the need for computers (Clinton, 1996). This was a significant part in the acceptance of computers as a part of students’ educations in the United States as well as all over the world and has led up to this date by providing students the resources and support to learn modern digital skills needed in the future, such as using Microsoft’s programs or graphic design in modern digital studios.

### **2.3 Digital studios now**

As time has passed and the world has moved on in digitalization, the core of digital studios has also changed from computer literacy to being technology-equipped facilities or spaces, commonly seen at universities, where people can work in groups or individually on multiple different projects. Projects such as website design, portfolio creation, podcasts, marketing material creation, and other content creation related to video or image editing, even making music is possible (Florida State University, n.d.). Although there are some digital studios involved more into the promotion of writing but overall, they act as hubs for the creation of digital and multimedia projects (Florida State University, n.d.).

The common mission of a digital studio is to promote, support, and showcase different content creation, as well as offer resources both online and face-to-face to assist the stakeholders in their projects (Florida State University, n.d.). These resources are used for

discovering different programs and software, as well as various platforms to aid in the projects (Florida State University, n.d.). Lastly, providing the necessary space for the stakeholders, either for individual or collaborative content creation, conducting research on different projects in the digital world, as well as hosting meetings, if necessary, for individuals or groups working by co-creation is a great part of the mission. (Florida State University, n.d.).

### **2.3.1 Digital studios in teaching architectural design process**

According to research conducted on architectural diploma students studying in a polytechnic where the main point was to find out which method was better for teaching the design process, a conventional studio, or a digital studio, showed that there are differences (Ismail, Mahmud & Hassan, 2012, p. 18). The whole process lasted for three years, and six students were involved in it. In this research students involved with the use of the digital studio were using different programs in 12 different projects during those three years in two different groups in which the first group was working using the digital studio and the second group used a conventional method (Ismail et al., 2012, p. 18). Results from this research indicated that the students working on their projects using the digital studio produce a larger variety of alternative ideas in the design process, they were also able to produce design ideas that were much more dynamic and complex (Ismail et al., 2012, p. 18). In conclusion, the use of a digital studio created a more desirable environment for the students to increase their desire in gaining more knowledge and designing ideas by giving the students specific stimuli to produce more creative designs (Ismail et al., 2012, p. 24)

### **2.3.2 Students and seeking jobs through social media**

Over the years, multiple organizations have adapted the use of social media platforms in their hiring processes with the most popular one of them being LinkedIn (Herbold & Douma, 2013, p. 68). Furthermore, it should be considered with care whether a company should recruit through social media or not by researching their audience and if that audience wants to be reached through social media platforms (Herbold & Douma, 2013, p. 68). In the case of the adaptation of social media platforms in the future as places for seeking jobs, it should be noted that some competences are needed to stand out from the masses (Herbold &

Douma, 2013, p. 68). Consequently, digital studios are one of the keys for students in how they present themselves online, as they offer tools and competences for expanding their online presence and competences related to digital content creation. Moreover, digital studios could increase the knowledge and awareness for the future profiling of students as job seekers through co-creative practices that are further analyzed later in this research with businesses that are recruiting in the fields that the students are studying in. In conclusion, digital studios would open the possibility for students to gain competences and insight in different fields related to businesses that are recruiting through co-creation and create presentable and attractive profiles, as well as showcase their competences through previous work that they have done in the form of files or photos and presenting them on their social media pages.

## **2.4 Co-creation**

Co-creation, at its core, is a tool comprising of different processes that consumers and producers use to create value for all by collaborating or participating otherwise (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 4). Co-creation has become a broadly utilized term in depicting a change in thinking from the organization as a definer of value to a more participative cycle where individuals and organizations together create meaning (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 86). In today's world, co-creation is something that is often talked about amongst organizations and people and on the business side of the world, co-creation has helped in the creation of new products, services, and marketing, as well as helping in new approaches to insight necessary (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 86). One problem with co-creation is the fact that a larger portion of the research in the field when it comes to co-creation has been organized with marketers and consumers and not with other stakeholder groups (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 86).

Furthermore, multiple writers' and researchers' works have focused only on a managerial perspective that has the effect of creating stress to co-opt customer competence when it comes to organizational opportunities (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 86). This approach has the possibility of creating unnecessary customer backlash because it is such an instrumentalizing approach when it comes to the main idea of co-creation, which is stakeholder and customer involvement by collaboration and development of new value (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 86). All in all, co-creation must be made an engaging process with the stakeholders in a useful way

that is shared by both parties involved so the stakeholders do not feel exploited after gifting their own time and thoughts in the process (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 86).

Furthermore, when it comes to co-creation between enterprises and customers, people tend to forget the inclusion of other stakeholders as well (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010, p. 5). These stakeholders involve entire networks comprising of partners, employees, and suppliers in the process of creating and developing new experiences with the individuals (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010, p. 5). Sometimes going even further and engaging in crowdsourcing and open innovation, as well as mass collaboration, is important so that the resource bases for projects can be used to their fullest potential (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010, p. 5). One of the most prominent and fruitful methods when it comes to co-creation is granting the customers and any other stakeholders in the process the possibility of personalization regarding the end-product of the process (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010, p. 5), this is something that can be done in the form of the stakeholders using the studio and creating the content themselves rather than outsourcing the content through students working in the studio. Furthermore, in the process of co-creation, one of the most important elements is that how companies engage people, and when attention is paid to that element companies saw success (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010, p. 5). It should be noted, that for co-creation to work it is important to involve all the stakeholders by interacting with them on their own terms and by giving the stakeholders more of an active role, rather than passive yes-or-no series of questions (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010, p. 6), further supporting the research question of the thesis when it comes to the stakeholders and their uniqueness as previously mentioned at the beginning of this thesis. Moreover, this is all due to the rapid increase in personalization, customer influence, value creation, and the increase in the importance of human experiences when it comes to co-creation and the customer journey towards the outcome of creating something new.

