Value Creation in Mobile Social Media: A Systematic Review and Agenda for Future

Research

Structured abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to provide a systematic review of the current state of research regarding mobile social media use for value creation by firms and customers and an agenda for future research.

Design/methodology/approach: We conducted a systematic review following three main steps: keyword search, study selection, and data extraction. A total of 53 articles were identified using academic databases and manual cross-referencing. By means of a thematic analysis method, the study addresses issues related to theory, methods, context, findings and gaps.

Findings: The study reviews and illustrates 14 value aspects of the mobile social media and value creation literature. The findings indicate that mobile social media are effective tools for firms to create and capture value from customers, and for customers to co-create value.

Originality/value: The study contributes to the marketing and social media literature by proposing a conceptual framework that integrates the core components of value creation by firms and customers in the mobile social media context, and by proposing an agenda for future research.

Keywords: literature review; mobile social media; mobile social networks; value creation; value co-creation.

Paper type: Literature review

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1. Introduction

Although the use of mobile social media is widespread, how to create value and benefit from customers using mobile social media remains an important challenge for marketing scholars and managers (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2013; Lamberton and Stephen, 2016; Muninger *et al.*, 2019; Nisar *et al.*, 2019). Value is indeed a complex concept that is difficult to define and measure (Grönroos, 2008) and knowledge on how value is created, by whom and for whom, is still scarce (Grönroos and Ravald, 2011), in particular in the mobile social media context. Thus, value creation by firms and customers in mobile social media is a promising and important research topic that deserves more academic attention (Kannan *et al.*, 2016; Kumar and Reinartz, 2016; Li *et al.*, 2021).

The mobile revolution has made it possible for a combination of mobile devices and social media technology to change the way firms and customers disseminate and acquire information, interact and communicate, and create, deliver and exchange value (Kannan and Li, 2017). The unique features of mobile devices, such as convenience, interactivity, personalization, and effectiveness (Huang *et al.*, 2019), provide users with a different experience compared to social media in desktop computers (Mahmoud and Yu, 2006). Thus, there are several important characteristics that distinguish mobile social media from traditional social media (Kaplan, 2012). First, access to mobile social media applications can be made any time and nearly from any place,

which facilitates effective in-time communication and interaction. Second, mobile social media integration of mobile technologies, such as GPS, provides customers with personalized services based on their geographic location, time, and preferences (Pagani and Malacarne, 2017). Therefore, through mobile social media, customers can more conveniently get involved in conversations and create user-generated content (Neuhofer *et al.*, 2012), while firms can more effectively customize their activities and integrate them into users' life (Buhalis and Foerste, 2015).

Mobile social media serve as useful tools in value creation processes that may help firms to achieve a competitive advantage (Gummerus, 2013). Firms are value creators that, for instance, can offer customized services and sales promotion to customers (Andrews *et al.*, 2016). Besides, firms capture value from customers in return, such as marketing insights (Bernhardt *et al.*, 2012) and customer satisfaction (Hew *et al.*, 2016), loyalty (Akhtar *et al.*, 2019) and equity (Kim *et al.*, 2017). At the same time, customers may act as value co-creators (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). They interact with firms, brands and customers (Chae and Ko, 2016), generate content (Brandt *et al.*, 2017), and share the experience on the platforms (Marchiori and Cantoni, 2015), which can influence other customers.

In recent years, the explosion of research interest related to mobile social media has stimulated the development of a substantial number of studies. In early conceptual studies, Kaplan (2012) introduced the general topic of mobile marketing and mobile social media and Larivière *et al.* (2013) presented the concept of value fusion and discussed how value emerged from social media and mobile technology use. The growing empirical literature on mobile social

media includes studies on the determinants of mobile social media use and adoption (e.g., Pagani and Malacarne, 2017), mobile social media services (e.g., Hew *et al.*, 2016; Tan *et al.*, 2018), and the impact of customer engagement on mobile social media (e.g., Chae and Ko, 2016; Chen, 2017; Kim *et al.*, 2017).

There are also some more general literature reviews on mobile and/or social media. Yadav *et al.*, (2015) reviewed the literature on social media and mobile phone applications to better understand the usage of mobile social media in marketing communications, sales enhancement, and developing cordial relationships with customers. Ketonen-Oksi *et al.* (2016) discussed how value is created in social media and the impact of social media on business models. Lamberton and Stephen (2016) systematically reviewed the digital, social media, and mobile marketing literature to summarize the key themes and propose an agenda for future research. While there are calls for further studies on the combined roles of social media and mobile technologies in value creation (Ketonen-Oksi *et al.*, 2016), to the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic literature review neither explicitly discussing value creation in the mobile social media context nor integrating the role of firms and customers in the value creation process.

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to cover this gap by systematically reviewing the literature on value creation by firms and customers using mobile social media. Our two research questions are: 1) How do firms create value by applying mobile social media? 2) How do customers co-create value with mobile social media? We make two contributions to the marketing and social media literature. First, through thematic analysis and a systematic review of academic studies dealing with mobile social media, we summarize current knowledge and

propose a conceptual framework that integrates value creation and co-creation in mobile social media. Second, by presenting a list of future research opportunities, we provide scholars interested in the topic with guidelines and directions for new studies.

