Exploring the Value Co-Creation Activities of HR professionals in an HR shared service center

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Prologue

Completing a master's thesis was an intensive process and with the writing of this prologue I put the last hand on my thesis. I have definitely learned a lot. Once, a personality test described me as a person who "likes to work on short term goals" and "always keep looking for new opportunities". This master thesis was completely in contrary. Nevertheless, I have completed this thesis and I am proud of the final result. Of course, I would like to thank a few people who certainly contributed to this thesis.

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Jeroen Meijerink, for his great support, insightful comments and inspiration during the process. I also would like to thank the staff of P-Direkt for their excellent cooperation. Especially, I would like to thank Marcel Gieske for all the opportunities I received from P-Direkt to conduct my research. Besides this, I will congratulate him with the great team he works with. All K&U (klant en uitvoering) employees are really friendly, helpful and they perform a really good job. Therefore Marcel, you are doing a good job with managing them.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my sister, Daniëlle, who have many times been my translater. Even as my friend Janique, and my housemates Jet, Machteld and Jet. And last but not least, dad, mom and my boyfriend Jeroen, thank you for your support during my master. Jeroen, thank you for your trust that this process would be successful. Mom and dad, thank you for the perseverance that I learned from you.

Finally, I would like to end this prologue and this thesis with the statement of my brother (he is the only family member I did not call yet). He would say when he finished something: "poar neem'n", which means let's take a few drinks!

Felonie Valk

Abstract

There is a considerable gap between the high rating of importance and the lower rating of knowledge on co-creation (Bowen, 2016). Just as in marketing research, it is stated that value is created by the recipient of the product or service – the employee – and that the value of that product or service is co-created by the supplier, 'the HR professional'. However, there is a lack of knowledge on how HR professionals can co-create value. To obtain more insight, fifteen HR employees of P-Direkt were observed to see in which ways HR professionals could co-create value of HR services for employees. In addition, questionnaires were conducted in order to measure the satisfaction of value creators about the provided services. Because the satisfaction level were linked to the applied co-creation activities, this study points out which co-creation activities should be adopt by HR professionals in order to co-create value. Results show that the context and question of the employee are determined for the provided service. When HR professionals personalize a service, provide personal resources, integrate actions of stakeholders or empower the employee in the co-creation process, it could all contribute to value creation if it is adjusted to the context and question of the employee. Otherwise, it has no value. Further results show that there are two reasons for dissatisfaction: one reason is that some employees had to wait a long time for response, and the other that some HR professionals created a weak relational interaction. When HR professionals build a trusting relationship, results show that employees are generally satisfied, even when a HR professional cannot provide help. Therefore, relational interaction will contribute to value creation of HR services.

Table of content

1. Introduction

There is proof that the usage of Human Resource (HR) services by employees positively affects the value of HR services for employees (Meijerink, Bondarouk, and Lepak, 2015). Value can be defined as the utility perceived and determined by the customer (Bowen, 2016). The customers of HR services within a company are the employees. In recent years, many studies focused on what HR services provide. Several researches pointed out that improvements in perceived HR service value for employees will result in higher levels of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction (Chiang and Wu, 2014; Hallowell, Schlesinger, and Zornitsky, 1996) higher levels of effective commitment of employees (Gilbert, De Winne, and Sels, 2011; Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005), increased performance (Bednall, Sanders, and Runhaar, 2014; Bos-Nehles, Van Riemsdijk, and Looise, 2013) and higher levels of intention to stay with the organization (Wildes, 2007; Wildes and Parks, 2005). Also Tsui, Pearce, Porter and Tripoli (1997) as cited by Meijerink et al. (2015) demonstrated the importance of HR services value. They presented that a negative balance in quality-sacrifice trade-off for employees has a negative influence on task performance and increases absenteeism among employees. These studies imply that there is interest in research about the effects of HR service value.

The priority on value creation within the HR service process has also increased. Ulrich (1997) as cited by Caldwell (2003) emphasized that HR professionals should have more focus on value creation instead of their traditional role as the 'caretakers' of administrative systems. In addition, Farndale, Scullion, and Sparrow (2010, p.167) argued for "the growing need to lose HR activities that do not add value to the business". This is important because value creation is the core purpose and central process of economic exchange (Vargo, Maglio and Akaka, 2008). In general, it is assumed that the HR professionals are the value creators within HR (Conner and Ulrich, 1996; Vargo and Akaka, 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). However, within marketing, there is proof that the recipient of services is the value creator and the supplier is the co-creator of value (Grönroos, 2008, 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008). Within a company, the recipient of HR services is the employee and the supplier is the HR professional. This implies that the employee creates value and the HR professional co-creates value. Theory and research into the co-creation of value in service is still developing. Ostrom, Parasuraman, Bowen, Patricio, and Voss (2015) as cited by Bowen (2016) reported a considerable gap between the high rating of "importance" and the lower rating of "knowledge" on co-creation. Considering that within HR, there is a lack of knowledge of the ways in which HR professionals can co-create value with employees and which of these ways of co-creation provides HR service value to employees. This finding is a cause for investigation. Therefore, the purpose of this current study is to analyze in which ways HR professionals co-create value of HR services for employees. To investigate this lack of knowledge, the following research question is conducted: *"In which ways do HR professionals co-create value of HR services for employees?"*

This study will provide more insights in the value creation process within HR. First of all, this research will give an explanation of the concept of HR service value for employees. Thereafter, there will be a clarification why employees are considered as value creators and HR professionals as value co-creators and which additional factors are determining for the value creation process. After that, the methodology describes the surveys used to measure the extent of value creation and outlines the observations which were made at the Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs. After the results, there is a discussion on the contributions and implications of the findings of this research. Finally, limitations of the research will be demonstrated.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Conceptualizing HR service value for employees

Before clarifying who creates HR service value, the concept of HR service and the concept of HR service value for employees are examined. This is used to investigate who creates and who co-creates value, and how this value can be created or co-created. In contrast to the field of HR, in the field of marketing considerable research on value creation has already been done. Results of these studies are, in this study, applied to HR.

First, the notion HR service in general will be conceptualized. HR services are offers of HR practices to employees that enable employees to fulfill their needs and increase their skills, motivation, attitude or behavior (Kuvaas, 2008). Per aspect, different HR practices can be effective to achieve an increased value to HR services. To choose the right practices is essential for organizations, because HR practices shape employee's perception, attitude and behavior (Wright, McMahan, Gerhart, and Snell, 1997). Wright, et al. (1997) distinguished three forms of different HR practices, namely transactional HR practices, traditional HR practices and transformational HR practices. Transactional HR practices are those which are most directly related to the administrative component of HR (Wright et al., 1997). Carrig (1997) mentioned benefit administration and record keeping as examples of this practice. These activities will contribute to the motivation of the employee. Traditional HR practices are those which are focused on managing workers and the work context, and serve a supportive role in the operating infrastructure. Carrig (1997) conceptualized these practices as policy-related practices. Examples of these practices are those which tend to explicitly focus on acquiring, supporting, guiding, and rewarding the actions of workers, such as recruitment, selection, training, performance appraisals, compensation, and more. These activities can positively contribute to employees' skills, motivation, attitude and behavior. Transformational practices are those which are focused more on macro or strategic organizational objectives. Carrig (1997) mentioned strategic planning and organizational development as examples of this practice. These activities can contribute to the attitude or behavior of the employee.

Within this research, value is identified as the utility from a product or service, which is perceived and determined by the customer (Bowen, 2016). Service value within HR is defined as a suitable concept for capturing both the quality and the nonmonetary costs of HR services. Thereby, service value shows users' overall assessment of the utility of a service, based on the observation of what is received and what is delivered (Zeithaml, 1988). In other words, a tradeoff is made by the service recipient between the quality of a service and the costs. In this study, the HR service recipients are the employees, since they make use of the HR services. Therefore, the value of HR services is focused on employees. For instance, the use of the service should give benefits to the employee, such as more skills. The quality of a service has been defined as the delivered value through use and with quality comes costs, which can be viewed as the exchange value (Lepak, Smith and Taylor, 2007). Focusing on the employees, costs can be explained by the fact that employees have to deliver effort, time, and energy for obtaining and consuming value (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal, 1991).

2.2 Employees create the value of HR services

In recent years, there is a notable trend that the customer has become more important in the value creation process. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) stated that the market has become a place for proactive customer involvement, and they support co-opting customer involvement in the value-creation process. This pro-active involvement is required for customers to create value. The question arises if they are creators of value or just co-creators.

