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What kinds of rhetorical strategies promote and impede value co-creation experience in the online collaborative innovative communities?

Case Study: Salesforce.com

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Abstract

Introduction: The Internet facilitates the innovation between external stakeholders and companies. For this purpose, companies have constructed online platforms, which help to form collaborative communities. Currently, there are many remarkable firms that benefit from the "wisdom of the crowd"; nevertheless the most innovative one according to Forbes (2012) is Salesforce.com whose IdeaExchange community became the case study for this research. Business science is still far away from understanding how value is co-created online but first steps have already been made. This thesis aims to contribute to the knowledge base in the co-creation area.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to identify the rhetorical strategies employed by customers in online collaborative innovative communities to co-create value and, based on findings, to construct the value co-creation model.

Methods: This study has a Qualitative Research Design with Netnography as a data collection method. Case study is used as the overall methodology approach. The dataset of this study consists of 2018 comments gathered from the case study community organized by Salesforce.com. To analyze the findings, Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis and Rhetorical Analysis were applied.

Results: The unique contribution of this study is that ten rhetorical strategies were identified based on Aristotle's persuasive appeals, which are described in Analysis chapter. Additionally, the social functions of rhetoric for the online collaborative community are clarified. Also the rhetorical situation is described in relation to innovative communities where audience, exigencies and constraints are defined. Finally, the "Model of Value Co-Creation" is designed through the lens of identified rhetorical strategies.

Conclusion: The results show that value might not only be co-created but also impeded in the online collaborative communities. As the "Value co-creation model" illustrates, such rhetorical strategies as "Requesting Implementation", "Advocating Strategy", "Approving Strategy", "Instructing Strategy", and "Exploratory Strategy" indicate about a high demand of the discussed idea, meanwhile "Warning strategy" indicates that the idea contradicts to the personal values or the social norms therefore customers apply this rhetorical strategy to prevent the idea's implementation. Additionally, such rhetorical strategy as "Self-governing Strategy" is usually employed by so-called "community officers" who take control that innovative

ideas are not published twice. Moreover, "Advisory Strategy" mainly employed for interactions between community members with a purpose to share experience. Above mention rhetorical strategies indicate though in a different extend, about the customers' empowerment and the value co-creation experience. However, this study identified two rhetorical strategies i.e. "Criticizing Strategy" and "Provoking strategy" which reveal that value can be also impeded in the online collaborative communities. Mainly it happens because of a company's ignorance of its customers' needs and therefore might lead to the decreased customers' motivation for the further involvement.

The results of this study offer a new way of understanding the value co-creation processes through the lens of the identified rhetorical strategies that are presented in the figure 4: "Model of Value Co-creation" (p. 48). Hence, it is an important addition to the literature on the customer satisfaction and value co-creation research. The practical purpose of this paper is to increase the ability of managers to analyze vast streams of data for better decisions and a better customer experience.

Key words: Rhetorical Strategies, Value Co-creation, Online Collaborative Innovative Communities, Crowdsourcing.

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1. Introduction

The business wisdom states "*Listen carefully to what your customers want and then respond with new products that meet or exceed their needs*" (Thomke & Hippel 2002, p.5). As a result of this trend in today's "markets of one", customers as innovators have the power to completely transform industries. People's involvement in collaboration processes has already influenced how goods and services are invented, produced, marketed and distributed on a global basis. This age of participation is giving rise to new collaborative capabilities and business models that will empower the prepared firm and destroy those that fail to adjust (Tapscott & Williams 2006).

Chesbrough (2004) argues that currently we are observing a "paradigm shift" in how businesses commercialize knowledge from "Closed Innovation" to "Open Innovation" which enables firms to use external and internal ideas and various paths to market. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) add that customers are increasingly attracted to both, defining and creating value. This co-creation experience of the consumers becomes the very basis of value because these business practices encourage customers from being isolated and passive to becoming connected and active.

1.1. Background and Problem Statement

Lerne (2012) claims that innovation *can* be understood and managed. Rochford (1991) adds that the Internet enabled companies to use their virtual network communities for the opportunity identification as the initial stage of innovation process in order to evaluate the new products or services so that company will allocate the resources to only those ideas that show potential interest from customers (Rochford 1991). For these reasons, online collaboration with customers became a popular tool to delegate the initial stages of innovation process to virtual communities.

Furthermore Prandelli et al. (2008) state that virtual environments play a key role in enhancing co-creation with customers by presenting low-cost opportunities for customers to interact with firms. The unique capabilities of the Internet are allowing leading firms to directly involve customers in their new product development activities, a phenomenon called "collaborative innovation".

However, online innovative collaborations are not panacea because according to a meta-analysis of market-segmentation studies, the users' needs for

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products are highly heterogeneous in many fields (von Hippel 2005). When users' needs are heterogeneous, the strategy of "a few sizes fit all" will leave many users somewhat dissatisfied with the commercial products on offer and probably will leave some users seriously dissatisfied.

Therefore, persuasive messages are essential to manifest ones needs in online innovative communities, where consumers interact mainly through text. Since persuasion is a goal of rhetoric (Zachry 2009), it is important to understand how customers use arguments in an online collaborative environment. Clearly, language provides a system of categories for our experiences and how we allocate meanings to them. As Alvesson and Kärreman (2000, p. 1126) argue, language, and its use, is increasingly being understood as one of the most important phenomena in social and organizational research.