2. Conceptualization of mobile social media and value creation

2.1. Mobile social media

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) defined *social media* as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content". Mobile devices enable users to access social media applications and stay connected with the world. In view of the unique characteristics of mobile devices, we define *mobile social media* as a set of mobile platform-based media technologies that enable communication, interaction, and user-generated content creation and sharing. This definition encompasses two types of mobile applications: mobile social networking sites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) and instant messaging apps (e.g., Facebook Messenger, WeChat, and WhatsApp).

2.2. Value creation in the mobile social media context

Value is generally defined as the trade-off between the benefits ("what you get") and the sacrifices ("what you give") in a market exchange (Ulaga, 2003). Mobile social media serve as value creation tools that facilitate value creation and exchange between firms and customers (Agnihotri, 2020). The value creation process implies three spheres: a provider sphere, a

customer sphere, and a joint sphere (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). The provider sphere is a prerequisite or foundation for value creation in which firms produce resources and processes for customers' use (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). In this sphere, activities performed by firms facilitate customers' value creation and result in outputs (potential value) that customers may use in their value creation process (Grönroos, 2008, 2011; Grönroos and Ravald, 2011). In the customer sphere, the value creation process is dominated and controlled by the customer (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). Customers are considered as value co-creators because value creation is interactional (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). In the joint sphere, the customer is in charge of value creation through direct interaction with service providers' resources/processes/outcomes (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). Customers are co-producers of resources and processes with the firm and value creators jointly with the firm (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016, 2018).

In the mobile social media context, both firms and customers are stakeholders. Value creation at the firm level concerns how firms may achieve a competitive advantage through a series of digital activities (Amit and Zott, 2001). Firms also capture value from customers in return (Lindgreen and Wynstra, 2005), such as marketing insights (Bolat *et al.*, 2016; Nguyen *et al.*, 2015), customer satisfaction (Zhao *et al.*, 2016; Zhou and Lu, 2011) and lifetime value (Hamilton *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, value co-creation at the customer level is related to how customers affect other customers and firms via individual activities (Gummerus, 2013). Customers participate in E-WOM communication (Chae and Ko, 2016), generate content (Brandt *et al.*, 2017), and provide opinions for the brand co-design and innovation (Nguyen *et*

al., 2015; Presi *et al.*, 2016).

3. Methodology

We conducted a systematic review in three steps: keyword search, study selection, and data extraction (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). First, we carried out a search in two scientific literature databases: Web of Science and Scopus, which are internationally accessible and contain high-quality literature (Salo, 2017). Following the article search criteria suggested by Paul and Criado (2020), we searched for studies related to mobile social media in the title, abstract, keywords and full text of the articles using "OR" as logical operator. To ensure the comprehensiveness of the article search, we initially used the following four keywords: "mobile social media", "mobile social network", "mobile social networking sites", "mobile instant messaging". We also searched, simultaneously but separately, "mobile" from the rest of the words in the keywords (e.g., "mobile" and "social media") to expand the search scope. In a second stage, we used specific mobile social media brands (e.g., "Wechat", "WhatsApp") as keywords in the article search. Finally, through a manual cross-referencing, we identified further studies. We found a total of 1551 results, including documents published or accepted for publication in journals, conference proceedings, and book chapters before 2021.

Second, we applied four inclusion and exclusion criteria to select the studies for our theme-based review (e.g., Paul and Criado, 2020). Initially, we excluded 1420 publications beyond business and management, leaving 131 publications in the database. Second, we only considered publications that are in English (all 131 publications were written in this language). Third, like

in many other studies, we decided to exclude books, book chapters, proceedings, and working

papers, which implied to screen out two publications. Fourth, the focus of the investigation had

to be value creation or value for firms and customers in mobile social media. Thus, we excluded

95 journal articles only focused on issues such as technological aspects of mobile social media,

leaving 34 articles in the database. Finally, we added 19 relevant studies from the references of

the remaining studies in the database. As a result, the number of articles included in the review

is 53 (see Figure 1).

Third, in the data extraction stage, each article collected was initially classified into one of

the three main categories of value creation: (i) value creation by firms; (ii) value captured from

customers in return; and (iii) value co-creation by customers.

("Insert Figure 1 about here")

4. Current research state

In this section, we explain how firms and customers create value in the mobile social media

context.

4.1. Value creation by firms

We found 27 studies dealing with value creation by firms in mobile social media. In Web

Appendix 1, we present the objective of each study, the type of study (theoretical vs. empirical)

and methodology, classify each article on a value creation by firms' category, and summarize the

contribution. The articles belong to six value creation categories: B2C (8 studies) and B2B (2 studies) communication, customized services (9 studies), promotions and discounts (5 studies), brand image enhancement (2 studies), and customer relationship management (6 studies). Five studies deal with value creation aspects belonging to two categories.

B2C communication. Mobile social media are interactive marketing communication tools that allow customers to search for information through official brand accounts or consult vendors directly (Cortez *et al.*, 2020). Among the eight studies within this category, four (Akhtar *et al.*, 2019; Bu *et al.*, 2020; Du *et al.*, 2019; Yang *et al.*, 2019) deal with firm-generated content (FGC), i.e., messages with text, emoji, image, videos, or online shopping links that marketers post on official brand pages on mobile social media (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2018). Akhtar *et al.* (2019) investigated FGC formats and found that visual messages (e.g., animated images) play a more significant role in increasing information quality and message interactions than audio messages. Researchers also investigated types of FGC and found that informative (Bu *et al.*, 2020; Yang *et al.*, 2019), entertaining (Bu *et al.*, 2020), and persuasive (Yang *et al.*, 2019) content attract customers' attention (Bu *et al.*, 2020; Yang *et al.*, 2019). Other aspects of FGC, such as content freshness and source credibility, have a positive impact on mobile social media popularity (Du *et al.*, 2019).