#### **2.4.1 Co-creation and its origins**

The emerging of co-creation is due to different coincidences that have resulted from several developments during the past years, involving the mainstream adoption of technologies of the Internet, a more service and experience-oriented environment, the need for innovation, as well as a more open approach to it (Chesbrough, 2006) and finally the massive growth of

technologies, more specifically social, collaboration, customization, and social technologies (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 91). All of these are developments that have happened recently, but co-creation is something that has been practiced for a long time, especially in partnerships in the business-to-business environment (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 91). Co-creation has its roots buried deep in the 1920s and the roots are rich and diverse and the co-creation that has surfaced in today's world is a much more opportunistic and updated version compared to what it used to be (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 91).

Consequently, building something with the stakeholders rather than with the data squeezed out of them in designing something new, in marketing processes, creating ideas with customers and the transparency of socially responsible corporate activities in any organization would indicate a huge step forward but co-creation in its core is the means as well as the end in a continuous cycle (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010, p. 29-35). Co-creation is something that can be applied to any type of innovation and that is the reason why it is such a powerful tool when used correctly and the correct way is to build something with someone and the results are already there, rather than build something and the results will follow (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010, p. 29-35). All in all, people should always be treated with respect and their contributions to processes should be rewarded in one way or another, be it benefitting from the value that the process creates or otherwise providing something of value comparable to the efforts they put into the process to benefit the other party involved.

#### **2.4.2 Value co-creation**

As mentioned previously in this thesis, the roles that stakeholders and organizations have are constantly evolving and shifting due to the advances in technology. Because of this, the fact is that business environments and ecosystems that feature value co-creation need to be understood for the sake of competition (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 6). Furthermore, because of this value co-creation has become somewhat of a main concept inside the fields of business management and service marketing (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 6). One of the most common traits when it comes to the modern approaches to value co-creation is the more extensive view towards value creation, as well as the shift towards it (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 7). Value creation should be looked at as something that the stakeholders, such as

customers, control because they should be an active part of the process and eventually, they end up creating value by being contributors and creators (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 8).

Furthermore, as the concept of value co-creation has multiple sides the problem with it is that in terms of its development related to the theory of value co-creation, it is possible that it will lead to temporarily empty structures (Arndt, 1985, p. 13). However, when value co-creation as a concept is taken apart into the very essential parts it provides a framework that can be utilized when working with stakeholders in a setting of value co-creation (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 11). In addition to this, the framework consists of three different elementary parts, the first one touching the value part of value co-creation (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 11).

To begin, this means what kind of value is being created in the process and who is at the receiving end of the process, and the outcome (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 11). Because of the nature of value co-creation and the literature around it, it is often hard to define what the value created in the process is (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 11). It often ends up falling to the categories of being firm value, customer value or often even a mix of the two by being both and because of this, it is important to provide a clear statement as to what kind of value and what parts of that value is important for the stakeholders in question, for example, a customer and a company (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 11).

After that, introducing the “co-” part of the process and defining the resources that are being used in the process (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 11). These resources are the actors or the additional resources in value co-creation regardless of the other party involved in the process, be it brand communities, companies, or individual customers (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 11). Moreover, it is integral to know the stakeholders involved in the process of value co-creation for a more pleasant and functioning process and so it is crucial to keep in mind what resources are utilized (Business-to-Business, Business-to-Consumer, Consumer-to-Business or Consumer-to-Consumer) so that both sides in the process are aware of what to do, say and how to treat the other party involved (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 11).

Finally, the “creation” part of the process and what kind of mechanism is used in the process (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 11). These mechanisms are different activities that are either led by companies, communities or customers and other stakeholders that result in other actors receiving more additional resources from those mechanisms (Saarijärvi et al., 2013, p. 11).

Furthermore, some examples of the mechanisms are co-design, co-production, and co-development especially between companies and customers and their relationships.

### **2.4.3 Co-creating value in a brand community**

As consumers keep creating value through their practices, by consuming, they also have their own original roles in the whole process of creating value that need to be focused on. This can be done through taking smaller micro dimensions from groups of co-consumers and focusing more closely on them (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011, p. 303). It should also be noted that these groups are formed by consumers and function as communities by linking value, leading to co-construction for their benefit (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011, p. 306.) Key components in the process of co-creating value within these communities, particularly within online gift economies and virtual communities, are gift giving (Belk, 2007, p. 126–140.), and social interactions among individuals, which lead to being a contribution to the whole process of value co-creation. Furthermore, the approach of using a micro-perspective on the process of value creation can provide useful insight into the interactions between individuals and how they can gain the cultural authority in the process to co-create value along with codes of consumption within specific consumer cultures (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011, p. 307). Together with all these matters in mind mixed with the more active role that the “free consumers” (Zwick, Bonsu & Darmody, 2008, p. 164) play is something that is a threat in the modern age of marketing when considering the role of marketers and their loss of power in the markets (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011, p. 304.).

Consequently, there are two distinct roles in the process of value creation. These roles consist of the provider and the beneficiary, from which the providers usually are the experienced members of consumer culture communities and contribute new resources to their respective communities (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011, p. 318). Uniquely, the beneficiaries provide little to no value but gain most of it through social interactions (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011, p. 318). Moreover, within these roles, double exploitation can happen, and it can either benefit or bring down value creation as it is, in a way such as: “We do all the work, while the teacher is not only being paid, but also receives



all the praise.” (Cova & Dallı, 2009, p. 327), so it is important to keep close watch of this and prevent it from happening in the process.