Just as in marketing research studies, in this HR research it is assumed that the customer is the value creator and the value is created during the use of a service. The value that is created during the use of a service is defined as value-in-use. A marketing theory of Vargo, Maglio and Akaka (2008) supposed this reasoning by arguing that when customers do not make use of the good or service, it has no value, so customers have to be the value creators. Suppliers apply their knowledge and skills in the production and branding of the product or service, and customers apply their knowledge and skills in the use of it in the context of their own lives. From this the question arises how value can be created by service recipients during value-in-use. Grönroos (2011) explained that customer's and supplier's practices move partly as parallel processes. All of these processes include interactions. From a value creating perspective, the processes are communicative interactive processes (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006) that can fuse into one integrated process, where both parties are active and can directly influence each other. It includes that the service supplier performs as an integrated part of the recipient's process, and the service recipient performs as an integrated part of the supplier's process. Therefore, it can be concluded that value-in-use can be created by the integration of the necessary resources from the supplier and the recipient of the service. Although, value-in-use has different meanings to different people and therefore is inherently differentiated (Vargo, Maglio and Akaka, 2008). This can be explained by the fact that the extent of value will be determined by the customer. As Payne, Storbacka, and Frow (2008) stated: the more a customer understands about the possibilities, the greater the value that can be created.

Within HR research, it is concluded that value is created during value-in-use and that the value will be created by integrating resources (Bowen, 2016). When the theory of Vargo, Maglo and Akaka is applied to HR service value, it is stated that when an employee has no knowledge about the subject that is discussed during the training, the training has less value. Another example of a HR practice is performance management, which can consist of a performance appraisal. When an employee is unprepared and is not concerned about his current work attitude, the feedback has less value. The extent to which an employee applies his feedback, determines the value of the feedback. Moreover, if HR professionals increase the involvement of an employee and therefore increase his empowerment, this will have no value if the employee is not concerned about his current level. Again the extent to which an employee applies this empowerment, determines the value of the delivered practice. From this it can be concluded that employees create value and determine how much the value will be.

2.3 HR professionals co-creates value
Given that value has to be created by the employee, for this research is proposed that those who provide HR services – the HR professionals – are the ones who co-create the value of HR services. In this research, value co-creation activities of HR professionals should support employees in creating value-in-use. To consider what this support to create value includes marketing research will be reviewed. Grönroos (2011) described the process of value co-creation and distinguished two activities of suppliers. First, the supplier's role as a value facilitator providing customers' value-supporting processes that facilitates customers' value creation. Second, the supplier's involvement in customers' usage processes, which results in interactions with customers that open up additional opportunities for suppliers to affect customers' value creation. During the interactions the supplier can directly co-operate with the customer and actively affects the flow and outcome of their value-creating processes. This second aspect points out how suppliers can create value during value-in-use.

Bowen (2016) described the value creation process within HR. He stated that the role of service providers should be perceived only as how companies could support recipient's ongoing activity and experience-making structures. This reflects that HR professionals support a service during the use. The support can be exercised by HR professionals adopting a trainer or educator role (Meijerink et al., 2015). When adopting such role, HR professionals can give instructions for an optimal use of a service. Another example within marketing is given by Payne et al. (2008). His findings present that customers receive clear 'scripts' from suppliers to communicate expectations on how they could actively participate in value creation. If the user does not act on these instructions, the value will not increase. Therefore, it means that the trainer can only support and thus co-create value. Another example of HR professionals who support a service is the involvement of employees in more processes which enhance their empowerment. In this case, HR professionals can point to aspects in which it will be beneficial to apply the empowerment. However, if employees do not make use of this support, the value of HR services will not be increased. This confirms that the HR professionals can only support and so only can co-create value to HR services.

2.4 Ways of activities to co-create value

The value that can be created out of services should be reflected in the value proposition (Grönroos, 2011), because a value proposition reflects what the supplier promised to customers. The value proposition is important, because it determines the value of a service to a great extent. If the proposal or delivered service is not clear for the employees, HR professionals could adopt the role of a teacher to support in the use of a HR practice. Adopting this role, HR professionals should support in obtaining competences or be able to teach the customer certain behavior. Besides that a proper value proposition can gain competitive advantage (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), Meijerink et al. (2015) found that when HR service providers offer a better value proposition, it will lead to an increasing usage of HR services by employees. Next to this, it is argued that the value proposal should be adjusted to the customer. If value proposal should be adjusted to the customer, it will increase the value of the provided service. Furthermore, if the value proposal of the service should be adjusted to the customer, also the service has to be adjusted to the customer in order to create value. Regarding the different ways of adjusting a service, this study suggests several activities which can be performed by HR professionals to co-create value or in other words, to support employees in creating value-in-use out of provided HR services.

2.4.1 Increasing personal resources

Meijerink et al. (2015) found that the HR competences of employees (i.e., their knowledge, skills, and abilities) positively relate with their perceptions of HR service value. On this basis, I argue that HR professionals can engage in value co-creation by increasing the HR competences of employees. To improve the HR competences of employees, HR professionals can, for instance, offer trainings, workshops and e-learning modules or stimulate the use of HR practices or support HR practices during the use (Meijerink, et al., 2015). When these HR practices will be personalized to the employee, it is likely that the employee feels more appreciated. When employees feel appreciated, they can create more value out of the provided service. Therefore, it can be assumed personal resources will positively contribute to value creation. The importance of appropriate competences of employees is also emphasized by Payne et al. (2008), who stated that if suppliers want to increase their competitiveness, one possibility is to affect the customer's process in such a way that the customer is able to utilize available resources more efficiently and effectively. To utilize available resources more efficiently and effectively, I assume that resources can be adjusted to factors as contextual resources. This will be explained in the next paragraph.

2.4.2 Providing contextual resources

Vargo, Maglio and Akaka (2008) suggest that the context in which the value is created is as determining for value creation as the provided resources and services. In their study, Vargo, Maglio and Akaka (2008) made a distinction between social, ecological and governmental influences on co-creation. Although the social, ecological, and governmental influences are often seen as uncontrollable to the process of value creation. In contrast, Vargo, Maglio and Akaka (2008) state that the contextual nature of co-created value suggests otherwise. Controlling all elements of the environment is not possible, but there are some contextual resources which are. An example of a contextual resource might be certain required materials, like systems in which value can be created, and the access to these systems. This systems are needed for HR professional in order to deliver HR services and, therefore, to create value. Further in order to create value, an employee needs time and space, which should be facilitated by the managers. This shows that individuals need different resources in order to create value. This extent to which individuals need contextual resources influence the way of value creation. Therefore, it can be assumed that contextual resources influence the extent of value co-creation.

2.4.3 Service personalization

Lewis and Bridger (2001) and Windham and Orton (2001) found that within marketing there had been a trend over the preceding decade toward greater individuality, which prompts customers to create more individualized, experiential and differentiated goods and services. According to Payne, et al. (2008), personalizing the co-creation experience includes stimulating individualized interactions and experience outcomes. Within HR, personalized co-creation experience can be recognized in the way HR professionals interact with experiential environment of the employee. The interaction that HR professionals provide should be adjusted to the preferences and lifestyle of the employee in order to create personalized value. The more transactional HR practices are, the more HR professionals can adjust to the preferences and lifestyle of the employee. This can be explained by the fact that the administrative objectives of HR are easier to individualize than the strategic organizational objectives. This situation requires that HR professionals should continually pay attention to opportunities based on changes in employee's preferences and lifestyle. Therefore, it remains necessary to understand co-creation experiences so that HR professionals can co-shape consumer expectations and experiences along with their customers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). As Payne et al. (2008, p. 92) pointed out: "successful value co-creation requires the ability to manage expectations, communications and promises between both parties throughout the co-creation process". According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), high-quality interactions, which enable an individual customer to create unique experiences with the company, is the key to create competitive advantage. For the purposes of this study it is assumed that the extent of value creation is influenced by the extent to which co-creation is personalized, so adjusted to the preferences and lifestyles of the employees.

2.4.4 Integration of services

A marketing study of Grönroos (2011) found that integrating marketing with value creation, has fundamental affects for both value generation and the relevance and future scope of marketing. This is also reflected in HR studies. Karpen, Bove, Lukas, and Zyphur (2015) argued that during any interaction with firm-provided resources, customers co-create experiences through the integration and the potentially reinforcing of resources into valuable outcomes. To thoroughly understand the competencies that should integrate, one has to investigate (in addition to the processes and systems that underlie them) the people who engage in the process, the skills they individually and collectively must have, and the behavior they have to engage in (individually and interactively) to implement the

process. Thereby, synergy can contribute to the generation of new knowledge in regard to the roles that people perform in organizational competitive advantage (Wright, Dunford, and Snell 2001). This clarifies why suppliers provide value propositions to employees which deliver offers that integrate with the customers' various practices and processes (Grönroos, 2011). On this basis, I argue that synergy can also originate when HR resources and services integrate. As stated in chapter 2.4.1, 2.4.2 and 2.4.3, an increase in personal resources, contextual resources and service personalization all have influence on value creation. Therefore, these elements should integrate and adjust to each other to create the optimal value and synergy should originate. Based on these assumptions, the following typologies are proposed:

Typology 1: HR professionals co-create value by increasing personal resources.