Advertising on mobile social media is another type of B2C communication and the focus of the other four studies. Grewal *et al.* (2016) proposed a mobile advertising framework explaining that brand and product information can be disseminated via mobile social media advertisements. Tan *et al.* (2018) concluded that instant responses from advertisers and free

choice of information are the main reasons for customers to accept to receive mobile social media advertisements. The study by Li *et al.* (2020) showed that customers may avoid ads on mobile social media because of the overload information and violation of the shared language. Finally, Yu *et al.* (2020) demonstrated that the attractive visuals and high-quality information of mobile social media advertisements make customers feel familiar with the brand and product.

B2B communication. B2B communication through mobile social media is a value-creating marketing strategy because messages are transmitted fast, flexibly, and efficiently. Among the two studies in this category, Wang *et al.* (2016) revealed that mobile social media capabilities (e.g., transmission velocity, parallelism, symbol sets, repeatability, and processability) are helpful for B2B communication. Additionally, conducting B2B communication on mobile social media improves business performance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) (Wang *et al.*, 2016). Zhang *et al.* (2018) showed that firms may improve business performance and competitiveness via B2B marketing communication on mobile social media. Mobile social media are valuable new-generation collaboration tools for inter-organizational projects because they support multimodal and multimedia communications that facilitate task coordination and knowledge sharing (Zhang *et al.*, 2018).

Customized services. In the context of mobile social media, customized services refer to services that firms provide to customers based on their time and location data, and expectations. Mobile social media facilitate firms to conduct one-to-one marketing because they can provide timely feedback, greater personalization of messages, information, and services concerning content,

timing, and location based on customers' preferences (Buhalis and Foerste, 2015; Cortez *et al*., 2020).

Among the nine studies in this category, there are two conceptual studies, three literature reviews and four empirical studies. We present first conclusions from the conceptual studies. Bernhardt *et al*. (2012) illustrated that the combination of new media with mobile technology such as GPS enables firms to trace customers' detailed movements. Buhalis and Foerste (2015) suggested that context-aware technologies can document aspects of mobile users' behavior.

From the three literature reviews, we can understand the state of the art in topics such as mobile promotions and advertising, and tourism experiences. First, Andrews *et al*. (2016) indicated that customized mobile coupons based on consumer preferences, location, and timing can help reduce the risk of potential negative post-purchase satisfaction. Second, Grewal *et al*. (2016) found that developing customized advertisement based on customer data with contextual information (e.g., location, technological context) and digital footprint can bring firms greater profits. Third, the study by Stienmetz *et al*. (2021) emphasized that mobile social media serve as touchpoints management tools that enable destination managers to deconstruct the tourism experience.

The remaining four studies empirically verified the impact of providing customized services applying mobile social media. Lien *et al*. (2017) found that the quality of timely feedback has a positive influence on customers' satisfaction towards mobile social media platforms. Zhang *et al*. (2018) examined the effects of location-based services and promotions through the local search-and-discovery mobile app Foursquare. Later, the study by Gong *et al*.

(2020) showed that mobile payment service is positively associated with brand equity. The findings by Wilson-Nash *et al.* (2020) highlighted the role of socialbot on mobile social media as a novel touchpoint tool to improve customized service.

Promotions and discounts. From the six articles in this group, we present first a conceptual study and a literature review, and then three empirical studies. Kaplan (2012) noted that promotions and discounts on mobile social media do not necessarily need to be associated with tangible benefits. The literature review conducted by Andrews *et al.* (2016) illustrated that mobile coupons and discount information can be delivered to customers at any point in time during their purchase process, providing them with a transparent exchange of value and activating the desired consumer behavior in the short term.

Regarding the three empirical studies, Zhang *et al.* (2018) showed that promotions can be more effective and useful for local businesses because customers carrying portable devices reveal their geographic location. Marino and Lo Presti (2019) verified that promotions and discounts on mobile social media help firms enhance customer relationship. Finally, Tang *et al.* (2019) found that trust in coupon recommendations on mobile social media is the most important factor driving customers' intention to use the recommended coupons.

Brand image enhancement. The two qualitative empirical studies discussing this topic suggest that mobile social media are mainly viewed as branding tools. Bianchi and Andrews (2015) emphasized that customers' needs are always on the move so that firm-generated content can damage brand image when it cannot meet customers' expectations. Bolat *et al.* (2016) indicated that customers could form positive perceptions of a brand image when firms develop high-quality

brand content and interact with them on mobile social media.

Customer relationship management (CRM). Among the six studies belonging to this category, Kaplan (2012) emphasized the role of mobile social media in enhancing customer relationship development and loyalty programs. In another conceptual study, Malthouse *et al*. (2013) highlighted the necessary adaptation of CRM to the rise of social media because the degree of customer engagement affects the CRM process (e.g., relationship acquisition, retention, and termination).

Concerning the four empirical studies in this category, Harrigan *et al*. (2015) found that customer relationship performance is positively affected by customer relationship orientation, which has a positive impact on social media technology use and customer engagement initiatives. The study by Marino and Lo Presti (2018) proved that CRM performance is positively affected by customer satisfaction with social apps. Liu *et al*. (2019) revealed that applying mobile social media applications to CRM is a current and future trend in the luxury industry in China because they facilitate the firm-to-customer communication and VIP customer maintenance. Finally, Wilson-Nash *et al*. (2020) found that the function of socialchat contributes to CRM by optimizing customers' complaint management experience.