In conclusion, when it comes to value co-creation in brand communities, specific roles are assigned to members of their respective communities consisting of providers and beneficiaries. Furthermore, social interactions between each role are the key to consumer value co-creation in these brand communities. Providers in these brand communities engage in a practice called “collective consumer creativity practice” (Kozinets, Hemetsberger & Schau, 2008, p. 341). In other words, through social interactions, providers create more new insight that could not be achieved through just by thinking alone (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006, p. 489). Furthermore, Haragon and Bechky (2006) argue that there are four different activities that are interrelated and enable collective consumer creativity: help giving, reinforcing behavior, help seeking and reflective reframing. Additionally, when observing these collaborative practices online, they are much more intense and reach far beyond what they reach offline when it comes to collective creativity (Reinhardt & Hemetsberger, 2007). As a result of co-creation, double exploitation, such as: “We do all the work, while the teacher is not only being paid, but also receives all the praise.” (Cova & Dallı, 2009, p. 327) can happen and potentially threaten the value creation process but it can also benefit consumers through empowering them. This was reinforced in a study conducted by Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder (2011, p. 303-324), in which it was found that within specific brand communities, there is a chance that double exploitation is a tool that can be used among members to initiate continuous learning processes to assist in strengthening, as well as unifying these brand communities (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011, p. 320). Furthermore, double exploitation can function in the creation of new resources and insight to challenge the owners of the brands, as well as the brand managers (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011, p. 320).

#### **2.4.4 Co-creation in the future**

Future is something that we’re always anticipating and the diversity of co-creation and the heritage it has needs to be considered carefully by combining multiple practices so ideas suggesting new opportunities when it comes to co-creation can be pinpointed (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 91). These practices are open-source movement, where meaning or utility is

generated through giving something to people, collaborative innovation and the “group genius” behind breakthroughs, a participatory design where end-users are involved to create something more relevant, and achieve better results, psychotherapy to help with the discovery of answers and insight that might not already have been come up with (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 91). Lastly, using literary theories because a two-way process called interpretation is involved, as well as the fact that meaning is always co-created (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 91). All these factors influence co-creation by moving away from a more managerially dominated focus to something that focuses on individual collaboration with each other and organizational influence on using the insights of co-creation without being the dominant party and supporting equality amongst the stakeholders involved in the co-creation process (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 91).

All in all, co-creation should be thought of as a process providing an opportunity for ongoing interactions, in which one of the parties is willing to share its world with external stakeholders, resulting in insight that can be derived from the engagement of the parties in the co-creation process. This way, rather than being just a research technique or a method of value creation through the skills and creativity of the individuals co-opted in the process, co-creation can be utilized as a driving force for creating meaning for all (Ind & Coates, 2013, p. 91).

### **3 HAMK Valkeakoski Digital Studio research**

To begin, the HAMK Valkeakoski Digital studio is a space of content creation to be utilized by different stakeholders who want to be involved, such as students, local companies and entrepreneurs, the city of Valkeakoski and HAMK as an organization itself. It is a small space with equipment available to create different content ranging from podcasts to music videos and marketing content creation as seen from the floor plan below.

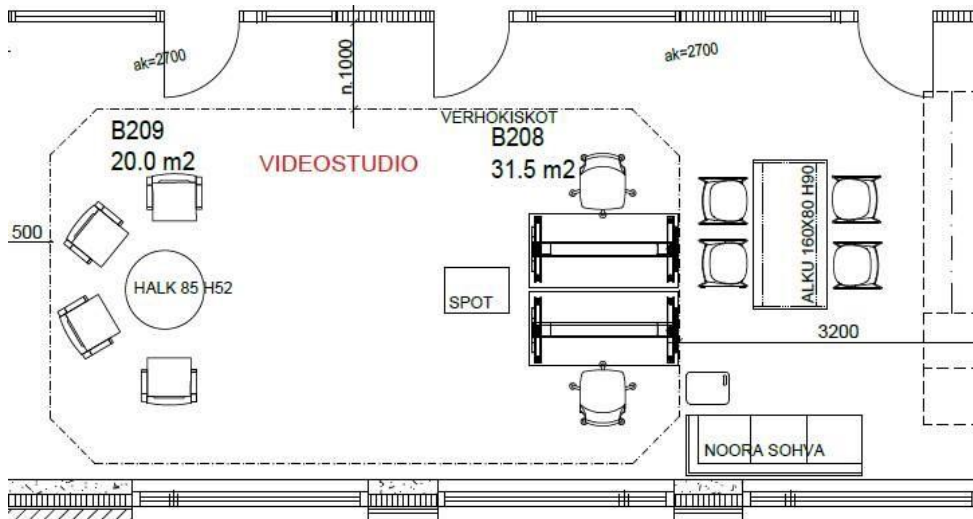


Figure 1. HAMK Valkeakoski Digital Studio plant (HAMK, n.d.)

Next, the research process consisted of interviews with qualitative data in mind to cover as many points of view as possible regarding the digital studio and capturing value through co-creation. The interviews were conducted with three people, including the person who oversaw designing the digital studio, media producer Mikko Uimonen, Sanna-Maaria Mäkelä who is the senior lecturer and the work placement coordinator of HAMK Valkeakoski and Juuso Korhonen, an entrepreneur and the founder of his small-sized business “Bittivirta” and he is also a student in the field of Business Administration. Furthermore, the intention of these interviews was to gain new insight into the creation process of the HAMK Valkeakoski digital studio and what the compromises were, as well as how each interviewee saw the studio being used from their point of view and by whom the studio would be mostly used by. Moreover, biases were something that was carefully thought of when conducting the interviews as they could hinder the results and the answers of the interviews. Consequently, the interviews were conducted when the studio was nearly finished and with people who had multiple years of experience in their respective fields, such as media producer Mikko Uimonen and senior lecturer and work placement coordinator Sanna-Maaria Mäkelä, as well as Juuso Korhonen who is studying in a university other than the Häme University of Applied Sciences and is also an entrepreneur and a student in the Tampere University of Applied Sciences. The setting for the interviews was face-to-face with media producer Uimonen and with entrepreneur Korhonen but with senior lecturer Mäkelä the interview was conducted through a Microsoft Teams call and each interview lasted half an hour to gain meaningful insight in the setting without them lasting too long to hinder the results. All the interviews

were informal as the goal of them was to gain as much information around the topics discussed with each interviewee and asking formal questions would have only limited the answers that the interviewees gave. The interviews were around the topics of the creation and the equipment of the digital studio, the usage of the studio and the equipment, as well as personal points of view of the digital studio.