Typology 2: HR professionals co-create value by providing resources and services which are personalized to employees preferences and lifestyles.

Typology 3: HR professionals co-create value by providing resources and services which are adjusted to the contextual resources.

Typology 4: The integration of HR resources and services positively influences the value creation process.

3. Methodology

This study aims to explore in which ways HR professionals co-create value for and with employees. To get to know how I conducted this study, this chapter presents the research setting of the study and the different data collection methods which are used to answer the research question.

3.1 The research setting

I conducted this study among HR professionals of P-Direkt. P-Direkt is the HR related shared service centre which is part of the Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs. The role of HR professionals at the shared service centre is to support employees of the government during the use of a service. The support is provided by phone. This direct contact is useful because this study also assumes that value is created and co-created during the use of a service. Because HR professionals provide services to employees and have direct contact with employees, it is useful to take the HR professionals from the shared service centre into account. Departmental managers and HR partners of ministries do not have direct contact with the employees, because they do not provide HR services to employees, but instead partner with line manager. This clarifies why departmental managers and HR partners do not create value, and therefore, are not taken into account as value co-creators.

P-Direkt is the HR service provider for all Dutch ministries, (except for the defence department) and therefore, P-Direkt provides services to a wide audience. P-Direkt services a wide audience because different services are requested among departments of ministries and employees. Next to the different services which P-Direkt provides, the function of the employee who calls is taken into account by HR professionals. Executive employees, and for instance prison guards, often ask for more operational services than policy-making employees. This shows that different services are provided to different employees. The effect of a wide audience is that P-Direkt gets many different questions from employees with many different backgrounds. This reduces the risk that forms of co-creation would be overlooked.

For this research, a case study is used, because this type of study explores how the phenomenon in question (i.e. co-creation) manifests in its context. This study concerns an investigation on how HR professionals of P-Direkt perform in their context in order to co-create value for employees of ministries. The name "case study" draws attention to what can be learned specifically about the single case (Stake, 2005). In this study, a case study – and therefore the context – is needed to explain what co-creation is. The reason is that employees create value during the use of a service. Resources that are provided by HR professionals supports in this and thereby, HR professionals co-create value. When employees did not make use of a service, value could not be co-created by HR professionals. This shows that the context is needed to explain value co-creation. Furthermore, systems and access to systems for HR professionals should be needed to provide certain personal resources and to personalize services. These contextual resources are needed for HR professionals to create value.

3.2 Observations as first data collection method

A mixed method approach was adopted in order to collect sufficient data to answer the research question. The first round of data collected consisted of observations. Observations were needed to identify which forms of co-creation were executed in the context. The observations took place while listening to phone calls between HR professionals and employees, because co-creation takes place during interaction. The interactions are observed to identify which co-creation activities are performed. The downside of this research method is that people can behave differently when they know they are observed. However, co-creation activities can only be identified with real-life

observations, because co-creating is a form of behaviour and real-life observations gave the possibility to ask questions after phone calls. These questions were needed to uncover why certain behavior was performed. In total, 75 calls made by 16 HR professionals in different locations were observed. The HR professionals are not mentioned by name because of privacy reasons. These calls were observed by two researchers who relied on a jointly developed data collection protocol. This data collection protocol was developed to identify the different forms of co-creation. The observation protocol consists of the four forms of co-creation which are described in the theoretical framework. The protocol is attached in appendix I. Table 1 indicates the operationalization of these co-creation types.

Table 1: Operationalization of co-creation types

Types of co-creation activities	Definition of the types and operationalisation
Providing resources	Providing resources to employees by supporting HR practices during the use in order to increase the HR competences *It is observed when and why certain resources are necessary to give the appropriate support*
Service personalization	Adjusting service to the preferences and context of the employee *For non-general questions, it is observed when and why certain services and how the services can be adjusted to the persona*
Contextual resources	Other contextual items that influence the value co-creation process *It is observed in which way and to what extent the context of the question will influence the extent of value creation*
Integration	Integrating the actions of stakeholders that support the employee in creating value-in-use *It is observed when and how actions of stakeholders would integrate, which result in synergy, supplementation, or substitution*

Additionally, several questions are taken into account during the observations to obtain more knowledge about why an HR professional responds in a certain way and why the HR professional performs certain behaviours. The following questions are taken into account:

1. *Why this specific type of help is chosen?*
2. *On what basis is support provided?*
3. *Why are certain specific questions asked?*
4. *Why it is chosen to provide additional information about a certain topic?*
5. *Why it is chosen not to provide certain information?*

3.3 Surveys as second data collection method

From the first data analysis, the different forms of co-creation can be identified. However, it is not known if the different co-creation activities actually deliver value. To get to know which co-creation activities (derived from the observations) deliver value, surveys are used as secondary data collection method. Respondents for this survey included all employees of Dutch ministries, except for the defence department, who call to the HR service centre to obtain knowledge from HR professionals. The surveys were conducted in response to telephone conversations initiated by the employee, in order to obtain information to solve a problem. After every call, the surveys were

automatically sent by P-Direkt. Automatically sent surveys give the opportunity to gain many respondents, because the centre receives calls every day and therefore, many employees would receive the survey. Since there is no action required from the employees to take part in this survey because the survey sent automatically, it was more likely that employees would participate. Additionally, it is proved that the method of surveys has a high validity and reliability and therefore, is used a lot for quantitative data collection (Ward, Gott and Hoare, 2015; Bauer, Truxillo, Paronto, Weekley, and Campion, 2004).

Instead of measuring value, this study measures the satisfaction of employees of ministries regarding the provided service. This can be explained by the findings of Cronin, Brady, and Hult (2000). They found a significant correlation between service value and satisfaction. Because service value expresses itself in satisfaction, this study measures satisfaction. The Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs already conducted surveys before this study to measure the satisfaction of the employees of ministries with the provided service of HR professionals. Conducting surveys is an appropriate data collection method for measuring satisfaction, because it can properly quantify the extent of satisfaction. For this survey, a 4-points scale was used to measure the satisfaction of customer friendliness and the knowledge of the HR professional, whereby 1 is considered as highly disagree and 4 as highly agree. Additionally, employees were asked to rate the overall service. Only this total rate is used for the distribution of satisfied and dissatisfied employees, because the item gives the overall view of satisfaction of employees, while the other items only measure a segment of the service. Considering the surveys, it is shown that when employees are dissatisfied, they are generally dissatisfied about all the segments. This indicates that the item which measures the overall service gives a proper view of the total image. Because the rating of the complete service measures the overall picture, it is allowed to use only this item. Table 2 indicates the operationalization of the item which is used from the survey.

Table 2: Operationalization of the survey item

Survey item	Definition of item and operationalisation
The overall service	The overall satisfaction of the service rated by the employees
	The overall service was rated between 1 and 10. This rating helps to divide satisfied employees from dissatisfied employees. Employees who rated less than an 8 are identified as dissatisfied employees and employees who rated at least an 8 are identified as satisfied employees.

The case that an 8 is recognized as satisfaction and a 7 is recognized as dissatisfaction is determined by P-Direkt, because the service of P-Direkt is on average rated with an 8 and P-Direkt strives to keep at least this average. A 7 can be seen as sufficient, but because P-Direkt delivers the service for a longer period of time, the ambition level is an 8. Therefore, when employees rate less, it will be seen as insufficient. The survey is attached in appendix II.

3.4 Replaying phone calls in addition to the surveys

In the previous method, the observations, co-creation activities are studied separately from the outcomes. In this second part of research, surveys are used to identify which behaviors correlate with satisfaction and, therefore, with value. To identify correlations, 42 phone calls were replayed. This process started with a selection of satisfied against dissatisfied employees, so employees who rated at least an 8 were classified as satisfied respondents and those who rated below an 8 were classified as dissatisfied respondents. As a result, fourteen calls were classified as satisfied and eight

calls were classified as dissatisfied. However, this study chose for theoretical sampling instead of a random sampling in order to get the same number of satisfied respondents as dissatisfied respondents. Because of this reason, new calls – by which it turned out that employees were dissatisfied – were replayed so that the findings concerning the calls that were rated as insufficient could be confirmed. Therefore, surveys from twenty dissatisfied respondents were added to the data.

All calls were replayed one by one and for every call I noted which forms of co-creation were applied and which forms of co-creation were not applied. This shows the relation between the surveys and the replayed calls, because the surveys show the satisfaction level and with use of the recorded calls, it could be observed which behavior and therefore which forms of co-creation were applied by those who indicated to be satisfied and to those who indicated to be dissatisfied. It was possible to replay phone calls, because all phone calls from employees to P-Direkt are recorded by P-Direkt. Only phone calls for which a survey is filled in after the phone call were replayed. This method 'replaying phone calls' is chosen, because during the calls it is observable which behaviour is shown by a HR professional. The surveys only show the subjective opinion of the caller's satisfaction and it do not measure the ways in which HR professionals co-create value. Although, callers may not have been in a good mood or may have been in a rush, which can have an influence on the value co-creation. These influences can be recognized during replaying calls and it can be recognized to what extent the co-creation activities are adjusted to employee's preferences.