4.2. Value captured from customers

A total of 24 mobile social media studies can be classified as pertaining to the value captured from customers' category. Web Appendix 2 presents the studies including their objective, type of study/methodology, elements of value captured, and contribution. We further classified them

into four groups: customer knowledge and market insights (6 studies), customer satisfaction (4 studies), customer loyalty (6 studies), and customer equity (10 studies). For the six studies dealing with both value captured from customers and value creation by firms, we present now information referred to the former. Two studies belong to two categories.

Customer knowledge and market insights. There are six articles belonging to this category: two conceptual studies, two literature reviews, and two empirical studies. Starting by the conceptual study, Kaplan (2012) pointed out that detailed customer information can be tracked, gathered, and analyzed. Bernhardt *et al.* (2012) indicated that combining data mining features with mobile geo-location applications helps marketers to instantly engage at the exact place where customers are making decisions.

Among the literature reviews, Chen *et al.* (2012) suggested the importance of extracting customer knowledge from big data analysis. Taking advertising as an example, Aguirre *et al.* (2016) pointed out that firms may access customer data such as clickstream history, and when and where advertisements are shown through different types of devices, to predict customers' purchase behaviors.

The two empirical studies provide evidence of how firms benefit from obtaining knowledge on mobile social media. Nguyen *et al.* (2015) and Bolat *et al.* (2016) found that business-relevant market knowledge, obtained from mobile social media, provides insights regarding market functions that are critical resources for firms' performance and subsequent competitive advantage.

Customer satisfaction. We reviewed four empirical studies in this group. In the context of mobile

social commerce, researchers found that perceived usefulness (Hew *et al.*, 2016; Zhao *et al.*, 2016) and perceived enjoyment experience (Zhou and Lu, 2011) are the main factors affecting customers' satisfaction. Similarly, Marino and Lo Presti (2018) demonstrated that enthused participation on mobile social media, including hedonic experience and interaction with organizations, positively affects customers' satisfaction with the platforms.

Customer loyalty. In the context of our study, customer loyalty implies a customer intention or willingness to continue using services provided by firms applying mobile social media, to purchase the same product in the same channel, or to recommend the purchased products to others. There are six empirical studies in this group. Hew *et al.* (2016) suggested customers' satisfaction as the most influential factor on brand loyalty. Apart from satisfaction, Buhalis *et al.* (2020) found that customers' purchase intention is another determinant of customers' loyalty. In a study focused on the tourism sector, Kim, Lee, and Contractor (2019) emphasized the role of customers' authentic experience in increasing their continuance usage intention of services provided on mobile social media. Besides, customers' psychological ownership for the platform (Zhao *et al.*, 2016), satisfaction towards the platforms (Buhalis *et al.*, 2020; Zhao *et al.*, 2016), and customers' E-WOM (Akhtar *et al.*, 2019; Buhalis *et al.*, 2020) lead to increased repeated purchase intention for the same products in the same shopping channel. Finally, Gong *et al.* (2020) showed that the three forms of customer loyalty (cognitive loyalty, affective loyalty, and conative loyalty) are positively affected by the value captured from the mobile payment service.

Customer equity. We found ten empirical studies related to this topic. Scholars explored how firms increase customer purchase intention or willingness to pay by applying mobile social media.

The studies emphasize the role of perceived value from the platforms (Chen, 2017; Hew *et al.*, 2018), customized marketing communication (Bacile *et al.*, 2014), firm-generated content (FGC) (Chen *et al.*, 2019; Leung *et al.*, 2020; Yang *et al.*, 2019), and customer engagement in mobile social media activities (Chae and Ko, 2016; Cheung *et al.*, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2017; Yang, 2019; Zhao *et al.*, 2019) in increasing customer purchase intention in distinct industries. Specifically, in the tourism industry, Hew *et al.* (2018) showed that the perceived value of mobile applications is the most influential factor driving customers' mobile social tourism shopping intention. The results by Bacile, Ye, and Swilley (2014) revealed that perceived customization of marketing communication increases not only attitude towards communication but also purchase intent, and purchasing activity, while also acting as a risk reduction mechanism. In the social commerce industry, Chen *et al.*, (2019) confirmed that brand-related information increased customers' trust in firms, which in turn increases customers' purchase intention. In the fashion industry, Chae and Ko (2016) compared three types of customer participation in mobile social media and found that customer-media participation had the most substantial influence on customer equity.

4.3. Value co-creation by customers

We found 14 studies related to how customers co-create value by applying mobile social media. Web Appendix 3 presents the studies included in the review together with their objective, type of study/methodology, category of value co-creation and contribution. The studies can be classified into four categories: Electronic Word-of-mouth (6 studies), opinion leader (2 studies), user-generated content (4 studies), and product and brand co-design and innovation (2 studies).

Electronic Word-of-mouth. There are six quantitative empirical studies within this group. Dialogue and interaction are the essence of co-creation for value generation (Payne *et al.*, 2008). Okazaki and Yagüe (2012) found that E-WOM intention positively affects customers' brand value. Other researchers examined the impact of E-WOM on mobile social media on customers' trust. Chae and Ko (2016) found that among the three types of customer social participation in mobile social media (customer and media, customer and brand, and customer and customer), customer-customer interactions positively influence trust between firms and other customers. Liu *et al.* (2018) found that the trust among consumers has a positive effect on customer engagement in brand communities and brand trust.