Although recently the interest has risen significantly among practitioners to the value co-creation in the online collaborative communities, little academic research currently exists on the interactive value creation experience throughout the process of co-innovation. Thus, this thesis helps to fill that gap by applying traditional rhetorical theory to identify the rhetorical strategies which are used to promote and impede the value co-creation experience.

This research theme was partly inspired by Zachry (2009), who claims that for scholars in professional communication, the possible applications for rhetorical analysis are seemingly limitless. For example, as digital technologies multiply and thus complicate our traditional assumptions about the nature of communication, rhetorical analysis seems to offer the flexibility needed for analysts to continue to develop insight for others; and hence rhetorical theory continues to be developed.

Despite recent efforts to contextualize knowledge of online interpersonal influence (e.g. Kozinets et al. 2010; Scaraboto et al. 2012), there is still a lack of a fully developed and culturally informed theoretical perspective that explains the processes which happen in online collaborative communities, especially from the customer perspective. In particular, we do not know much about the social relationships constituting such communities and don't know which rhetorical strategies are employed for online value co-creation. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to complement and extend prior research by addressing the following question: what kinds of rhetorical strategies promote and impede value co-creation experience in the online collaborative innovative communities.

1.2. Research Questions

The aim of this paper is to study the rhetorical strategies employed by customers to co-create value and collaboratively innovate online. Consequently, two open research questions were formulated for this purpose.

Research question 1: What kinds of rhetorical strategies are used by customers in the online collaborative innovative communities?

In order to answer the research question, the rhetorical analysis based on Aristotle's persuasive appeals and on the core rhetorical purpose of an argument will be applied to identify the rhetorical strategies.

Research question 2: How the Value Co-creation Model can be constructed so that it shows what kinds of rhetorical strategies promote and impede the value co-creation experience?

The second research question requires the understanding of the social relationships and ties, which occur between members of an online collaborative innovating community. In light of it, the rhetorical situation of the collaborative innovative community will be analyzed and the social function of rhetoric will be examined through the lens of the identified rhetorical strategies. In order to develop an explanatory theory that associates rhetorical strategies with the value co-creation, the Model of the Value Co-creation for the online collaborative innovative communities will be constructed.

1.3. Thesis Relevance

This study adopts an exploratory approach to derive patterns and implications through a detailed case-study analysis; consequently it seeks to provide deeper insight into the processes of value-co-creation. The intention of this thesis is to deliver theoretical and practical relevance for managing the collaborative innovative communities in terms of value-co-creation experience.

2. Theoretical Framework

This research paper is centered on three distinctive concepts: collaborative innovative communities, online rhetoric and value co-creation. The search of EBSCOhost databases does not bring any results that contain all three terms. Therefore below are presented the previous researches that could help to unify these areas in order to answer the research questions. Therefore in this part of the thesis the relevant theories regarding online collaborative innovative communities, online rhetoric and value co-creation are presented.

2.1. Online Collaborative Innovative Communities

Billions of connected people can now actively participate in innovation, wealth creation, and social development (Tapscott & Williams 2006). Virtual communities have been studied using various perspectives (Jones 1998; Rheingold 1993; Hagel & Armstrong 1997). Increasing attention is devoted to the exploration of consumer power in the online communities.

Rossi (2011) states that in a discontinuous business environment facing a high competition and the growing expectations of the consumers, companies are compelled to manage innovation on a continuous basis. According to Gallouj and Weinstein (1997, p.547), innovation can be defined as "…*any change affecting one or more terms of one or more vectors of characteristics*". As innovation occurs through combining different knowledge bases, firms need to nurture their ability to create, integrate and recombine knowledge from different contributors, not only inside but also outside their boundaries (Rossi 2011).

Collaborative online innovation communities can maximize users' innovation potential by enabling collective thinking, which is superior to the ideas of individual users (Antikainen 2011). Therefore collaboration has become an established way of doing business with suppliers, channel partners and clients. As von Hippel (1988 in Prandelli et al. 2008) claims, customer interaction has always been important for innovation in order to improve the fit between the firm's offerings and customer needs.

Moreover, Sawhney et al. (2005) and Verona and Prandelli (2006) highlight, the virtual environment greatly enhances the firm's ability to engage customers in collaborative innovation. It allows companies to transform episodic and one-way customer interactions into a persistent dialogue with customers and manage an ongoing dialogue. By supporting the customer-to-customer

interactions, companies can enter into the implicit dimensions of customer knowledge, experiences and feelings. Therefore online conversations in the network of online innovations can become a source of customer insight, making available to the company a new understanding of customer beliefs, values, habits, desires, motives, emotions or needs (Rossi 2011).

Consequently, customers as co-creators are invited to actively participate by generating and evaluating new product ideas; elaborating, evaluating, or challenging product concepts; discussing and improving optional solution details; selecting or individualizing the preferred virtual prototype; demanding information about or just consuming the new product. For example, in the Idea Generation (ideation) phase, customers can serve as a resource for virtual brainstorming; thus, the virtual environment must be created in a way to enable and motivate consumers to play an active role in innovative processes as well as to make them participate in further projects (Füller et al. 2009).

It is critical to understand that the ability of a virtual community to find and generate innovation is due to the value of the members' contributions. Mainly, individuals approach information exchange in different ways, although it relies on an equal blend of selfish and altruistic attitudes. A thriving virtual community will exist over time only if its collective membership believes that participation is worth their time and efforts. Through the process of information exchange, members share knowledge, solve problems, and work toward achieving shared goals and objectives (Baim 2006).