For this new data analysis, a new observation protocol is used which is shown in appendix III. The observation protocol is based on characteristics that emerged from literature and was extend during the data collection to include additional co-creation behaviors that were empirically derived. During these observations, the same questions which are used during the first data analysis are taken into account. The recorded calls are listened to uncover which co-creation activities HR professionals have to perform in order to increase satisfied employees. With the results out of these measurements, conclusions are drawn concerning the relationship between the ways HR professionals co-create value and to what extent HR professionals contribute to the value creation process of the employee.

4. Results

This chapter presents the results of the case study. The first part concerns the description of the P-Direkt case. The second part describes the outcomes of the first data analysis. This will indicate how HR professionals of P-Direkt co-create value for employees of the Dutch Central Government. In the second part of the results, the surveys will be discussed and linked to the replayed calls which are replayed to observe which forms of co-creation are applied.

4.1 Case description

P-Direkt supports employees of all ministries, except defense, by arranging HR related issues and it operates from within the Ministry of Internal Affairs providing services both to this ministry and to the other ministries. These provided services concern, for instance, explanation of the payroll and support within the P-Direktportal which include self-services which allow employees to arrange their leave days, declare travel expenses, etc. This support can be requested by phone, e-mail or through the P-Direktportal. The P-Direktportal is the personal online account in which personal HR issues have to be arranged. P-Direkt delivers its support by phone, e-mail, P-Direktportal, and by the government portal. The government portal is a website where general HR related information can be found. Over a 120.000 government employees make use of this portal (P-Direkt, 2017).

At P-Direkt, 75 observations were conducted to identify which forms of co-creation are performed by HR professionals of the shared service center. There are several factors which influence the way and extent of co-creation and one of these influences is the context in which P-Direkt is settled. In some circumstances co-creation by HR professionals is a must and in other circumstances co-creation is not possible. For instance, HR professionals have to make resignation forms when an employee leaves, because managers and employees are not allowed to do that by themselves. This situation reflects that co-creation is a must. Vice versa, when a HR professional is not allowed to provide certain information, co-creation is not possible. Co-creation is also not possible when a HR professional is not able to manage tasks that an employee is allowed to do by himself.

Another influencing factor which is reflected in the context is the instructions of P-Direkt to its own employees in the way of communicating. The way in which HR professionals should interact with employees is strictly defined by the Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs. This is shown by the conversation protocol which is issued to every HR professional. This protocol describes that HR professionals may not use diminutives. Another prescribed rule is that HR professionals should ask if all the questions of the caller have been answered. This can result in more co-creation, because the HR professional allows the employee to ask more questions on which the HR professional can provide support.

4.2 Forms of co-creation

The four forms of co-creation which are described in the literature review – provided personal resources, service personalization, contextual resources and integration – will be reviewed in order to conclude whether they can be seen as a form of co-creation or not. Other additional forms of co-creation will also be explained.

4.2.1 Provided personal resources as a form of co-creation activity

Regarding the replayed phone calls, it is shown that HR professionals do not strive to increase employees' knowledge and skills. Instead of that, they mostly adjust their support on the knowledge and skills of the employee. This is done by asking if employees are familiar with the HR portal and related applications. If they are, they receive a more specific and focused service than employees who are not familiar with the system, because HR professionals anticipate on the current knowledge and skills of the employee. The resources can, for instance, be provided in the form of a reference to an instruction manual or by guidance through the HR portal. Because the resources can be provided in different ways, this study divides the provided resources into three different types. The first type of providing resources is the most intensive type of support, which I call "step-by-step guidance". This type is demonstrated when a HR professional guides an employee through the government portal and explicitly explains which button has to be touched and why. Next to this, the HR professional can provide additional information, he can make simulations of certain choices, appoints consequences and give examples of certain situations. This often occurs when an employee has less knowledge about the HR system. During the observations, HR professional #7 demonstrated an example of this type, because he instructed an employee to where she should add a receipt on the portal (i.e. in contact form - is different from travel declaration process):

"You have to login into the portal and you have to click on the button "declarations". After that, the system will ask for which reason you will declare a receipt. You choose for the option "business trip" and you fill in the amount. Then you have to click on "add", otherwise the application will be sent without attachment".

The second type is less intensive, but still personal. This type is called "indication support" and is demonstrated when a HR professional explains what an employee has to do and why. However, for this type the HR professional does not guide to where the employee could find or has to perform a certain activity. HR professional #1 demonstrated an example of this:

"I'm looking at your salary and I see that your salary is corrected right. Indeed, your bonus is paid and therefore your salary should be higher. However, the purchased bicycle from last month is compensated with your bonus. This clarifies why the paid amount at your account is less than the month before".

Through the way of asking, the HR professional recognized that the employee was familiar with the system, and therefore, he did not provide information about the system, but immediately looked at the employee's open leave and indicated which leave the employee should use.

The third type is the least intensive type, which I call "Do it yourself manual". This type is demonstrated when a HR professional refers to an instruction manual in the government portal. This type is also demonstrated when a HR professional is not able to provide support and, therefore, refers to another party who could help an employee. An example is given by HR professional #1 and HR professional #6.

HR professional #1 tells the employee to go the government portal and to read the instruction manual on that page.

HR professional #6: "You have to contact the ICT department at your workplace."

Based on the question and knowledge of the employee, the intensity of providing personal resources is determined. Regarding the extent of value creation, it can be suggested that support, that benefits the employee, will create value. Because providing personal resources is recognized as support for employees, it is reasonable that providing personal resources can be seen as a form of co-creation. However, the personal resources do not have to be increased by HR professionals in other to create value. This includes that typology 1, HR professionals co-create value by increasing personal resources, is not confirmed, because just providing appropriate personal resources supports in co-creation.

4.2.2 Service personalization as a form of co-creation activity

It is shown that services are personalized by HR professionals of P-Direkt. The extent to which services are personalized is mostly based on the generality of the question. For instance, the way in which someone has to register for leave days is similar for everyone. However, some processes differ between departments and therefore different information has to be provided. Because rules and processes differ between departments, some HR professionals state that they first pay attention to who the user is and for which department the user works and then analyse the question, while others first listen to the question of the user and then pay attention to the background of the user. Therefore, it can be concluded that the extent of service personalization is in most situations dependent on the question and the context.

Regarding personalization of the service: this study divides three types of service personalization. The difference is based on the several preferences regarding the question. This can be explained by the case in which employees are in a hurry. Then they probably prefer to get a quick and clear response. When HR professionals anticipate on this type of case by given a quick and clear response, a service is personalized. Considering these different types: the first type is what I call "legal counselling". This type regards services focused on the legal context, which is shown when services are adjusted to rules and regulations. For instance, based on some legal rules you would choose for certain leave. HR professional #1 gives an example of this:

"It will be wisely to choose for the first category of leave, because the other leave option is valid for a longer time".

The second type is what I call "emotional mirroring". This type regards services focused on the emotional context, which includes that when an employee shows certain behavior, the HR professional mirrors that certain behavior. Moreover, it is demonstrated that a HR professional responds to the mood of the employee. HR professional #5 gives an example of this. He talked with an employee who has parental leave every Thursday. Although, the next Thursday was Ascension Day, which is a national holiday. On national holidays, government employees are not paid. This makes the employee sad, because when it was no national day off, he would get paid. Therefore, the HR professional responded at follows:

"If you had chosen to take your parental leave on Monday, you had missed hours on Easter Monday. I understand your situation, but unfortunately it's a rule within the government".

This example shows that the HR professional indicated that the employee was not the only person who experienced such a situation. This clarifies why the term "emotional mirroring" is chosen.

The third type is what I call "operational adjusting". This type regards services focused on the operational context. This is demonstrated by the case that managers often expect a well-considered explanation, while government employees who do not have a HR function are previously satisfied with an answer without full explanation. Therefore, the service will be adjusted on the operational context of the persona. An example of this is demonstrated by HR professional #12 and #13. HR professional #13 supported a government employee who did not have a HR function. This can be a prison guard or a labour inspector. The employee asked:

"My declaration has not been approved by my manager, can I retrieve my application?"

It seemed that the respondent had satisfaction with the response: "You can find you application in your personnel dossier, which is attached in your P-Direkt portal". Then the employee did not ask what was wrong, but instead of that, he thanked the HR professional for his response. In contrast, HR professional #12 supported a manager, who also entered a declaration:

""I have entered a declaration, but this has been withdrawn by the HR supporter according to the manager's form. What went be wrong here?"