Moreover, researchers examined the impact of social interactions on other customers' purchase intentions. In the e-commerce industry, Sun *et al.* (2016) demonstrated that social climate, including social interaction, social trust, and social support, positively affects group members' social value, hedonic value, self-discovery value, informational value, and member intention to purchase together. Similarly, in the tourism industry, Kim *et al.* (2017) found that social interaction with others on mobile SNS helps customers enhance their social relationships and increase their subjective well-being, which, in turn, has a positive effect on their purchase intention. Vahdat *et al.* (2020) verified that peer influence on mobile social media affects customers' attitude towards the apps and their subsequent purchase intention.

Opinion leader. We found two empirical studies belonging to this group. Opinion leader reviews can reach and affect a large number of potential customers (Casaló *et al.*, 2020). Among the two studies included in our review, Liu *et al.* (2019) highlighted local key opinion leaders as one of

the successes and challenges in the fashion industry in China due to their knowledge of the brand and local culture. Bu *et al.* (2020) found empirical support to the mediating role of key opinion leaders in the relationship between digital content marketing and E-WOM.

User-generated content. We reviewed two conceptual and two empirical studies in this group. Neuhofer *et al.* (2012) explored mobile social media technology used in the pre/during/post-stages of travel. They indicated that customers, fans, followers, friends, and peers can be co-creators of value who play an active role in co-creating their own experiences. Buhalis and Foerste (2015) argued that contextual information collected in a smart destination provides real-time information that may influence other tourists' experience and enables tourism organizations to co-create products and services with their customers.

Among the empirical studies, Brandt *et al.* (2017) illustrated that customer-generated messages provide insights into the presence and environmental and topical engagement of users. In the tourism industry, Marchiori and Cantoni (2015) found that younger and less educated people are more likely to change their mind about a certain destination under the influence of UGC.

Product and brand co-design and innovation. We found two empirical studies in this group. Applying mobile social media to obtain information and acquire knowledge from a broad audience leads to firms' innovation activities (Nguyen *et al.*, 2015). Nguyen *et al.* (2015) suggested that brand innovation is affected by both knowledge acquisition from social media applications and market orientation. Presi *et al.* (2016) illustrated the contribution to brand co-production by customers who post a brand selfie on mobile social media. Customers are active

participants and co-creators of market conversations in this process that influences other customer brand experiences and customer-brand relationships.

5. Discussion, conclusions from the review and proposed conceptual framework

Following Paul and Criado's (2020) approach, we apply the theory, context, and method (TCM) structure to organize the value creation findings and draw some conclusions. TCM is a classical structure for conducting literature review studies that has been successfully applied in multiple literature reviews (e.g., Kumar *et al*., 2020; Rosado-Serrano *et al*., 2018).

The literature on value creation and mobile social media has been growing quickly in the last fifteen years, and there is a great variety in terms of theories used. The Technology Acceptance Model (4 studies) and use and gratifications theory (3 studies) are the most used ones. Regarding the research context, the mobile social media context is the most frequently examined (15 studies), followed by tourism (10 studies), and social commerce contexts (9 studies). Less studies have been developed in other contexts, such as the advertising, B2B, fashion, and luxury industry.

With respect to the type of study and methodologies used, a total of 10 studies are theoretical (conceptual and reviews) while 43 are empirical. Among the latter, most studies are quantitative (38) and only five have a qualitative nature. The quantitative studies have collected data more frequently through online surveys (32 studies) and applied structural equation modeling (30 studies). The qualitative studies have mainly collected data via interviews (5 studies). Most data come from Asian countries (27 studies), in particular from mainland China

(24 studies), while there are very few cross-country studies (1 study) compared to single country studies (43 studies).

In our review, we initially classified the studies into three groups: value creation by firms (27 studies); value captured from customers (24 studies), and value co-creation by customers (14 studies). We use thematic analysis (Aronson, 1995; Braun and Clarke, 2006) to propose a novel and integrative conceptual framework on value creation in mobile social media (see Figure 2). Specifically, we adopt a narrative synthesis (Popay *et al.*, 2006) perspective to review the literature and to construct our conceptual framework. The framework illustrates, summarizes, and integrates the role of firms and customers in creating value, the three value creation aspects analyzed in our review (value creation by firms, value captured from customers and value co-creation by customers) and the 14 research topics studied in the mobile social media literature. Firms create value for customers through B2C and B2B communication, customized services, promotions and discounts, brand image enhancement, and customer relationship management. At the same time, firms capture value from customers by means of customer knowledge and market insights, satisfaction, loyalty, and equity. Moreover, customers also co-create value through E-WOM, opinion leader, user-generated content, and co-design and innovation. The conceptual framework is expected to help scholars better understand the body of knowledge and the frontiers of research on value creation and mobile social media.

("Insert Figure 2 about here")

Social media users are gradually moving from the web to mobile phones, creating the need for scholars and managers to better understand this process and its implications. In response, we contribute to the marketing and social media literature by providing a timely literature review focused on value creation in mobile social media and a conceptual framework that integrates firm and customer value creation in this context. While previous studies on mobile social media focused on different topics without an integrated framework, we provide this overarching view where the roles of firms and customers and their different value-creating activities are incorporated.