Von Hippel (2005, p.96) defines "*innovation community*" as an organized cooperation in the development, testing, and diffusion of user-initiated innovations. Users as well as manufacturers can be members; the innovation community can be purely functional but may also fulfill the role of a social (virtual) community providing sociability, support, a sense of belonging, and social identity. Additionally, Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, p.412) define a brand community as "*…a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand*"; and like other communities it is marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility. Ridings et al. (2002) explains that communities develop a sense of membership, because its members form relationships with each other, which leads to the formation of strong codes of conduct, and that in some cases members develop a dependence on their virtual community.

But what motivate customers to participate in the online collaborative communities? Antikainen (2011) clarifies that there are various causes such as new viewpoints, a sense of efficacy, a sense of community, fun, interesting objectives, an open and constructive atmosphere, making and acquiring better products, winning and rewards. Besides, Hemetsberger (2002) recognizes five kinds of motives: (1) gaining knowledge needed for personal use; (2) achieving a common goal with other members of the virtual community; (3) experiencing joy in the challenge of the task involved; (4) developing/valuing communal relationships; and (5) validating the individual's personal definition of the meaning of exchange. Similarly, previous studies of Blanchard & Markus (2004) and Koh & Kim (2004) suggest that members in successful virtual communities have a strong "sense of virtual community" that has four dimensions, i.e. feelings of membership, feelings of influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). These affective bonds are crucial in ensuring that members continue participating in that particular virtual community (Shan et al. 2006).

2.2. Rhetoric

The phenomenon of rhetoric elaborated since Greek antiquity the various concepts. For example, Kennedy (1991, p.7) defines rhetoric as:

> *[...] the energy inherent in emotion and thought, transmitted through a system of signs, including language, to others to influence their decisions or actions.*

Rhetoric is sometimes seen as synonymous with discourse, and often used interchangeably with ideology. Rhetoric is, however, distinguished by a focus on persuasion, and implicit in any definition of rhetoric is the notion of power (Brummett 2000 in Higgins & Walker 2012). Rhetorical studies are concerned with how language and other symbolic forms influence the way an audience thinks, feels or acts. Rhetoric sits in harmony with discourse, but is not necessarily a 'subset' of discourse analysis (Green 2004; Cyphert 2010 in Higgins & Walker 2012).

In contemporary economics, a person acts by and for himself. For example McCloskey (1994, p.15) cites Smith who argues:

> *[...] Men always endeavor to persuade others... (and) in this manner everyone is practicing oratory through the whole of his life.*

Primary, rhetoric seeks to persuade by means of argument. An argument is made when a conclusion is supported by reasons. An *argument* is basically

reasoning made public with the goal of influencing an audience. *Appeals* are those symbolic strategies that aim either to elicit an emotion or to engage the audience's loyalties or commitments. *Arrangement* refers to the planned ordering of a message to achieve the greatest effect, whether of persuasion, clarity, or beauty. The *aesthetics* of rhetoric are elements adding form, beauty, and force to symbolic expression (Herrick 2000).

Rhetorical Discourse is usually intended to influence an audience to accept an idea, and then to act in a manner consistent with that idea. Rhetorical discourse has five distinguishing features: normally it is planned, adapted to an audience, shaped by human motives, responsive to a situation, and persuasion-seeking (Herrick 2000). For instance, Burke (1969, p. 72 in Higgins & Walker 2012) explains the relationship between rhetoric, persuasion and meaning as:

> *[…] wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is meaning, there is persuasion.*

Rhetoric has been studied for thousands of years, from at least the time of Plato. Rhetorical analysis is used as the primary methodological approach for developing insight into particular forms of business discourse. For example, rhetorical analysis has played a key role in studies of corporate strategies and marketing materials (e.g. Skerlep 2001; Ewald and Vann 2003; Martin 2007 in Zachry 2009). Rhetorical analysis has also been explored recently as a mean of understanding business communication in the digitally mediated spaces, including business websites (Zachry 2009)**.** King & Kugler (2000) observed that most previous research in communication is related to the format of a message rather than its content. However, Scaraboto et al. (2012) studied how consumers exert, verify, and respond to interpersonal influence in online communities. While similar in approach and used research methods, mentioned research differs from the current one by nature of relationships, which apparently happen in consumer forums and business collaborative environments. Consequently, this research is a first one that applied rhetorical analyses for understanding the value co-creation processes in the online collaborative communities through the lens of rhetorical strategies.

Next in this section the terminology associated with rhetoric will be explained deeper since its understanding is essential for the answering the first research question of this study, namely to identify what kinds of the rhetorical strategies are employed by customers to co-create value and collaboratively innovate online.

2.2.1.   Social functions of rhetoric

According to Herrick (2000), the art of rhetoric has six social functions, namely ideas are tested, advocacy is assisted, power is distributed, facts are discovered, knowledge is shaped, and communities are built.

Herrick (2000, p. 16) claims that one of the most important functions of rhetoric is that it allows ideas to be tested on their merits publicly. In order to win acceptance for an idea in a free society, in most cases a rhetor (*an individual engaged in creating or presenting rhetorical discourse)* has to advocate it so that a message will be memorable and persuasive. *Audience* is a vital element in rhetoric's capacity to test ideas because it will examine the case advanced to support that idea. One of the great benefits of this process is that the ideas will be verified and refined.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca in their work "The New Rhetoric" (1969) argue that the quality of an argument is in direct proportion to the quality of the audience that gives its approval. The universal audience will assent to good arguments and reject poor ones. Therefore the quality of audiences determines the quality of rhetoric in a society. Herrick (2000) adds that some audiences test ideas carefully, while others are careless in this responsibility. Author concludes that the quality of ideas will be higher if audience is better prepared and give more attention to ideas' testing.