The HR professional looked for the declaration in the system. Thereafter, he explained that the declaration has not been approved because it was not clear which employment the employee performs. The HR professional found this reason in the memo. However, the manager did not agree with the response. She asked for more details and wanted to know in detail why the current description was not correct. This example shows that a manager often desires a more detailed response, while a not HR employee often desires a concise response.

Another example can be explained by the case that a difference is shown by providing services to employees who are in a hurry and to them who are not. Employees who are not in a hurry can be supported by the step-by-step guidance (as explained in chapter 4.2.1). Employees who are in a hurry can be supported as HR professional #3 did:

"If you work for six hours more, you have to correct the compensation leave hours within the P-Direkt portal".

After the call from HR professional #3, the HR professional mentioned that she anticipated on the behavior of employee: the employee was in a hurry, and therefore, she only mentioned required information.

In cases in which service personalizing is needed, for example when a user struggles with his or her leave days, it is shown that HR professionals provide support based on the personal data. This support helps the employee and, therefore, it can be suggested that HR professionals will create value for the employee. When, for this specific question, support is provided without the personal data, there might be created less value. This example shows that value can be co-created by HR professionals when a service is personalized to the context and preferences, and therefore, also the lifestyle of the employee. This means that the results of this study confirm typology 2: HR professionals co-create value by providing resources which are personalized to employee's preferences and lifestyle.

4.2.3 Integration as a form of co-creation activity

Stakeholders who are involved in the value creation process are often supervisors or HR support staff connected to departments of ministries. When stakeholders as departmental supervisors or HR supporters integrate during the use of a service, they will create more value. Therefore, integration of stakeholders can be recognized as a form of co-creation. The way in which these two types of stakeholders contribute to value co-creation will be described in this subchapter.

At first, departmental supervisors of employees who using a service are recognized as a type of stakeholders. This type of integration is what I call "supervisor involvement". For instance, when an employee resigns, the supervisor is involved. The supervisor can apply for a resignation form, which supports in the efficiency of the resignation process. Furthermore, the supervisor has to agree with fees of employees. This is also shown by the interaction of HR professional #15. He stated:

"You should ask your supervisor to apply your fee as soon as possible, so that you get your money this month".

Because the action of the supervisor supports during the use of a service, the integration can be seen as a co-creation activity. The second type of stakeholder is the departmental HR supporters. This type of stakeholder is what I call "departmental HR involvement". This name refers to the fact that the departmental HR supporters are involved when the service is related to the department and HR professional cannot provide support. This situation is recognizable in the observations of HR professional #10. She got the question how child benefits based on a 40 hours working week should be settled, because regular contracts are based on 36 hours a week. The HR professional stated:

"Your departmental HR supporter should send a year schedule which shows your working hours. This schedule serves as evidence and you can sent this evidence to the tax authorities."

Through the integration, the service will afford more value and this support during the use of the service shows that value will be co-created.

Regarding the observations, integration in the actions of stakeholders that support the employee in creating value-in-use is possible in certain situations. If integration of stakeholders is possible completely depends on the question of the employee and the appropriated service. When an employee asks for a transition fee, his or her manager has to agree with this. In this case, the manager is integrated as stakeholder. However, if an employee, for instance, only asks if a certain document will be saved in the P-Direktportal, the HR professional will answer the question and there will be no involvement of other stakeholders than the HR professional and the caller. This shows that integration is not possible. Next to this, if integration positively contributes to the value creation process depends on the question. In the example of the application for transition fee, involvement of a manager will benefit, and therefore, it will contribute to the co-creation process. However, when there is a question by which only value can be created between the HR professional and the employee, integration will not contribute to value creation. This includes that typology 4, the integration of HR resources and services positively influence the value creation process, is not always recognized.

4.2.4 Influence of contextual resources on co-creation activities

Considering the contextual resources, this factor is not seen as a way of co-creation, but it is recognized as a factor to which provided services should be adjusted. As chapter 2.4.4 explains, HR professionals need certain contextual resources in order to provide a service. An example is the P-Direkt portal, which is the system in which (personal) HR related issues are organized. The arrangement of that system is determinative for the way of co-creation, and therefore, it has an influence on the way of co-creation. However, contextual resources cannot be seen as one of the value co-creation activities. The reason is that the factor "contextual resources" is not recognized as a way in which HR professionals are able to co-create value, because contextual resources are required for value creation or, in other words, required for providing services. Without the certain resources there will be no service. The required contextual resources differ per context. The contextual resources for this study will be explained in this subchapter.

At first, the government can be seen as the agency who offers the contextual resources, because they offer systems to P-Direkt. This is shown in the previous example above. Next to this, there are recognized two additional agencies who offer contextual resources: the backoffice of P-Direkt and the managers. The backoffice of P-Direkt provides contextual resources by providing specialized information which might be needed to support P-Direkt, so that P-Direkt can provide its service. HR professional 4 shows an example of this. He gets a call from an employee who has an exceptional situation: he owns a mobility card and he travels abroad daily. Because for this exceptional situation there is no standard, a form is sent to the backoffice. A backoffice employee will handle the form and he or she will adjust employees' data or settings in the P-Direkt portal, so that it will be possible to declare the daily travel in the Netherlands and outside. This example shows why P-Direkt needs the backoffice in order to create value in certain circumstances.

The third agency, the managers, provides contextual resources by providing agreement forms for leave days and fees. P-Direkt needs all contextual resources, which are described in the examples, to perform a good job and to co-create value to HR services for employees. Additionally, the contextual resources determine the extent of providing personal resources and the empowerment of employees. This can be explained as follows. As just described, the HR system is provided by the government. Because the facilities of the HR system determine to what extent personal resources can be provided, the extent of personal resources is dependent on the government. The facilities of the HR system also determine to what extent the employee is empowered in co-creation, which shows that again a contextual resource has influence. This empowerment will be further explained in the next paragraph. Because the provided resources are dependent on the question and on the context of the problem, the provided resources should be adjusted to both factors. This means that typology 3, HR professionals co-create value by providing resources and services which are adjusted to the contextual resources, is confirmed.

4.2.5 Additional co-creation activities

During the observations two additional co-creation activities were recognized. These activities are empowering employees and relational interaction. Empowering the employee in the co-creation process includes involving the customer in co-creating the service. Thereby, the employee gets the role of a co-creator. This is shown by the fact that employees are responsible for their own data. This means that employees have to fill in data by themselves, change it when needed, and apply their own leave days within their P-Direkt portal. Because, when employees are able to perform some activities by themselves within their P-Direktportal, HR professionals will not perform that certain activity. In this case, empowering the employee in the co-creation process is needed so that the HR

service works well for the employee and the employee can contribute in value co-creation. However, whether employees can be empowered in the co-creating process depends on the problem. Hereby, three different types of empowerment can be distinguished. The first type is what I call "required empowerment". This type is demonstrated in the example above, which explains that certain activities have to be performed by employees because HR professionals do not perform activities that employees can do by themselves. An example of certain activity is applying leave days. To apply leave days, employees should log in in their P-Direktportal and they should fill in how many leave days and which kind of leave is used. HR professionals can only advise which kind of leave is beneficial to use.

The second type is what I call "accessible empowerment". This type is demonstrated when employees have the choice to empower in the co-creation process. An example can be given by illustrating a call of HR professional #10. A departmental HR supporter called with question: What is the salary of a trainee so that she gets to know if she has to stop her student funding? The response of the HR professional is as follows:

"I can forward the question to the backoffice, but it may take up to 5 days for your reply. You can also ask your p-advisor on location"

This example shows that it is accessible to empower in the co-creation process, but it is not a must because P-Direkt can also provide response without subsequent action of the employee. Furthermore, every employee should ask in the end of the conversation if the caller has more questions. This enables the employee to create more value.

The extent of co-creation is, just as the other factors, related to the provided resources by HR professionals. Because when a HR professional provides (additional) information on how an employee can perform a certain activity, an employee will be more able to co-create value. For example, when a HR professional indicates that an employee can send a form by himself so that the case will be handled more quickly instead of waiting for his manager, the value of co-creation will be higher. From this reasoning, it can be concluded that the extent of co-creating value is dependent on the provided resources by HR professionals. In summary, despite not being necessary for HR professionals to empower employees in the value creation process in order create value, it is possible that (more) value will be created because of the empowerment of employees.

The second additional form of co-creation is relational interaction. Relational interaction is the communication whereby quickly a relationship is built between the HR professional and the employee. When HR professionals build on a relationship with the employee, the employee often indicated to be more satisfied. Building a relationship out of a phone call can be performed in different ways. This study recognizes three ways of relational interaction: showing recognition, taking time and providing additional information. Showing recognition is demonstrated by HR professional #13:

"I understand your frustration and it's indeed annoying"

Furthermore, recognition is demonstrated by cases in which HR professionals repeat or summarize what the user says, so that the user knows that he or she is understood. This behavior is performed, because HR professionals indicated that employees feel good when they know they are understood.