6. Future research directions

Our review of the literature allows us to identify relevant research gaps and propose directions for future research on value creation in mobile social media. We have also organized this section according to the Theory, Context, and Method (TCM) structure (Paul and Criado, 2020). Figure 3 shows explored, less investigated and unexplored areas in mobile social media studies considering theories, contexts, methods, and topics.

("Insert Figure 3 about here")

6.1. Theory

Most theories have been applied to examine firms' activities from the perspective of individual customers, while few have been used to analyze firms' value creation behaviors at the

organizational level. Thus, to better understand how firms leverage mobile social media to create value, more research is necessary at the organizational level. We also noted limitations in the explanatory power of various theories used in value creation in mobile social media. For example, adopting the TAM as the single theoretical lens (e.g., Vahdat *et al.*, 2020; Zhao *et al.*, 2016) seems a weak approach to explain how firms create value applying mobile social media. Consequently, we suggest researchers to emphasize the organizational level and to combine several theories to better explain value creation in mobile social media. Thus, we propose the following research question:

RQ1: Which theoretical perspectives can be fruitfully combined at (and beyond) the organizational level to provide a more comprehensive explanation of value creation for customers in mobile social media?

Studies on value captured from customers have adopted various theories to explain the same phenomenon in different contexts. In particular, customer loyalty has been explained using the expectation confirmation theory in e-commerce (Hew *et al.*, 2016) and the use and gratifications theory in tourism (Kim *et al.*, 2019). We still do not know which theories may have higher generalizability potential. Scholars can use and test competing theoretical lenses in their mobile social media studies to enhance the theoretical contribution of their research. Therefore, we propose the following research question:

RQ2: How expectation confirmation, interaction adaptation, and gratification affect customer loyalty on mobile social media?

Finally, studies related to value co-creation by customers have applied various theories to explain customer behavior in different countries. In the literature on E-WOM behavior, the use and gratifications theory has been employed in China (Sun *et al.*, 2016) and the flow experience theory in South Korea (Kim *et al.*, 2017). We do not know much about whether these theories can be used to explain E-WOM in Western countries. To test the generalizability of theories across countries, we suggest further cross-cultural research. Thus, we propose a third research question:

RQ3: To what extent do gratification and flow experience affect Western customers' E-WOM behavior on mobile social media?

6.2. Context

Given that mobile social media integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology into platforms, customer service has become "intelligentized". Thus, chatbot functions allow firms to communicate with customers in real time and offer a quick response to solve problems. Luo *et al.* (2019) examined the application of AI chatbots for customer service and found that disclosing the identity of the chatbot prior to the machine–customer conversation reduces purchase rates. Wilson-Nash *et al.* (2020) concluded that the customized services provided by the Facebook Messenger chatbot increase impulse purchases and reduce decision-making time. The existing empirical findings are based on voice-based chatbot. However, many chatbots on mobile social media are text-based (e.g., ManyChat). We do not know whether the findings also apply to the text-based context. This led us to propose the fourth research question:

RQ4: Do voice-based chatbot and text-based chatbot affect customers on mobile social media in the same way?

In addition, the existing results on the impact of the chatbot on mobile social media are based on qualitative evidence with young informants recruited by purposive sampling (Wilson-Nash *et al.*, 2020). Thus, we do not know the impact of the chatbot on other age groups of mobile social media users. Therefore, we propose another research question:

RQ5: How does the mobile social media chatbot affect the consumer journey for users of different demographics and age groups?

Digital marketing triggers potential customers to move forward within the customer journey (Alamäki and Korpela, 2021). However, we do not know whether the role of the chatbot during the customer journey differs across platforms, including mobile social media based chatbot and chatbot incorporated on firms' websites (Wilson-Nash *et al.*, 2020). Thus, we propose the following research question:

RQ6: Is the role of the chatbot during the customer journey the same on different platforms such as mobile social media and firms' websites?

Focusing on the tourism industry, researchers concluded that user-generated content (UGC) on mobile social media affects customers' opinions and decision-making (Brandt *et al.*, 2017; Marchiori and Cantoni, 2015). However, there are differences in UGC topics and brand sentiments across industries (Liu *et al.*, 2017). Thus, we suggest researchers to study the dominant topics of interest emerging from UGC on mobile social media and the variations in

customer sentiment towards brands across industries. This leads us to propose our seventh research question:

RQ7: How dominant topics on mobile social media affect customer sentiment across industries?

Another important future research topic is the role of influencers/opinion leaders in value co-creation across industries. Youtubers and bloggers have a wealth of knowledge in specific fields and a large number of followers (Lin *et al.*, 2018). However, we still do not know much about the role of mobile social media in the influencer/opinion leader value co-creation process. Due to the convenience nature of mobile social media (Larivière *et al.*, 2013), the relationship between influencers/opinion leaders and consumer behavioral intentions may be stronger in this context. Thus, we propose:

RQ8: Does mobile social media strengthen the relationship between opinion leadership/influencers and behavioral intentions?

Similarly, although behavioral intention could be the main antecedent of actual behavior, researchers are encouraged to analyze the influence of opinion leadership on actual behavior (Casaló *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, we propose the following research question:

RQ9: To what extent does opinion leadership/influencers affect actual customer engagement and purchase behavior on mobile social media?

6.3. Method

Firm-generated content (FGC) is not only useful for establishing brand awareness, but also for increasing online customer engagement and even improving sales performance (Meire *et al.*,

2019; Pansari and Kumar, 2017). Researchers have examined the impact of FGC using data from a single country (e.g., Akhtar *et al.*, 2019; Bu *et al.*, 2020). Although multinational enterprises may have official social media accounts in different countries, we do not know whether the same FGC can be used and have a similar impact in these countries/regions. Thus, an important research direction is cross-cultural analysis. We propose the following research question:

RQ10: Does the impact of different types of firm-generated content vary across countries and/or cultures?