Another important function of the art of rhetoric is that it assists advocacy, which gives a public voice to private ideas, thus directing attention to them. People advocate ideas, which they believe to be important. However, false and destructive ideas also draw on rhetoric for achieving acceptance. When we disagree with a point of view, rhetoric helps us to prepare an answer, to advance the counterargument (Herrick 2000).

Moreover, rhetoric is linked to power at three levels. Rhetoric as *personal power* provides an opportunity to success and personal advancement through training the capacity to express oneself effectively; as *psychological power* it shapes the thinking of other people; as *political power* it displays how influence gets distributed in a society (Herrick 2000).

Furthermore, rhetoric helps to discover facts and truths that are crucial to decision making. Rhetoric assists this important task in at least three ways. First, in order to prepare a case, a rhetor must locate evidence to support her ideas. Second, creating a message involves thinking critically about the

available facts. Third, the clash of differing argumentative cases that often accompanies rhetorical efforts brings new facts to light and refines available facts. Consequently, through rhetorical interaction, people come to accept some ideas as true and to reject others as false. Once an idea has been thoroughly tested by a community, it becomes part of what is accepted as known by that group (Herrick 2000).

Last but not least social function of rhetoric is building communities of people who find common cause with one another, who see the world in a similar way, who identify their concerns and aspirations with similar of other people. Therefore rhetoric shapes the character and health of communities in various ways (Herrick 2000).

2.2.2. Rhetorical Situation

Lloyd Bitzer (1968, p.3) defines the rhetorical situation as:

> *A complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence, which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence.*

Bitzer claims that the "*situation*" spawns rhetoric in much the same way that a question generates an answer. Bitzer describes the rhetorical situation as having three distinct characteristics: exigency, audience, and constraints. *Exigency* refers to the speaker or company's (or audience's) insufficiency, or the necessity for action (or marketing). *Audience* is, those who receives the messages, or to whom the messages are targeted. *Constraints* refer not only to the restrictions in given situations of the speaker, but also restrictions of the audience in receiving the message and acting upon it (Bitzer 1968).

2.2.3. Aristotle's Appeals

Rhetoric defined by Aristotle (2006) as the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion and appeals that are the ways in which a text seeks to engage its readers. Common approaches are appeals to ethos, appeals to logos, and appeals to pathos.

Figure 1 illustrates the three classical rhetorical types of persuasive appeals. According to Aristotle (2006) *logos* concerns the logical reasoning, or argumentative content in speech; *ethos* points to the speaker's credibility, while *pathos* relates to emotion, or what role emotions play in the persuasion of an audience.

Rhetorical Strategies

	Appeals to LOGOS (logic, reasoning)	Appeals to ETHOS (character, ethics)	Appeals to PATHOS (emotion)
Definition	The argument itself; the reasoning the author uses; logical evidence	How an author builds credibility and trustworthiness	Words or passages an author uses to activate emotions
Form of Appeal	. Cites theories /scientific facts . Indicates meanings or reasons . Literal or historical analogies . Offers definitions . Cites factual data & statistics . Quotations . Citations from experts . Informed opinions . Uses real life examples . Tells personal anecdotes	. Author's profession/background . Appearing sincere, fair minded, knowledgeable . Conceding to opposition where appropriate . Morally/ethically likeable . Use of appropriate language for audience and subject . Appropriate vocabulary . Correct grammar . Professional format	. Emotionally loaded language . Vivid descriptions . Emotional examples . Anecdotes, testimonies, or narratives about emotional experiences or events . Figurative language . Emotional tone (humor, sarcasm, disappointment, excitement, etc.)
Effect on Audience	Evokes a cognitive, rational response. Readers get a sense of: "Oh, that makes sense" or "Hmm, that really doesn't prove anything."	Helps readers to see the author as reliable, trustworthy, and credible. The reader may respect the a or his/her views.	Evokes an emotional response. Persuasion by emotion. (usually evoking fear, sympathy, empathy, anger)

Figure 1: Rhetorical Strategies. (Scaraboto, D., Rossi, C.A.V., Costa, D. (2012) How Consumers Persuade Each Other: Rhetorical Strategies of Interpersonal Influence in Online Communities. *BAR, Rio de Janeiro*, 9 (3), p. 254).

Meyer (2005) argues that ethos, pathos and logos should be considered on equal footing, since rhetoric is a relation between a speaker (ethos) and her audience (pathos) through some language (logos) that could be visual, written, or simply heard. Author defines rhetoric as the negotiation of the distance between individuals on a given question. If people speak and write, it is because they have question in mind. Without such a question that in some way "measures" out their distances, nobody would speak but remain silent. On the other hand, if everything were problematic, nobody could agree on anything. Rhetoric deals with the intersubjective problematic. Individual try to resolve it by relying on *what* is non-problematic for the locutor, and more especially for her audience. That relationship between the problematic and the non-problematic is called an *argument* (Meyer 2005).