When there are many silent periods during a call (i.e. no communication which contributes to relationship building), there will probably no relational interaction. Sometimes HR professionals do not tell what they check out or going to do and this results in silent periods. Although, when a HR professional tells what he is going to do and he puts the employee on hold, the employee feels more understood. Therefore, it is important to show understanding and recognition during the use of a service. When employees are understood and they feel good about a service, more value is created from the service. HR professionals #12 gives an example of this repeating:

"Is it true that you change function and department?"

The second type of relational interaction is "taking time". This is revealed by the fact that when HR professionals take time and put effort in employees, they will feel more appreciated and therefore, more value will be created. HR professional #5 demonstrated an example of this:

"Do you like me to stay on the phone while you fill in the application? Then you have the possibility to ask more questions if needed"

The feeling of appreciation is also recognizable when HR professionals tell what they check out during a call and thereby show that a service is personalized. When a HR professional does not mentioned which data and documents are checked, service personalization may be not remarkable and employees can feel less appreciated. In this case is shown that relational interaction influences the effect of service personalization.

The third type of relational interaction is "providing additional information". When additional information is provided, employees feel more appreciated. Next to information, also (personal) resources can contribute to the feeling of the employee. This shows that the provided personal resources – another secondary type – can be related to relational interaction. When, for example, additional information is provided, or an explanation why certain proceedings are not performed by HR professionals, results show that it improves the trusting relationship with employees. HR professional #8 demonstrated examples of this:

"Do not forget to click on the red button on the right side".
"What you can do for example is ...."

Because the employee feels more appreciated when he gets additional information, more value can be created. These examples show that relational interaction contributes to the value-in-use, and therefore, can be seen as a form of co-creation.

4.2.6 Illustration of the co-creation activities
The five forms of co-creation activities which are performed by HR professionals of P-Direkt and results from the first data analysis are presented in table 3. The forms of co-creation activities are called secondary types. This results from the fact that in this study, "value co-creation" is recognized as the type and because value co-creation consists of the different forms, these forms are called secondary types. In turn, the different forms of co-creation can be performed in various ways, which are presented by the tertiary types. These tertiary types show the different ways in which HR professionals can provide the secondary type whereby they co-create value of HR services for employees.

Table 3: Classification of co-creation activities

Primary type	Secondary types	Tertiary types
Value co-creation: Support provided by HR to users value-in-use creation	1. Providing resources: providing resources to customers by supporting HR practices during the use	1.1 Step-by-step guidance 1.2 Indication support 1.3 Do it yourself manual
	2. Service personalization: adjusting service to the preferences and context of the user	2.1 Legal counselling 2.2 Emotional mirroring 2.3 Operational adjusting
	3. Empowerment of user co-creation: involving the user in co-creating the service	3.1 Required empowerment 3.2 Accessible empowerment
	4. Integration: integrating the actions of stakeholders that support the user in creating value-in-use	4.1 Supervisor involvement 4.2 Departmental HR involvement
	5. Relational interaction: Building trusting relationship	5.1 Showing recognition 5.2 Take all time 5.3 Providing additional information

The first part of the results points out that several factors, among which the type of question, determine the way of co-creation, i.e. which forms of co-creation can be applied. This includes that it is hard to determine when certain influences, as the type of question, are related to co-creation activities and when they are not. The consideration is hard because in a lot of situations the influences might affect co-creation activities, but it is not necessarily the case. The different influences are shown in table 3, but first they will be explained one by one.

Firstly, considering the differences between the service for managers and HR supporters, and the service for general government employees, it is possible that managers and HR supporters are more often empowered in the co-creation process. This occurs because they have access to perform more tasks than general government employees. However, this does not always have to be the case, because for some issues general government employees have the same rights and possibilities than HR supporters and managers. Secondly, regarding the pro-activeness of the employee, when employees behave pro-actively, it is likely that if they behave in a way that it will be favorable for creating a positive relational interaction. It is also more likely that a HR professional provides additional information. But again, this does not have to be the case, because in some cases, HR professionals do not know additional information. Thirdly, regarding the mood of the employee, a good mood of the employee may contribute to the extent HR professionals personalize the service.

When, for example, an employee shows a bad mood or little interest, it seems that HR professionals show less effort in service personalization. Further, the mood of the employee can also influence the relational interaction. Even when an employee shows a bad mood, the HR professional can show a positive relational interaction. Fourthly, if employees show they are in a hurry, it may be possible that services will be less personalized in order to provide support quickly. However, this will not always be the case, because the way in which the service should be personalized, mostly depends on the question. Fifthly, when an employee has a limited knowledge about the question, and therefore, a low degree of human capital – which is the knowledge that exists through experience with a product or service together with the general knowledge (Priem, 2007) – it is presumable that a HR professional provides more personal resources. This can be expressed in the way in which HR professionals guide employees in a short time through the system. When employees should find their way by themselves, it takes a lot of time and energy, which can cause frustration. When a HR professional guides an employee, the employee will find the requested issue in no time. This will result in satisfaction. When an employee is already familiar with the system, the guidance is not required, and therefore, less personal resources will be provided. Lastly, the age of the employee may have an influence on the provided resources, but again, this is not necessary. In general, older employees show less knowledge about processes, but results show that this is not always the case. Table 4 shows an overview of which factors influence which form of co-creation.

Table 4: The influences on the types of co-creation

| Influences | Relates to: | | | | |
	Provided resources	Service personalization	Empowering the employee	Integration	Relational interaction
Type of question	x	X	x	x	
HR vs. not HR	x		x / -		
Pro-activeness of the user	x		x / -		x / -
Mood of the user	x	X			x
Haste of the user	x	x / -			x
Human capital of the user	x	x / -			x
Age	x				

4.3 Satisfaction of calls rated by employees
In the first data analysis, the different forms of co-creation are identified. But, it is still not known if the different co-creation activities deliver value. Therefore, surveys were analyzed and calls from the associated surveys were replayed to get to know which co-creation activities deliver value. The surveys measure the satisfaction level of employees. This satisfaction level was measured using a single item, because the item gives the overall view of satisfaction of employees. From replaying calls is observed which forms of co-creation are applied and which forms of co-creation are not applied. Therefore, this subchapter will give insights in which factors influence the extent of satisfaction.

4.3.1 Influences from the co-creation activities on the extent of satisfaction
While replaying the calls, I observed which forms of co-creation are applied and related to the surveys. From this analysis, it can be concluded that only a few forms of co-creation activities

influence the extent of satisfaction of employees. Table 5 shows in how many calls certain forms of co-creation were applied and if employees were satisfied with their support or not. Considering the provided resources, during almost all calls resources are provided. Because the provided resources are adjusted to the question and the knowledge of the employee, in some calls step-by-step guidance is provided and in some calls do it yourself manuals are provided. During replaying the calls, it turned out that the level of satisfaction did not differ between employees who received step-by-step guidance and those who received a do it yourself manual. Because almost all employees receive resources, it cannot be concluded that employees seem satisfied when resources are provided.

Furthermore, there is no observed difference in the extent of satisfaction of employees whose service is personalized and for those for which it was not possible to personalize the service. Table 5 shows that for more respondents the service is personalized (23), but it is shown that many of those respondents are still dissatisfied (14). The difference of respondents for who the service is not personalized (19), by which 5 respondents seem satisfied and 14 respondents seem dissatisfied, compared to those who received a personalized service is therefore small. As has been explained in chapter 4.1, certain co-creation activities are not always possible, which also includes that personalizing a service is not always possible. Even when a service is personalized to the legal context, the emotional context or the operational context, no difference in satisfaction is recognizable. However, when a service had to be personalized and it did not happen, it might result in dissatisfaction.

In the situation that employees are empowered to co-create value, there is no observed difference between employees who are satisfied and those who are dissatisfied. Even when employees are required to empower in the co-creation process in order to create value or employees are not required to empower in the co-creation process, table 5 shows no difference in satisfaction. It is shown that 22 of the 42 respondents empowered in the co-creation process and 20 respondents did not empower in the co-creation process. From both groups, one third of respondents seem satisfied. However, when an employee has to empower but it is not possible, which can happen when they have to arrange leave days but the system does not work, it will lead to dissatisfaction. Although, this will be the case in only exceptional situations.

It might be expected that when integration is possible (regardless of the stakeholder), employees will be satisfied. The main reason of this expectation is the fact that in many cases the backoffice is the other stakeholder, and they provide more specific information. With more specific information, the employee will generally be more satisfied. However, when a HR professional provides sufficient information by himself, results show that employees are also satisfied. This shows that in some situations no other stakeholder than the HR professional is needed to create the desired value. This clarifies why there is no observed difference between respondents for who integration was possible and for those for which integration was not present. For 19 respondents by which integration is applied, 14 respondents seem dissatisfied. For 23 respondents by which integration is applied, also 14 respondents seem dissatisfied. The difference in proportion is too small to make a statement of this.