Furthermore, since the studio is a space for digital content creation, such as podcasts, videos, photos, music and much more, the proper equipment and space are required. Below can be seen a photo of the studio, the layout is the same as in the floor plan of the studio provided earlier in the thesis for reference how it looked like prior to adding the equipment.



Figure 2. HAMK Valkeakoski Digital Studio from the inside, Creator's Hub (Jesse Laine, 2021)

At the time of taking this photo, the space was still missing all the equipment and a photo of the complete studio will be provided later in the thesis. The name of the studio was chosen from a contest held on social media, more specifically Instagram, and ended up being "HAMK Creator's Hub" and it enforces the co-creative nature of the space by being a "hub", meaning that different stakeholders around HAMK Valkeakoski are involved as unique people with specific needs in the process of digital content creation while bringing value ranging from digital content, such as marketing material for businesses to future career paths for students. In addition, the studio also has a small space with two microwaves, a

dishwasher, and a fridge if there is a need for fixing a quick snack and cooling beverages for any occasion.

Overall, the studio fits neatly into a smaller space on the second floor of the HAMK Valkeakoski Campus B building and houses a variety of equipment, appliances, and space. Moreover, the equipment and the space can be used for digital content creation varying from podcasts to videos and from taking photos to creation of music with the curtains and acoustic foam between the windows of the hallway, creating a perfect setting for recording any type of audio. The video side of the studio is also designed to be very optimal due to the lighting conditions, with windows providing large amounts of natural light that can still be covered by lowering the blackout curtains installed on every window and then closing the curtains circling the space of the actual studio if needed. Consequently, the equipment was chosen carefully to fit the space to create appropriate content for each of the stakeholders involved with their unique needs as people taken into consideration. Moreover, bringing value in forms of digital content for different purposes, networking with different stakeholders and gaining new competences or advancing the ones stakeholders already have.

### **3.1 Equipment as the heart of the studio**

To begin with, equipment related to the studio is something that should be considered very thoroughly through research of the space and budget available mixed with the aspect of what the studio will be used for. According to media producer Mikko Uimonen (Interview 14 September 2021), the equipment for the studio was chosen based on being mobile enough to be able to transport to different locations if needed. Uimonen also mentioned (Interview 14 September 2021) that the biggest compromise was the decision of either choosing fixed equipment, such as remote-controlled cameras fixed to the space of the studio itself and other equipment of that sort or equipment that could be possibly transported.

Moreover, the equipment consists of a set of 4K Canon video cameras, more specifically Canon XA40 cameras (Canon, n.d.), paired with three tripods to mount them on when needed. In addition, an action camera was included in the video side of the equipment from GoPro, GoPro mixed with accessories that enable the mounting of the GoPro camera to

different objects and on one's own body and a microphone for better audio quality (GoPro, n.d.). The studio also holds two desktop computer setups with large monitors, both from Dell. These computers can run programs needed for video content creation, audio content creation and photo editing with ease to have a suitable workflow. All the cameras can be connected to the computers through a mixer unit from a company called Blackmagic Design and the video signal can be switched effortlessly from one camera to another depending on the situation (Blackmagic design, n.d.). In addition, the mixer unit from Black Magic makes the whole setup very simple to operate. The studio is also equipped with a green screen at the far end of the space for different types of content creation with the need of isolating a subject in front of the camera and blending it in the content that can be used for instance in some cases of product photography and the background can be made "invisible" as seen from the figure below of the nearly finished studio with all the equipment that was available inside the studio and some still in boxes at the time of taking the photo.

In addition, the equipment was thought of in terms of modularity and the ability to transport them to have the studio function in multiple ways and multiple different scenarios in case there were different types of people working in the studio on one day and then the studio needed to be transformed into something else or pieces of equipment needed to be switched around.



Figure 3. HAMK Valkeakoski Digital Studio, Creator's Hub with equipment (Jesse Laine, 2021)

Furthermore, the audio side of the studio equipment consists of two professional audio quality microphones from Shure (Shure SM7B) paired with studio grade headphones from the same manufacturer that can create several different contents ranging from music to podcasts (Shure, n.d.). In conclusion, all the pieces of equipment have their own purposes in the studio, focused on the stakeholders and their own unique needs with as many possibilities for content creation in a smaller space and outside of the studio with the possibility of moving the equipment around and taking it out of the studio if possible while making operating the space and equipment simple and efficient for a multitude of different stakeholders and their unique needs. Of course, there were also budgeting matters mixed with the space available that impacted the equipment and why a certain piece of equipment was included in the studio with compromises considered along still missing information around the types of stakeholders who would be the main utilizers of the space of the digital studio mixed with unclarity of the main types of content that would be produced. All in all, these reasons combined were why all the specific equipment was purchased for the digital studio.

Additionally, the management of the equipment is something that according to media producer Uimonen (Interview 14 September 2021) should be done with the type of equipment that is needed in mind. Some of the pricier and more complicated pieces of equipment to use should be handled by the data administration staff of the Häme University of Applied Sciences when it comes to the transportation and utilization of them in a setting where a stakeholder outside of the HAMK Valkeakoski wants to borrow the equipment or use the studio. This could also be done by students in way of doing their work placement periods inside the studio, but this has multiple challenges to it that are discussed further on in the thesis. Moreover, having a platform where the equipment could be tracked if they are borrowed and taken out of the studio would greatly benefit the process of setting the equipment back up for the next stakeholder utilizing the studio. This could be done, for example, using the same mobile app that HAMK uses for other bookings of spaces around campuses and such, called Tuudo. It would also add to the experience of stakeholders wanting to create content in the studio by showing them what equipment is available and when, as well as what could be taken out and what could not.