Style involves such things as choice of words, grammatical correctness, modes of discourse, levels of formality, and figures of speech. Confucius (1989 in You 2008) holds that a harmonious community is built through individuals performing rituals, including speaking and writing, appropriate to the social context. As rituals carry community-shared values, by participating in or

performing rituals, individuals can easily recognize and identify with the community values, and are thus persuaded automatically. Additionally, You (2008) advocates that patterned rhetorical strategies become an important ritual for community's building and sharing.

2.2.1. *Characteristics of Cyber-Rhetoric*

Ballot Box Communication (BBC) is a new communication feature in online communities and can be best summarized as an aggregation mechanism that reflects the common experience and opinions among individuals. By offering a limited number of choices such as voting, rating and tagging, BBC creates a new medium to effectively reveal the interests of mass population. BBC presents a new choice in which each user can express his/her opinion through BBC and their collective preferences can be heard as a dominant voice. There are three characteristics of BBC compared with CMC: (1) simplification, (2) the many-to-one nature, and (3) implicit influences on users (Xia et al. 2009).

2.2.2. *Rhetorical strategies*

According to Anderson (2011, p.178) rhetorical strategies are defined as "*methods of communicating the details of a message*". Common rhetorical strategies include narration, analysis, description, comparison, and persuasion. However, strategies might be classified differently depending on which facet of strategies is of interest. Thus there is no one correct (or best, or most nearly correct) list of compliance-gaining strategies. Rather, there are many different possible "strategy" classifications, each potentially useful for capturing a different dimension (O'Keefe 1990, p. 207; Wilson 2003). For instance, Scaraboto et al. (2012) have identified rhetorical strategies that are associated with four types of interpersonal influence, namely setting expectations, prescribing, claiming expertise, and celebrating acquiescence. Alternatively, King and Kugler (2000) describe a rhetorical strategy as a collection of arguments generated to persuade decision makers operating under deliberative circumstances, and subject to budget constraints, to commit resources to an innovation. A rhetorical strategy is therefore a cluster of arguments that have an intended set of characteristics where arguments can be defined as a function of their core appeal.

The goal of this paper requires identify the rhetorical strategies employed by members of the collaborative innovative communities. For this purpose the definition of rhetorical strategies offered by King & Kugler (2000) is adopted; hence rhetorical strategies will be classified based on the core appeals.

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2.3. Value Co-creation

From a service-dominant logic viewpoint, value creation is an interactive and collaborative process that occurs through the exchange of service (Vargo & Lusch 2008 in Plé & Chumpitaz 2009). The factual value of a market offering can only be assessed through the lens of the customer. Gustafsson and Johnson (2003) explain that customers view products and services from the standpoint of the benefits they provide and the problems they solve, and also that the lens is used to measure satisfaction and loyalty.

The discussion recently raised on customer involvement, wikinomics, power of the masses, crowdsourcing and the role of collaboration in creating unique value proposition. However, the role of the final customer has been instead long neglected. Only recently the "*customer as a source of competences*" idea appeared in literature (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Füller et al. 2009, Rossi 2011 etc.) This shift was primarily enabled after opening the ways to a deeper customer involvement in the processes of value co-creation and collaborative innovation (Rossi 2011).

With raise of Internet consumers are increasingly stimulate the interaction between the company and the consumer that may result in value co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004) or value co-destruction (Echeverri & Skålén 2011; Plé & Chumpitaz 2009).

The meaning of value and the process of value creation are rapidly shifting from a product- and firm-centric view to personalized consumer experiences. Informed, networked, empowered, and active consumers are increasingly co-creating value with the company. Consumers now seek to exercise their influence in every part of the business system. Armed with new tools and dissatisfied with available choices, consumers want to interact with company and thereby "co-create" value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004).

Interactive value co-creation takes place during the interaction between the provider and the customer. The interaction is becoming the locus of value creation and value extraction. As value shifts to experiences, the market is becoming a forum for conversation and interactions between customer, customer communities, and company. It is this dialogue, access, transparency, and understanding of risk-benefits that is principal to the next practice in value creation. High-quality interactions that enable an individual customer to co-create unique experiences with the company are the key to unlocking new

sources of competitive advantage (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000). Later authors resume (2003) that co-creation puts the spotlight squarely on *consumer-company interaction as the locus of value creation.*

Company can create a personalized experience environment within which individual can create their own unique *cocreating* personalized experience. *Products can be commoditized but co-creation experiences cannot be.* Dialog is an important element in the co-creation view because it implies interactivity, deep engagement, and the ability and willingness to act on both sides (Levine at al. 2001 in Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004)

The information infrastructure must be centered on the consumer and encourage active participation in all aspects of the cocreation experience, including information search, configuration of products and services, fulfillment, and consumption. Co-creation means developing methods to attain a visceral understanding of co-creation experiences so that companies can co-shape consumer expectations and experiences along with their customers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004).

When interacting, service systems most likely intend to co-create value rather than co-destroy it. Therefore, it is important to identify where value can be destroyed so that it can be remedied. *Value co-destruction* is according to Plé & Chumpitaz (2009, p.433), an interactional process between service systems such as firm and its customers that results in a decline in at least one of the systems' well-being. Co-destruction process may result either from accidental or intentional actions from service systems. If happened, accidental missuses may lead to unsuccessful co-innovation that in its turn may become a co-destruction process that decreases the firm's competitive well-being, and limits its capacity to adapt to its competitive environment. Besides, this relative innovation failure necessitated the customer to bring in resources she could have employed for other more beneficial activities. This might provoke frustration and other psychological costs and eventually negatively affect her well-being. On the other side, there is an intentional misuse that happens if service systems may have an interest in misusing its own resources or the ones of another system on purpose. Doing so, this system plans to increase its well-being and its capacity of adaptiveness to the detriment of another system's well-being and capacity of adaptiveness (Plé & Chumpitaz 2009).