In summary, from the described forms of co-creation can be concluded that if a certain form of co-creation is applied, it can have a varying effect on satisfaction. Dependent on the question, certain activities of co-creation will be applied. However, when certain co-creation activities are needed and not applied, it will lead to dissatisfaction.

While analyzing the calls of employees who in the survey indicated dissatisfaction, it is noticeable that in 13 of the 28 calls, the HR professionals created no relational interaction. This is much compared to employees who indicated to be satisfied. Thereof, only 2 of the 14 created no relational interaction. Considering the different types of building a relational interaction, it turns out that by employees who indicated to be dissatisfied and no relational interaction exist, there is often a lack of showing recognition (the first type of relational interaction as described in table 3). Thereby, it is shown that there often existed silent periods during a call. Chapter 4.2.5 already explained that silent periods during a call might be a reason of no relational interaction. A lack of taking time (the second type of relational interaction) turned out to be occasionally the reason why no relational interaction exists. In that situations, HR professionals are too rushed. Providing additional information (the third type of relational interaction) is not always possible and not required during a call, but it is seen as an extension to the service. That is why it is not required for relational interaction and therefore it is not required for satisfaction. Nevertheless, from the results can be concluded that ensuring a relational interaction makes employees generally satisfied. Even when a HR professional cannot provide help, employees indicate to be satisfied when the HR professional creates a positive relational interaction. In that case, a trusting relationship can be created by an explanation why the HR professional cannot provide help or who the employee has to contact.

In summary, only relational interaction has a noticeable influence as co-creation activity on the extent of satisfaction. To show this, table 5 presents an overview of each type of co-creation which shows the number of satisfied and dissatisfied employees versus the number of HR professionals that did or did not engage in the co-creation activity. As the table shows, personal resources will mostly be provided. Service personalization is often provided when employees seem satisfied. Although, when the results are analyzed, it shows that satisfied people asked in general more specific questions which could be more personalized. Considering the empowerment of employees in the co-creating process and integration, there is no observed difference. However, when HR professionals do not create a relational interaction, the table shows that almost no respondent is satisfied. Therefore, it can be concluded that a positive relational interaction is necessary to create satisfaction.

Table 5: Influences of co-creation activities on satisfaction

	Providing resources		Service personalization		Empowering the employee		Integration		Relational interaction**	
	Applied	Not applied	Applied	Not applied	Applied	Not applied	Applied	Not applied	Applied	Not applied
Satisfied	12	2	9	5	7	7	5	9	12	2
Dissatisfied	25	3	14	14*	15	13	14	14	15	13

During twelve out of the fourteen calls, service personalization was not possible
*** Relational interaction is subjective to measure. Some HR professionals create positive relational interaction on a later moment instead of from the beginning*

4.3.2 Other influences in the extent of satisfaction

This study also found that some employees seem dissatisfied if their question is forwarded to the backoffice and they have to wait for response. Especially, if the HR professional is not able to mention a time limit or if the employee already had to wait a long time for response on the request by e-mail or by use of the P-Direktportal. When HR professionals are not able to mention a time limit, it means that they are dependent on other parties such as the backoffice, which handled the specific questions. Because P-Direkt cannot set a time limit for other parties, the HR professional performs correctly by mentioning no deadline. The dependence of other parties is also recognizable by the fact that employees have to wait a long time for response by e-mail. However, only the process of support by phone is included in this study.

5. Discussion

The objective of this study was to identify in which ways HR professionals of the Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs co-create value of HR services for employees. This research contributes to the need for further research on value co-creation by HR professionals by showing which ways of value co-creation should be present in order to increase satisfaction by employees. The study began with a literature review to gather important previous research about value, co-creation, and HR services for employees. Through the use of a case study, the results show which different ways of co-creation are applied by HR professionals of P-Direkt. To what extent co-creation takes place, is measured by surveys in combination with the associated observations.

5.1 Research implications

In this part of research, the principal, noteworthy conclusions of the study are discussed and compared to the theoretical framework. As a result, the findings of this case study point out that there are five forms of co-creation: providing resources, service personalization, empowering the employee in the co-creation process, integration of actions of stakeholders, and relational interaction. Compared to the theoretical framework, empowering employees and relational interaction are added as forms of co-creation, and the factor 'contextual resources' is not included. After determining the forms of co-creation, I observed which forms influence the satisfaction of employees. The forms which are recognized as ways of co-creation are described one by one.

Providing resources

Providing resources as form of co-creation (a step-by-step guidance, indication support or a do it yourself manual) is shown during almost every call. Therefore, no conclusions can be drawn about the effect of provided resources. When no resources are provided, it is presumable that employees will be dissatisfied because he or she did not get support. Hence, a distinction can be made between necessary resources and sufficient resources. A necessary resource is a resource without which the relevant result does not occur, but it is not sure that this single resource is enough to lead to the relevant result. A sufficient resource is a resource that, on its own, leads to the relevant consequence without other resources. The principle of necessary and sufficient resources is explained by Fiss (2011), who stated that provided resources leading to the presence of the outcome may frequently be different from the provided resources leading to the absence of the outcome. Analyzing this case-study, when P-Direkt will on average provide good support to maintain high satisfaction, but by themselves such good support will not guarantee high satisfaction. Considering the provided resources, P-Direkt desires to provide appropriate resources, which are adjusted to employee's preferences and lifestyles, in order to support the employee. However, the provided resources will not guarantee that the employee performs the way as indicated by the source. This means that future research has to take into account that certain resources are necessary in order to co-create value and other resources are sufficient.

Service personalization

The provided resources and services are always adjusted to the question of the employee and generally personalized to employee's preferences and lifestyle. Therefore, it does not matter which form of adjusting is applied (legal counselling, emotional mirroring, or operational adjusting), as long as it is adjusted to the question and employee's preferences and lifestyle. This confirms the literature as described in chapter 2.4.3. However, from this study it cannot be concluded that, in contrast to what is stated in the theoretical framework, "the more transactional HR practices are, the more HR professionals can adjust to the preferences and lifestyle of the employee", because most conversations concerned transactional HR practices. A few conversations concerned traditional

HR practices, such as training and performance management. For that kind of activities, the processes are similar for every employee. However, for transactional HR activities, such as applying leave days, the processes are even similar for every employee. But, if employees have questions about their payroll, services were personalized. Therefore, it seems that services can be personalized for some transactional HRM activities and not for others. If personalization is possible depends on the practice and the specific question. Therefore, future research should take into account that dependent on the case, different practices can be personalized.

Empowerment of the employee
Results show that empowering the employee in the co-creation process as form of co-creation, even it is required or accessible, both forms can result in value co-creation. However, replayed calls turned out that there is no observed difference in the satisfaction level of employees. This might be because when employees should empower in the co-creation process in order to create value, it is shown that they will empower in the process. This makes sense, because generally people want to arrange their HR issues well so that they get their salary and fees. An example of a case that employees are required to empower in the co-creation process is when they have to arrange leave days. Therefore, from this research cannot be concluded if empowering employees create satisfaction. As stated before, the type of question and the context influence the way of co-creation and therefore, the extent of satisfaction. In this case, when a HR professional is required to empower an employee order to create value, the employee could be dissatisfied if the HR professional does not. Therefore, future research should take into account that empowering of employees can result in satisfaction, but dependent on the case and the question, a lack of empowerment might result in dissatisfaction.

Integration
The results demonstrate that there is no difference in satisfaction when integration of supervisors or departmental HR supporters takes place or when integration did not takes place. However, other cases in which other parties are involved as stakeholder might give other outcomes. Therefore, future research might take other stakeholders into account. In this case, when integration took place, it was only one stakeholder who was involved. In other cases, it might be possible that more stakeholders are involved for the same topic. Considering the possibility of integration of actions of stakeholders and integration did not happen, results show that most employees still indicated to be satisfied. However, there were also certain situations in which integration of actions of stakeholders took place and employees still were dissatisfied. This shows the impact of the question and / or context. Further, it should also be possible that integration took place and employees were satisfied, but when integration did not take place in that certain situation, it would lead to dissatisfaction. Because this study did not measure this, no conclusions can be drawn based on the relation between satisfaction and value creation.