### **3.2 Space and the management of it**

Firstly, when it comes to the space of the digital studio itself, there are limitations to what can be done and what cannot when it comes to a smaller space such as the digital studio at the HAMK Valkeakoski campus. According to media producer Uimonen (Interview 14 September 2021), the limitations of the space are related to the number of people that can be in front of the cameras for different content creation, as well as behind them as there are only three cameras and the space in front of them is fit for around 4 people at the most. The space is somewhat of a multi-function space and according to media producer Uimonen (Interview 14 September 2021) can be mostly used for podcasts, videography, video editing, photography, and photo editing with possibilities for multiple different camera angles. Furthermore, due to this, there needs to be a clear line of what can be done and what cannot when advertising the space for other stakeholders outside, as well as inside the Häme University of Applied Sciences. For instance, when stakeholders utilize the space of the studio there needs to be a clear understanding of the limits of the space when it comes to the nature of the content they want to create, such as the actual size of the studio and the equipment in it, as well as their compatibility with the stakeholder's own devices if they want to bring them in.

In addition, the room height of the studio is a lot higher compared to a normal room in an apartment for instance, and according to media producer Uimonen (Interview 14 September 2021), is something that is a considerable element in the studio when it comes to the lighting of the space like previously mentioned in the HAMK Valkeakoski digital studio introduction part of the thesis. Also, the modularity and the fact that the equipment is not fixed into walls, and such create an opportunity to adjust the layout of the studio in the future after more stakeholders get involved with content creation within the studio. This gives more room to learn from the stakeholders who mainly use the space of the studio and adjust equipment accordingly.

### **3.3 Utilization of the digital studio**

To begin, the studio is best suitable for projects that are somewhat limited in their nature, as previously mentioned in the thesis, so content creation around videography, podcasts, other



audio work and photography. Moreover, according to media producer Uimonen (Interview 14 September 2021), the digital studio at HAMK in Hämeenlinna has been used for audio work as it was originally intended to be a studio mostly for audio recordings, as well as podcasts by the student. According to the interviews held with media producer Mikko Uimonen, senior lecturer Sanna-Maaria Mäkelä and entrepreneur and the founder of Bittivirta, that students, businesses, and entrepreneurs are mostly interested in the utilization of the space for audio work, such as podcasts, audio recordings, music, and music videos as well as editing work outsourced by entrepreneurs to save time and operate their own businesses. In conclusion, the studio will most likely become a space more towards podcasts and music, as well as other audio recordings for the students and outsourced editing of videos and photos. Moreover, regarding businesses and entrepreneurs around Valkeakoski, as things are now, it will be utilized for podcasts and the creation of marketing material towards social media channels.

### **3.3.1 Students**

At the present time, students are one of the key elements as stakeholders of the digital studio and its operations. They can utilize the space for their own needs related to any type of digital content creation, such as YouTube videos, podcasts, as well as taking and editing photos just to name a few. Since some of the activities around Valkeakoski are heavily seasonally dependent, having a space that would encourage these stakeholders to spend more time with content creation when they cannot find other activities in their past time is something that many of these stakeholders will surely utilize. Moreover, students would gain practical experience in the world of digital content creation that will be needed in the future as the world becomes more and more digitalized. Furthermore, a suggestion by senior lecturer and work placement coordinator Sanna-Maaria Mäkelä (Interview 7 September 2021) was to pick students to manage the space and equipment in return for work placement credits and possibly an hourly salary and would benefit them and the other stakeholders greatly. Additionally, this would benefit multiple students who want to further get involved with digital content creation through co-creative processes and gain experience from businesses and entrepreneurs wanting to utilize the space through helping them in their projects and seeing how different content is created.

In addition, students involved in the utilization of the space would foster and create new connections with different businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as “get their foot in the door” when it comes to the future. All of this is something that is desperately needed in the digital age of today since more and more businesses and entrepreneurs are wanting to outsource marketing material, other social media content and podcasts and the students will gain experience in the creation of this. Furthermore, foreign students from outside the European Union coming to study in Finland are facing problems landing jobs in their respective fields of studies for their work placement periods to gain the needed credits to finish their degrees. This could be relieved by investing in digital studios inside international universities to help the students since outsourcing digital content is becoming even more popular in today’s world and the companies or entrepreneurs would otherwise possibly only hire people who speak Finnish or are Finnish but since the space is at the campus, HAMK Valkeakoski and its staff could help in organizing work placement periods or partial ones through students co-creating content for these companies or entrepreneurs without bigger risks involved. The only problem with the students being involved in the management of the studio space and equipment is that each student will eventually graduate, so there would have to be a cycle of bringing new students for the job repeatedly. Furthermore, according to Media producer Mikko Uimonen (Interview 14 September 2021), it would be most suitable to have staff from the Häme University of Applied Sciences data administration when it comes to handling, teaching, and using the equipment when it comes to borrowing the equipment from the studio.