Next in this section the customer experience and consumer empowerment through co-creation will be reviewed since it is essential for understanding how value is co-created in the online collaborative innovative communities.

2.3.1. *Understanding Customer Experience*

According to Dubois (2000, p.34), consumer involvement can be defined as a state of motivation, stimulation, or interest, which cannot be observed. Involvement refers to an individual's state with regard to a domain of interest, the type and intensity of which can evolve according to circumstances.

Customer experience is the cognitive and affective outcome of the customer's interaction with a company's employees, processes, technologies, products, services and other outputs (Buttle 2010). Author defines three main concepts that are associated with customer experience (Buttle 2010, p.170):

- **Touchpoints**: include websites, contact centers, events, exhibitions, trade shows, seminars, direct mail, e-mail, advertising, sales calls, and retail stores etc.
- **Moment of Truth**: Any occasion the customer interacts with, or is exposed to which leads to the formation of an impression of the organization.
- **Engagement**: The customer's emotional and rational response to a customer experience.

Customer satisfaction can be defined as the customer's fulfillment response to a customer experience or some part thereof (Buttle 2010, p.44). In order for one to obtain satisfaction, a customer must first have some sort of expectation for the product or service. Once the product is obtained, satisfaction can be measured against the presumed expectation in order to define whether the experience was satisfactory or dissatisfactory. As Dubois (2000, p. 248) adds, if repeated satisfaction is experienced, it often leads to customer loyalty, whereas dissatisfaction, usually due to performance below expectations, leads to a feeling of deception provoking complaints, which can go as far as service rejection.

2.3.2. *Consumer Empowerment Through Co-creation*

Empowerment can be viewed as any means strengthening a person's perception of self-determination, self-efficacy and reducing conditions contributing to feelings of powerlessness. Empowerment raise peoples' experience of self-determination and efficacy together with the related enjoyment of a task determines initiation of an activity and increases

persistence of task performance, while a sense of powerlessness leads to lack of responsibility and demotivation (Füller et al. 2009).

There are several ways through which self-efficacy can be increased, for example through mastery of experiences. Consumers' actual or perceived influence on new product design and decision-making reflects participative management. Technologies and interaction tools enabling consumers to virtually engage in meaningful and challenging tasks, to effectively share their knowledge with producers, to feel they are autonomously contributing in the way and to the extent they like, to experience a culture of collaboration and to believe that their input will be seriously considered may provide those consumers with a sense of mastery. Thus, participants in virtual co-creation may feel empowered. As the management literature has shown, the experience of empowerment enhances individuals' motivation to repeat the task where they felt empowered. Therefore, perceived empowerment should increase participants' intentions to participate in the future projects (Füller et al. 2009).

3. Research Methodology

Methodology is the way in which a researcher conducts research, i.e. how s/he chooses to deal with a particular question (Jonkerm & Pennink 2010). This Methodology chapter presents the research process that took place in order to answer the research questions. The choices of research approaches that were made are explained and the description of the research process and overview of the case company is provided. A discussion regarding the reliability and validity of the results is presented in the end of this chapter.

3.1. Methodological Paradigm.

Paradigm is usually called a basic attitude or affinity of a researcher. Gummesson (1999 in Jonkerm & Pennink 2010, p.26) describes it as:

> *[...] the underpinning values and rules that govern the thinking and behaviour of researchers.*

A methodological paradigm specifies the research behavior and can therefore provide indications about the way in which research should be conducted. The implicit or explicit choice of a specific research paradigm is directed by the nature of the question respectively the phenomena to be examined, their context and the affinity of the researcher.

To answer the research questions, the *Interpretive Paradigm* is identified for the framework of the study because it allows understand the world as it is to recognize the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience. The Interpretive Paradigm seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity and it sees the social world as an emergent social process, which is created by the individuals concerned (Burrell & Morgan 1979).

3.2. Research Strategy

Deduction and Induction are two opposite approaches to examine the research question: deductive approach entails a process in which theory leads to observations and findings, while with induction approach the connection is reversed, namely observation leads to the theory. However, just as deduction entails an element of induction, the inductive process is likely to entail a modicum of deduction (Bryman & Bell 2007, p.14).

Careful investigating of the existing theories regarding rhetorical strategies and value co-creation in the collaborative innovative communities discovered too

little studies; probably because of the newness of this phenomenon. Consequently, the frame of literature references is weak. Therefore, in order to answer the research questions, only the inductive method grounded on the theory of Rhetoric and Value co-creation can be applied. This approach is in accordance with the principles of induction, because as Bryman and Bell (2007) claim: some inductive researches often use a grounded theory approach to the analysis of data and to the generation of theory. However, other researches generate interesting and illuminating findings but without clear theoretical significance so that they draw conclusions only based on the empirical findings.

Guided by statement of Bryman and Bell (2007) that an inductive approach is appropriate when an apparent relationship between theories and empirical finding is vague, this study has been contacted with no specific hypothesis on what will be found and how strong the connection between existing theories and the empirical findings will happen to be.