Relational interaction
In contrast to the other forms of co-creation, findings show that when HR professionals create a relational interaction, it often influences the satisfaction level of employees. Even though other co-creation forms are not applied, employees may still be satisfied about support when a relational interaction existed. This can be clarified by the case that when a HR professional is friendly and helpful, it will contribute to a satisfied feeling. In addition, when a HR professional does not create a relational interaction, it is shown that it will lead to dissatisfaction. This is reasonable, because when HR professionals provide a service without building on a relationship, it can have no effect on the mood and the thought of the employee, and therefore, it will have no effect on the satisfaction

level. This will probably lead to a general rating and not to the desired minimum of an 8. When a HR professional is unfriendly, it will create dissatisfaction. Considering how a relational interaction exists, this research found three ways: showing recognition, taking sufficient time and providing additional information. Showing recognition and taking is recognized as required aspect, because it can result in dissatisfaction. Providing additional information is not recognized as required aspect, because it is not always possible and employees still seems to be satisfied without additional information. Employees are generally just more satisfied with additional information. Therefore, from this research can be concluded that the showing recognition and taking time are necessary for satisfaction and providing additional information can be seen as an additional form by which a relational interaction can exist.

The reason that the factor 'contextual resources' is not included is because it is shown that the contextual resources, together with the type of question and behavior of the employee, is recognized as a factor to which provided services should be adjusted. Thereby, contextual resources only influence the co-creation process, but it is not a way through which value can be co-created. The finding that contextual resources are determined for the way of co-creation confirms the suggestions of Vargo, Maglio and Akaka (2008), who argued that the context in which the value is created is as determining for value creation as the provided resources and services. This clarifies why certain forms of co-creation activities are not always possible. For instance, integration of actions of other stakeholders than the HR professional and the employee is not possible when employees only call to know what the status is of their request.

From this research can be concluded that only showing recognition and taking sufficient time for the employee is required to create satisfaction. This study contributes to HR research with the outcome that during the use of a service, HR professionals should create a relational interaction in order to create satisfaction. Which support is provided does not matter, because that is dependent on the question and context. Furthermore, this study highlights the identification of a HR professional (the supplier) as active value co-creator and so not the passive customer. Because the value is created during the use of a service, it makes it possible for HR professionals to perform as active co-creator. The statement of Vargo and Lusch (2004) that operant resources (people) are the basis for competitive advantage shows the importance of role of the supplier (and therefore in this case, the HR professional). Additionally, they argued that if a firm engages in a relationship with the customer is more important than the transaction of a service (Bowen, 2016). This confirms the importance of a relational interaction, which is highlighted in this study.

5.2 Practical implications

Considering the satisfaction of employees, the reason that employees are dissatisfied is often because there exists no relational interaction or because employees' question is forwarded to the backoffice and they have to wait for response. When there exists no relational interaction, it is shown that HR professionals do not shown enough recognition or takes not enough time for the employee. The reason that employees take not sufficient might be because they are too much focused on targets. A quick handling of questions is desirable by P-Direkt, but quantity should not get priority over quality. P-Direkt should be alert of that. However, when employees indicate dissatisfaction, HR professionals more often give no sufficient recognition. HR professionals should be alert of that, but also managers have to be focused to keep this point of attention. They should continue to train the HR professionals on this aspect. Besides that, when P-Direkt will look for new

HR professionals, managers should take the oral skills of candidates into account. When people already have good oral skills, it will benefit to create a relational interaction.

Another factor which turns out in dissatisfaction is the forwarding of employees' question to the backoffice, whereby it takes a long time to get response. The fact that employees have to wait more than a week for response by e-mail is a weakness of the addressee. Most of the specific questions are handled by the backoffice, but non-specific questions are handled by P-Direkt. Therefore, P-Direkt can examine if the process of questions and request can be more effective.

Based on this case study, almost all provided resources are adjusted to the context and question of the employee. The background of the employee is also taken into account by most HR professionals. However, to what extent the provided resources contribute to value co-creation cannot be concluded. The reason is that during all the observations, resources are provided and there is no observed difference concerning provided resources between satisfied employees and dissatisfied employees.

5.3 Limitations and future research

There are limitations to the use of surveys for research. For instance, the mood and attitude of employees cannot be taken into account. The mood is included as contextual factor, but it is subjectively measured. This includes when a question cannot be answered, reactions can emerge out of frustration. Therefore, this method is not as "valid" as when the sincerity of employees could be taken into account. Furthermore, no discussion was possible about the results of the survey, and therefore, the reason that employees rate the conversation as insufficient was not always recognizable. To obtain more knowledge about this rating, the survey can be extended. Although, the risk is that the survey becomes too long for employees to start with.

Because this study is a case study, future research is required to test this framework in other markets and sectors in order to get a general view. This also applies to the different sub forms of co-creation activities, which are illustrated in table 3 as third order types. Studies in other markets and sectors might find additional co-creation forms or sub-types, and therefore, it might be valuable to do more research on the secondary- and tertiary types. Other research could change the co-creation types into variables by making the type a measured attribute. Additionally, it might be valuable to research which co-creation forms are important within which context, because the context determines the outcomes of the research. Considering this study, more research can be conducted into the process where e-mails and request are sent, because this study shows that sometimes P-Direkt takes a long time for response to questions and to process requests. This explains why many frustrated employees rated their survey as insufficient.

5.4 Conclusion

This case study examined and extended the theoretical knowledge concerning the ways in which HR professionals can co-create value of HR services for employees. It is important to research the role of the HR professionals as active co-creators, because value is created during the use of a service. Five forms of co-creation opportunities (i.e., providing resources, service personalization, empowerment of employee co-creation, integration of resources and relational interaction) were identified, whereby only relational interaction showed a high impact on the extent of satisfaction of employees. To create this relational interaction, HR professionals should pay attention that they show recognition and take enough time for employees. These aspects should get more attention than targets which tell the employee to get more calls in a short time the better.

Furthermore in order to co-create value, this study points out that HR professionals should adjust their provided resources to personalize a service which is adjusted to employee's preferences and lifestyle. Another way for HR professionals to co-create value is to provide resources and services which are adjusted to the contextual resources. For instance, the extent of empowering employees' co-creation is dependent on the context. If multiple HR resources and services are integrated, it is dependent on the question and the context in which the problem takes place if integration has a positive effect on value creation.

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7. Appendices

Appendix I: Observation protocol first data analysis

Call ID	Question	Providing resources	Service personalization	Contextual resources	Integration	Possible additional co-creation type
Call from employee 1 *Call ID nr.* …………………. *Call ID nr.* …………………	………………… ………………… ………………… …………………	………………… ………………… ………………… …………………	………………………… ………………………… ………………………… …………………………	………………… ………………… ………………… …………………	………………………… ………………………… ………………………… …………………………	………………………… ………………………… ………………………… …………………………
Call from employee 2 Call ID nr. ………………… Call ID nr. …………………	………………… ………………… ………………… …………………	………………… ………………… ………………… …………………	………………………… ………………………… ………………………… …………………………	………………… ………………… ………………… …………………	………………………… ………………………… ………………………… …………………………	………………………… ………………………… ………………………… …………………………
Etcetera	………………… ………………… ………………… …………………	………………… ………………… ………………… …………………	………………………… ………………………… ………………………… …………………………	………………… ………………… ………………… …………………	………………………… ………………………… ………………………… …………………………	………………………… ………………………… ………………………… …………………………

Appendix II : Survey

1   Ik heb een passend antwoord gekregen op mijn vraag.
☐ *Zeer mee oneens* ☐ *Mee oneens* ☐ *Mee eens* ☐ *Zeer mee eens*

2   De medewerker had kennis van het onderwerp waar mijn vraag over ging.
☐ *Zeer mee oneens* ☐ *Mee oneens* ☐ *Mee eens* ☐ *Zeer mee eens*

3   De medewerker was klantvriendelijk en servicegericht.
☐ *Zeer mee eens* ☐ *Mee eens* ☐ *Mee oneens* ☐ *Zeer mee oneens*

4   Ik heb …… contact gehad met het contactcenter over deze zelfde vraag.
☐ 1 keer
☐ 2 keer
☐ 3 keer
☐ Meer dan 3 keer

5   Heeft u ook op een andere manier antwoord gezocht op uw vraag? Ik heb de volgende bron geraadpleegd:
☐ Niets, ik heb meteen het contactcenter benaderd
☐ Een collega
☐ Rijksportaal Personeel
☐ P-Direktportaal
☐ Anders

6   Ik waardeer de afhandeling van mijn vraag door het contactcenter met een:
☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5   ☐ 6   ☐ 7   ☐ 8   ☐ 9   ☐ 10

Appendix III : Observation protocol third data analysis

Call ID	Question	Providing resources	Empowerment of employee co-creation	Integration	Relational interaction
	Question from the employee to the HR professional	*Definition: providing resources to employees by supporting HR practices during the use in order to increase the HR competences*	*Definition: involving customer in co-producing the service*	*Definition: integrating the actions of stakeholders that support the employee in creating value-in-use*	*Definition: Building trusting relationship*
Call from employee 1 *Call ID nr. .... Call ID nr. ....*	....	....	....	....	....
Call from employee 2 Call ID nr. .... Call ID nr.	....	....	....	....	....
Etcetera	....	....	....	....	....