### **3.3.2 Small and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurs**

To begin with, according to senior lecturer Mäkelä (Interview 7 September 2021) entrepreneurs, as well as small and medium-sized businesses (hereby referred to as SMBs) have been waiting eagerly throughout the entirety of the building process of the studio to have it functioning so they can get their hands on it. Senior lecturer Mäkelä also mentioned (Interview 7 September 2021) that through her cooperation with companies and different projects, she has advertised the digital studio to multiple companies interested in the creation of podcasts, YouTube videos and other content leaning towards social media. These projects, such as podcasts and videos would be done as work placement periods by students for the entrepreneurs and SMBs according to senior lecturer Mäkelä (Interview 7 September

2021). In addition, Mäkelä mentioned (interview 7 September 2021) that a couple of students would benefit from the digital studio through doing their work placement periods as the “gatekeepers” of the space of the studio. Moreover, these students would provide access to the entrepreneurs and SMBs to the space of the studio with everything set up for them to just record their podcasts, videos or other content and be on their way while someone else than the SMBs and entrepreneurs would handle the rest, such as editing the content and uploading it to the social media or sending it to the entrepreneurs and SMBs. Through this idea of senior lecturer Mäkelä (Interview 7 September 2021), the entrepreneurs and SMBs would then be charged based on an hourly rate for the other parts of the content creation so that the entrepreneurs and SMBs can get content produced and up on their social media pages as fast as possible.

Moreover, according to senior lecturer Mäkelä (Interview 7 September 2021), it would also be great if the entrepreneurs or SMBs were also willing to learn how to edit and create their own content in addition to utilizing the studio as a tool of creating their own content as the process of co-creation these stakeholders would be a method of teaching through interactions as the theory part of this research stated. This could be done through the guidance of the students working in the studio or using tutorials, such as videos, to guide them through the process to create unique content just how they want it to look like. Consequently, senior lecturer Mäkelä said (Interview 7 September 2021) that earlier in the morning before the interview she had been at the campus with multiple entrepreneurs, and they went to check the studio out and there were clearly more interested in the creation of podcasts due to their nature of being able to create them more easily compared to videos. senior lecturer Mäkelä (Interview 7 September 2021) also mentioned that as podcasts are now trending, that also influences the types of content that different entrepreneurs and SMBs are interested in creating.

Furthermore, according to Juuso Korhonen (Interview 20 October 2021), an entrepreneur and the founder of Bittivirta, a Finnish small-sized business operating in Valkeakoski, the studio is well thought out and has all the proper equipment for local SMBs and entrepreneurs to further enhance their online presence and especially outsource the editing part for their content. Entrepreneur Korhonen also mentioned (Interview 20 October 2021) that the quality of the equipment was high enough or even higher than it should have been

for the type of work that is to be concluded in the studio but the number of microphones for podcasts should have been four instead of the two that the studio was equipped with. Moreover, according to entrepreneur Korhonen (Interview 20 October 2021), the digital studio is a great tool that entrepreneurs and SMBs should use for their own advantage as it is a unique opportunity in the world of constantly growing digitalization. Entrepreneur Korhonen (Interview 20 October 2021) also mentioned that many of the entrepreneurs around the city of Valkeakoski are aged between 40 to 50 and might not start switching to the digital side of the world in terms of marketing and content creation to grow their businesses until it is something that absolutely must be done to keep their businesses alive from his personal experience. Korhonen also mentioned (interview 20 October 2021) that one of the most prominent uses for the type of an entrepreneur he is, was using his own footage that he had captured and using the studio for outsourcing the editing of it since it is something that takes a lot of time and is monotonous.

In addition, according to entrepreneur Korhonen (Interview 20 October 2021), he was concerned about the rapid growth of digital technologies and equipment as his business also deals with livestreaming of different events and he has the knowledge when it comes to equipment like the ones that the HAMK Valkeakoski digital studio consists of. Korhonen said (Interview 20 October 2021) that the equipment that the studio had was of high enough quality to be utilized for multiple years without having to replace them, so the growth of digital technologies and development of equipment has no effect on the current set of equipment in the studio. Furthermore, Korhonen also mentioned (Interview 20 October 2021) that as the equipment is high-quality, it would also increase the likelihood of the content produced with them to be on the more attractive side of the content being produced by single entrepreneurs and SMBs, so the equipment the studio consists of the need to be of high quality as it is now but also in the future.

All in all, Korhonen thought (Interview 20 October 2021) that the studio was a well-needed addition to all the entrepreneurs and SMBs around Valkeakoski as most of them lack the competences to create their own content related to marketing or content that would increase their presence online through social media and their own websites. Furthermore, as co-creation can work as a teaching method in terms of sharing insight and competences as previously mentioned in the theory part of this research, the problem that some

stakeholders have related to the lack of competences would no longer be prominent. Korhonen also mentioned (Interview 20 October 2021) that the digital studio was a great addition for the students of HAMK Valkeakoski as it can grow their competences in the digital content-oriented future that we are headed. Lastly, Korhonen said (Interview 20 October 2021) that for his line of work the studio would be mainly used for editing and possible in designing websites with other stakeholders also in the space of the digital studio so that the goal of personalized content that was mentioned earlier in this research could be created and the process of co-creation could be performed in its most optimal environment as each stakeholder has their own unique personal needs and ways when it comes to co-creation of content and the creation of content by themselves. This would also tackle the issue of the stakeholders being unable to follow the process of their content being created in real-time unless it would be done through a call in Microsoft Teams or a platform similar to it, but it would be the most efficient way of networking while co-creating and it would bring more value to each stakeholder when compared to giving the students working in the studio instructions and expecting the perfect content that the stakeholder had dreamt of.

### **3.3.3 HAMK Valkeakoski**

First, the most functional use for the studio when it comes to utilization by the staff from HAMK Valkeakoski would be teaching purposes, followed by organizing projects and lastly hosting events such as Freezing Week. Moreover, teaching material is one of the key contents that should be focused on by HAMK Valkeakoski, as the past years have been mostly online rather than face to face due to the Coronavirus and hybrid classes have become more and more popular, in which students participate either online or be there at the campus. Furthermore, HAMK Valkeakoski could organize events frequently from the studio through livestreams and podcasts related to, for instance, living in Finland, things to do around the city of Valkeakoski, studying-related content, or otherwise a weekly or monthly livestream in which there would be activities for all the stakeholders involved in the studio. In addition, HAMK Valkeakoski could organize different courses around the digital studio for those who are interested.