3.3. Research Design

Bryman and Bell (2007) state that a research design structures the collection and analysis of data. This research is designed as a single Case Study, which is defined by Yin (2003, p.13) as:

> *[…] an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-lid context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.*

This thesis aims to contribute to the frame of reference surrounding rhetorical strategies and value co-creation, which take place at the online collaborative communities. By conducting research of a case study community that led by Salesforce.com, which is acknowledged to be the most innovative company in the world in 2011 and 2012 according to the Forbes metrics (Forbes 2012), this study is designed for the understanding what kinds of the rhetorical strategies are used by customers for articulating, promoting and discussing the innovative ideas and also for the interpersonal interaction. Moreover, the case study community is investigated for describing the rhetorical situation and explaining the social function of rhetoric that significantly contribute to the construction of the Value Co-creation Model.

Consequently, this research has a descriptive design for the answering the first research question because it aims to identify and describe the rhetorical strategies and as an Exploratory Research for the second research question

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because it aims to investigate relationship between variables, namely what kids of rhetorical strategies promote or impede the value co-creation experience.

3.4. Research Process

This Inductive Research with Qualitative approach was conducted by applying Netnography as a method to collect data and the qualitative methods such as Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis and Rhetorical Analysis in order to identify the rhetorical strategies used by community's members of a case study.

Following the guidelines offered by Kozinets (1998, 2002, 2006) for the use of Netnography, and the ones outlined by Herring (2001, 2007) for the use of Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis, this research developed in four stages: (1) defining the field, (2) entering the field, (3) collecting data, and (4) analyzing data.

First, a study of the phenomenon of the online collaborative innovative communities was conducted through reading relevant literature and exploring relevant communities of a given practice. It resulted in a selection of an appropriate case study, namely Customer Community of Salesfore.com, which is based on the company's Idea Exchange Platform.

The second stage of the research process was the entrance in the field, involved the first contacts with the community through non-participant observation. At this entry stage the structure of topics were studied and it was proven that there is an easy access to the community's statistics. After informing the management of Salesforce Company about the intend to conduct a research based on company's community, the innovative ideas' topics were explored further.

Thirdly, data collection was initiated straightaway after entering the field. However, the dataset of community was so vast that a qualitative analysis of the whole dataset proved extremely difficult to accomplish. Hence, a sample of the 10 most popular ideas with 2018 comments were chosen as the most suitable to the development of this study. This decision was motivated by fact that ideas are organized by different threads so that one thread provides plenty of opinions about the same idea whereas customers use the different rhetorical strategies to persuade the company to implement their favorite ideas. This architecture absolutely corresponds to the purpose of the research. However, this community serves as a feedback channel where company representatives have the power to endorse and accelerate discussion, therefore, in order to

eliminate not organically created messages, only three discourse interactions such as (1) Customer to Company, (2) Customer to Customer and (3) Customer to Expert (IT developer) were taken into consideration.

Finally, data analysis consisted of perusal readings of all of the messages included in the sample, intending at identifying rhetorical strategies in the participants' rhetorical manifestations. This dataset was manually coded and then verified a set of conditions and practices that were relevant to the aim of this study. Content analysis revealed that after new idea is articulated other customers follow with non-synchronous responses, which elicit further responses. Therefore discourse is mainly focused on expressing personal motivations why the idea should be implemented; however there were also discovered other rhetorical situations such as asking advice, looking for the information, sharing experience etc. Therefore every message was closely zoomed and analyzed to find and pattern the rhetorical strategies based on the three persuasive appeals while keeping in mind particular rhetorical purposes and exigencies. Data collection stage ceased when the amount and variety of the data collected were considered sufficient to address the research question.

3.5. Case Study Research: Salesforce.com, Inc.

As it was stated earlier in the Research Design section, the exploratory single-case study design is adopted to address the research goal. Yin (2003 in Jonkerm & Pennink 2010, p.83) defines the Case Study research as: "… *using a limited number of units of analysis within their natural conditions*". Consequently, in order to identify the rhetorical strategies and provide a deeper understanding of the mechanism and processes of value co-creation, the Salesforce IdeaExchange Platform was selected as a case study.

Salesforce.com, Inc. was founded in 1999 as a provider of enterprise cloud computing applications to businesses worldwide. In 2012 company reached more than 100 000 customers, 2000 partners, 8000 employees, 150 billion data center transactions and $2.5 billion annual revenue (salesforce 2012b). Company manages three communities on its website: for partners, developers and customers (salesforce 2012a). For the purpose of this study only customer community was studied.

Customer community assists as an IdeaExchange platform, which is located at http://success.salesforce.com/. Appendix 1 illustrates its index page (salesforce 2012a). This platform works for the last 5 years and during this

time company has received: 22,355 ideas, 446,119 votes and 872 ideas were delivered. In average, 174 ideas delivered a year or 3 ideas a week. Delivered ideas reached 86,872 votes or 100 per idea (salesforce 2012d) despite the fact that Salesforce does not compensate contributors, but gives visibility to the best community's members via using the elements of Gamification (salesforce 2012g).

3.6. Netnography as a data collection method

In accordance with the research questions, and respecting the nature of the phenomenon, a qualitative research approach using Netnography (Kozinets (1998, 2002, 2006) as a method was adopted co collect data.

Netnography (also known by a range of other terms, e.g. webethnography, webnography, online ethnography, virtual ethnography) is, essentially, the application of ethnographic methods to an online context (Kozinets 2002, Hine 2000, 2002 in Prior & Miller 2012).