Information and communication technologies are effective tools for knowledge creation and innovation (Papa *et al.*, 2018). The knowledge and customer information generated from new media allow firms to predict customers' attitude towards products or services (Crammond *et al.*, 2018) and firms' organizational performance improves as knowledge competencies increase (Garcia-Morales *et al.*, 2018). Thus, knowledge and customer information are valuable assets, and firms can make recommendations based on customer knowledge generated on mobile social media (Bolat *et al.*, 2016; Nguyen *et al.*, 2015).

Researchers have conducted conceptual (e.g., Bernhardt *et al.*, 2012; Kaplan, 2012) and review studies (e.g., Aguirre *et al.*, 2016) to highlight the benefits that firms can obtain from customer knowledge derived from mobile social media. However, empirical studies on the specific benefits, such as ad-click through rate (Yu *et al.*, 2020), customers' redemption behavior of recommended mobile coupons (Tang *et al.*, 2019), and customers' impulsive purchase behavior (Chen *et al.*, 2019), rely heavily on survey data. We encourage researchers to obtain real customer data derived from a variety of mobile social media platforms to explore how

customer data can empower companies' marketing strategy. Thus, we propose the following research question:

RQ11: Do findings on the relationship between customer knowledge and ad-click through rate, customers' redemption behavior of coupons, and customers' impulsive purchase behavior still hold when customer data are collected on mobile social media?

Mobile social media platforms are also a good place to capture large amounts of customer data. Big data enables firms to gain marketing insights and find new opportunities for innovation and optimization of products and services (Hänninen *et al.*, 2018). Researchers have suggested the capabilities of mobile social media to obtain market insights in conceptual (e.g., Kaplan, 2012) and qualitative studies (e.g., Nguyen *et al.*, 2015 and Bolat *et al.*, 2016). However, there is also room to study customer data on mobile social media through big data approaches. We, therefore, propose:

RQ12: How can big data captured from mobile social media reinforce value creation for customers and firms?

Firms face the challenges of collecting and analyzing complicated customer data from a variety of sources with differences in size, structure, and format (Dahlbom *et al.*, 2019). Customer data on mobile social media, such as texts, images, sounds, and videos, is unstructured. Marketing practitioners still experience difficulties to transform such knowledge into meaningful outcomes (Dahlin *et al.*, 2019; Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). Therefore, we propose our last research question:

RQ13: How unstructured user-generated data captured from mobile social media can be transformed into valuable marketing insights?

Mobile social media and their associated value creation processes are based on rapidly changing technologies. In this context, functionalities of mobile social media, their adoption, as well as the role of its users call for new research efforts. Thus, our study provides valuable research directions for scholars interested in mobile social media and value creation.