Second, projects such as project SISU, which is a project included in the International Business Degree Program around gaining experience by organizing different projects for the

public, could involve something related to the digital studio. This could involve streaming the projects annually so more and more people can participate in them without having to physically be there if the project is an event of sorts.

Furthermore, when it comes to the creation of the studying-related content, the studio is a great tool to be utilized by the teachers of HAMK Valkeakoski as mentioned before. The main goal of the digital studio for HAMK Valkeakoski and its usage internally should be content around the studies that are organized in the International Business degree of HAMK Valkeakoski, and the content should support the students, especially the ones who are engaging in online studies. Moreover, this would improve the quality of recordings and make the process of recording material a smooth and simple process for the teachers so that it would save time and increase the value delivered through the content as it would look more attractive and not like it was recorded with a single laptop and the audio could also be heard a lot better.

#### **3.3.4 The city of Valkeakoski**

At the present time of writing this research, the city of Valkeakoski has not been creating that much marketing material towards new residents possibly moving to Valkeakoski, businesses wanting to transfer operations or start up their operations in Valkeakoski and other content related to the city itself. Furthermore, this has been brought up in a few of the city council meetings, mixed with the desire for co-operation with HAMK Valkeakoski in the form of different events, such as a project called SISU in the International Business Degree Program. In the past years, more specifically in the year 2020, it was supposed to be an event in Valkeakoski that would have been a joint effort between the city of Valkeakoski and HAMK Valkeakoski and strengthen the connections between these two. All in all, the city of Valkeakoski could offer similar work placement periods in collaboration with HAMK Valkeakoski to students willing to participate in the creation of marketing material towards something else than marketing a business or an entrepreneur and in return the city of Valkeakoski would gain new resources in marketing through, for example, social media. This would benefit the marketing team working for the city of Valkeakoski by allowing them to focus more on the more crucial subject. Considering this, according to senior lecturer Mäkelä (Interview 7 September 2021), the city of Valkeakoski was aware of the possibilities of the

digital studio in HAMK Valkeakoski related to marketing the city of Valkeakoski and its different fields. The digital studio also poses a possibility for co-operation in the form of events that the city of Valkeakoski could host jointly with HAMK Valkeakoski ranging from smaller events to collaborations with the Valkeakoski Lifelong Learning Centre, which offers plenty of courses ranging from photography to language studies in the Pirkanmaa region. Moreover, operating with the Valkeakoski Lifelong Learning Centre could provide useful insight and networks through people who are interested in digital content creation.

#### **4 Analysis of the research results**

The research conducted in the form of interviews and the secondary data collected from a theoretical standpoint around digital studios and co-creation combined resulted in a creation of a guide in the form of this research for the stakeholders revolving around the digital studio. The guide is explained in this chapter of the thesis along with other results that followed from the interviews regarding the digital studio and the processes around it. Moreover, the guide also acts as a framework that can be applied to other similar digital studio projects, their creation, and their usage mainly within universities.

To begin, the theoretical part of the research conducted with secondary data from multiple different case studies and other research revolving around co-creation, value co-creation and digital studios showed that there were processes that must be followed for co-creation to be efficient, work humanely and produce value for all the stakeholders involved. Consequently, these processes consist of working with the stakeholders and not just reaping the benefit of their skills and creativity while leaving them unrewarded as mentioned in the literature review of this research about co-creating value in a brand community. Furthermore, the processes involve providing something as an incentive in return for the insight and the creativity provided by one of the stakeholders, for instance, the ability to gain more competences in operating the equipment in the studio while they work on content for an entrepreneur or a SMB to post on their social media page. In addition, for the process of co-creation to be efficient, all the stakeholders in the process need to share their internal worlds with each other. This mixed with setting the limits, possibilities, and the rules of the space leads to the process of co-creation functioning efficiently and in a humane manner, as well as creates value for all the stakeholders. Admittedly, for the processes for

co-creation to function as mentioned previously in this research, everything came down to interactions and networking with the stakeholders, while working together in an open environment with expectations and benefits, as well as the instructions of the digital studio stated before starting the co-creative process and harnessing the value created in the process. As previously mentioned in the research, the value gained in the case of the HAMK Valkeakoski digital studio was revolving around the future of the students, prosperity of the SMBs and entrepreneurs around the city of Valkeakoski, HAMK Valkeakoski and its online teaching and event hosting capabilities, as well as the city of Valkeakoski and the possibilities of co-creation around marketing related content with the students and HAMK Valkeakoski. Furthermore, the processes to achieve the value discussed in this thesis the processes that the theoretical research showed were connected to the fact that in co-creation, people are often used by the larger companies for their data and information with nothing in return. This form of co-creation should be avoided as much as possible for the co-creation and the value harvested from it to be as natural as possible with something for both of the parties of stakeholders involved in the process.

As a result, co-creation should be thought of as a process that provides a possibility for ongoing interactions between the stakeholders and provides new insight and new competences for all, thus making co-creation something that brings value to all the stakeholders involved as a driving force. This way the problem that co-creation often faces, that is being treated as a research method or a tool that only benefits one side of the stakeholders mixed with the fact that co-creation often only rewards one side of the stakeholders involved in the process by co-opting the skills and creativity of individuals involved in it is taken out of the equation. In addition, as the outcomes of the interviews conducted in this research proved, the space of the digital studio is something that others want to utilize themselves and those cases cause the co-creation to act as a teaching method, as one of the problems that stakeholders faced was the lack of time or competences to create content themselves. Moreover, this makes co-creation into a powerful process that can be utilized in multiple different settings, such as working in the new digital studio at HAMK Valkeakoski with any stakeholder group and should be considered so that all the parties involved have something to gain by following the guide given in this thesis.