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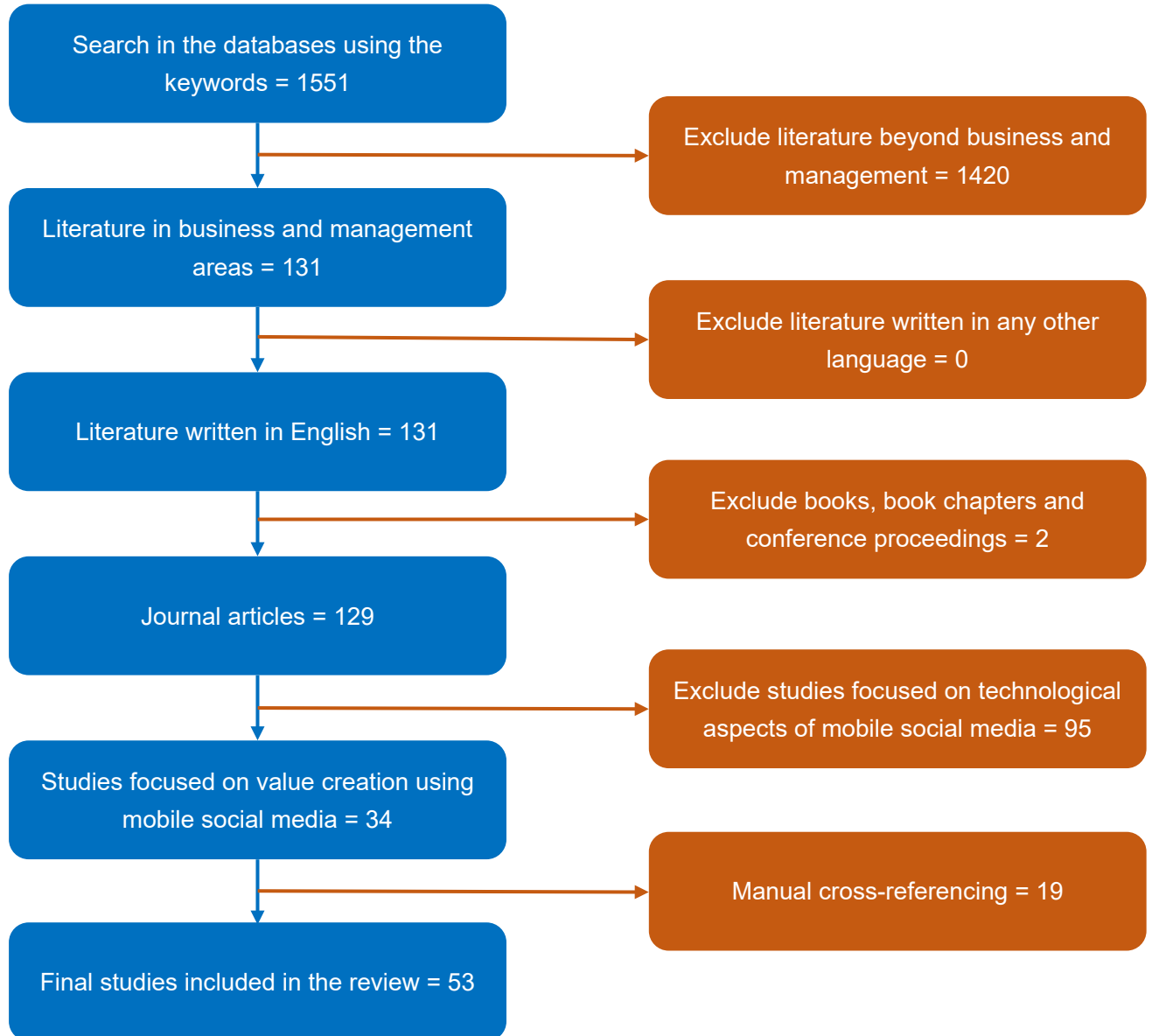**Figure 1. Process of search and selection of articles.**
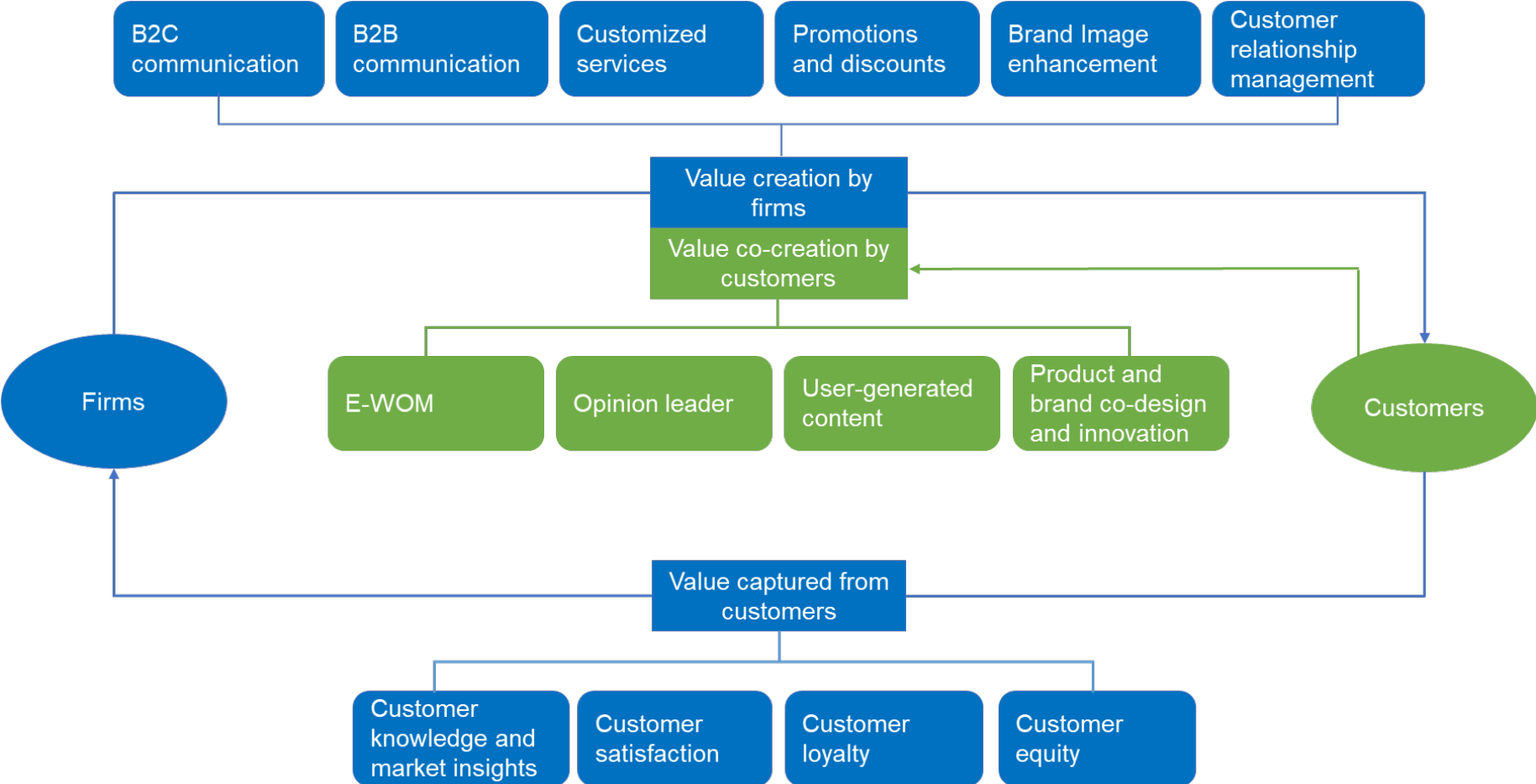
Figure 2. Conceptual framework on value creation in mobile social media.

Figure 3. Mobile social media research tree.