Furthermore, the interviews conducted in this research showed that the digital studio was a very sought-after element in Valkeakoski when it came to entrepreneurs and SMBs and they were the most likely stakeholders to utilize the studio along with the staff of HAMK Valkeakoski and the possibilities that the studio provides for teaching purposes. Consequently, the interviews proved that the main area of focus for the studio would be the editing and recording parts of content for most of the entrepreneurs and SMBs due to the effort and time it takes as they would rather use it to work on their own businesses and the entrepreneurs' and SMBs' lack of competence in that field. As a result of the interviews, the operation of the more complicated studio equipment was something that should be done with the help of the students hired to work in the studio but also with the data administration staff of the Häme University of Applied Sciences to minimize the risk of something breaking and for the process to go as smooth as possible.

All in all, the studio is something that requires the contribution of multiple stakeholders mentioned earlier in this research, as well as the responsibility to operate it with the help of the data administration staff of the Häme University of Applied Sciences and the students working in the studio for the co-creation of value to work in the space of the studio. Moreover, the uniqueness of the needs and the stakeholders involved is necessary for the creation of value by co-creating content to meet the needs of everyone involved and establish the processes and networks used within the studio. In addition, defining the main use of the digital studio requires more insight from the future but as of writing the thesis, the main use was around editing content already produced by the stakeholders, as well as audio and video work.

In addition, after establishing the main uses for the studio in the future with the help of this research, the studio and its modular structure can be further upgraded or modified to fit the needs of the stakeholders better than it currently does. Furthermore, as time goes by, and technologies change it might be necessary to start offering guidance or courses on how to use the equipment in the space of the studio for the stakeholders so that the problem the studio faces in terms of having to hire new students to manage the studio every time they graduate is no longer prominent. This would also help the operation of the studio and the equipment in certain situations where the studio ends up being understaffed and needs one

more person to help, for instance, in cases related to events that are larger in size than normally hosted in the space of the studio.

## 5 Conclusion

To summarize, the digitalization of the world slowly starts shifting focus to digital content creation of various kinds for various purposes and digital studios are what bring stakeholders involved closer to attaining the competences and resources to survive in the future by outsourcing content through them. Digital studios have come a long way from being used for literature, to being hubs of co-creation for videos, podcasts, and other digital content. Furthermore, the digital studio at HAMK Valkeakoski is a needed addition for the community around the campus to thrive and start creating something that the community lacks in return for value. The value gained can range from study credits for the students involved and creating their own content while gaining new competences, marketing material for entrepreneurs and SMBs along with podcasts and other content, opportunities for HAMK Valkeakoski to utilize the space for creating studying material and host different events online as streams. Moreover, the most important type of value to be created in the space is networking with the other stakeholders and sharing insight and gaining new competences.

In addition, for the digital studio to work and to capture the value mentioned, a set of guidelines needs to be met, including ethical co-creation with the stakeholders, where everyone involved in a project has something to gain from the outcomes without exploiting the other party involved for their competences, skills, and creativity. Furthermore, it should be noted that when handling the complex equipment in the space of the studio a staff member from the data administration of the Häme University of Applied Sciences should be present and the students working in the studio should set realistic expectations for the other stakeholders and take care of the equipment in the process. This way the operation of the space works smoothly, and realistic boundaries are set as to what can and cannot be done within the studio. The equipment inside the studio mentioned earlier in this research has been carefully thought of and includes portable and modular pieces of equipment for the studio to function in multiple different settings and provide multiple ways of content creation outside of the studio as well. Consequently, the utilization must be done by people with proper education and guidance as mentioned previously, mixed with the managing of

the space of the studio online through the internal platforms of Häme University of Applied Sciences.

In conclusion, by following the theoretical information along with the interviews conducted and provided in this research, stakeholders consisting of students, entrepreneurs and SMBs, HAMK Valkeakoski, and the city of Valkeakoski can capture value by co-creating content and networking with each other through ethical practices. This leads to value being created and captured by all the parties involved in the forms of the stakeholders' competences, digital content, future careers, online presence, and networks. Moreover, this research provides a guide for creating a digital studio and utilizing it now and in the future, as well as a base to start building from in terms of content creation for stakeholders with little to no experience in content creation through outsourcing content and gaining competences to survive in the future.

Furthermore, as time passes and students working in the studio graduate and need to be replaced to keep the studio functional and help the stakeholders in their projects with setting up equipment and editing content, it should be noted that the same level of knowledge of the space and the equipment should be taught to a data administration staff member of the Häme University of Applied Sciences. This way the studio is always functional if that staff member is available when needed in case something ends up happening to the students currently working in the studio. In addition to the realistic expectation about the digital studio and its capabilities, a set of rules to work with should be compiled to keep the internal processes easily operable and avoid possible damage to the physical equipment or the digital content being created in the studio.

All in all, when the rules are followed and the expectations set and understood, mixed with following the ethical co-creation practices provided in the theory part of this research, value for all the stakeholders involved in projects within the studio can be captured without the stakeholders involved leaving the completed projects feeling exploited for their skills and creativity. That way the digital studio will keep operating smoothly for years to come while developing the communities around HAMK Valkeakoski and capturing meaningful value for everyone involved while establishing an environment full of tools that can adapt to what the future brings. In addition, the studio will benefit multiple other communities outside of

Valkeakoski as well, by bringing more attention to the Häme University of Applied Sciences in other cities and creating more networks in those cities while possibly attracting more students interested in the creation of digital content while studying.

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## **INTERVIEWS**

Mäkelä, S.-M. (2021) Senior lecturer and Work Placement Coordinator, Häme University of Applied Sciences (International business). Interview 7 September 2021.

Korhonen, J. (2021) Entrepreneur and the founder of Bittivirta, Valkeakoski, Interview 20 October 2021

Uimonen, M. (2021) Media producer, Häme University of Applied Sciences, Interview 14 September 2021.

Appendix 1: Photos of the Creator's Hub