According to Kozinets (1998, p.366), Netnography can be defined as

> *[...] a written account resulting from fieldwork studying the cultures and communities that emerge from on-line, computer mediated, or Internet-based communications, where both the field work and the textual account are methodologically informed by the traditions and techniques of cultural anthropology.*

Therefore, Netnography is a suitable method for the data collection from the online collaborative communities because "*it tends to focus on the analysis of specified online communities where these are 'computer-mediated social gatherings"* (Kozinets 2002, p.61).

To answer the research question of this paper, the purely Observational Netnography method was used in contrast to Participant-observational Netnography or Autonetnography (Kozinets 2006, p. 133). Observational Netnography means that the researcher does not reveal him or herself to the online community and its members. As the main purpose of this study was to identify the rhetoric strategies, which are chosen directly by community members and since all data of the case study community are available online to all non-registered viewers, there was no any necessity of a researcher's involvement in the community life. Moreover, a specific culture of particular B2B community requires the access to the software products that are used by members as part of their daily business life. Therefore knowledge and experience in dealing with these IT products are essential for those who want to enter as a contributor because the interaction between members is based

solely on the sharing the advanced professional knowledge and seeking the ways to enhance these products. Therefore, the researcher of this paper remained present to collect data yet distant from the community and its interactions. Thus the tactic of data collection can be characterized as completely unobtrusive and observational.

Furthermore, in order to preserve the non-intrusive character of the method, was decided do not conduct interviews with community members. Therefore triangulation as the combination of methodologies was not carried on.

Netnographic research ethics. Conducting primary research on the Internet raises some specific ethical issues. Kozinets (2002 in Kozinets 2006, p.136), recommends that the researchers should (1) disclose his/her presence and research intention; (2) guarantee confidentiality and anonymity to informants by providing them with pseudonyms; (3) seek and incorporate feedback from members of the online community being researched; and (4) to obtain permission from authors whose postings are directly quoted in the report; (5) to use member checks that means to present research findings to the people who have been studied in order to solicit their comments.

The Salesforce customer community is a company's public place where no registration is required to get an access to the IdeaExchange Platform, which stores all data. Therefore, all information of this community can be easily found through the search engines. However, the management of company was informed that data would be used and interpreted for the scientific purpose. Moreover, by the ethical motives, the identities of members are not revealed in the Finding chapter of this paper. Furthermore, this research is not present any sensitive information which might lead to embarrassment or ostracism. Nevertheless, member-checks method that was recommended by Kozinets (2006) was escaped since the quotes were cited verbatim and anonymously because the aim of the researcher is to apply the rhetorical analysis to analyze the persuasive appeals of their messages in order to identify the rhetorical strategies employed by customers.

3.7. Qualitative Data Analysis Methods

After qualitative data were collected through the Netnography method, the next step was to interpret them with the aid of computer-mediated discourse analysis and rhetorical analysis. These two methods were chosen because while

discourses embody the universe of dialogic communication, rhetoric is the planned and effectual way to articulate persuasion.

Qualitative data analysis is a very personal process, with few rigid rules and procedures. When data is analyzed by theme, it is called *thematic analysis*. This type of analysis is highly inductive, that is, the themes emerge from the data and are not imposed upon the researcher. In this type of analysis, the data collection and analysis take place simultaneously (Dawson 2002, p.116). Accordingly, the findings of this study are organized by theme.

3.7.1. *Computer-mediated discourse analysis*

Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD) is an analytical framework, which draws on linguistics, communication, and rhetoric studies to orient the analysis of computer-mediated communication (Herring 2001). CMD has important implications for understanding key concepts in discourse studies, such as interactional coherence, participant frameworks, intertextuality, language-identity relationships, and the notion of community. The CMD Analysis framework describes different domains of analysis of online discourse, including (1) structure, (2) meaning, (3) interaction management, and (4) social practices (Herring 2004).

Discourse analysis method looks at patterns of speech, such as how people talk about a particular subject, what metaphors they use, how they take turns in conversation, and so on. Analysts see speech as a performance; it performs an action rather than describes a specific state of affairs or specific state of mind. Much of this analysis is intuitive and reflective, but it may also involve some form of counting, such as counting instances of turntaking and their influence on the conversation and the way in which people speak to others (Dawson 2002, p.119).

3.7.2. *Rhetoric Analysis*

Rhetorical analysis is "*an effort to understand how people within specific social situations attempt to influence others through language*" (Selzer, 2004, p. 281). Therefore, Rhetorical Analysis might be interpreted as an effort of researcher to read a text interpretively, endeavoring to understand how the message was crafted to earn a specific response.

A complete rhetorical analysis requires the researcher not only identifying and labeling characteristics of the text, that represents an empirical methodology,

but also interpreting the meaning of these textual components (both in isolation and in combination) for the other people who experiencing the text. This highly interpretative aspect of rhetorical analysis requires the analyst to address the effects of the different identified textual elements on the perception. Most texts, of course, include multiple features, so the analytical work involves addressing the cumulative effects of the selected combination of features in the text (Zachry 2009).

According to Zachry (2009, p.70), basic but not necessary linear sequence of activities in conducting a rhetorical analysis includes:

1. Identify text(s) for analysis
2. Categorize the text(s) according to purpose and type
3. Identify constituent parts of text(s)
4. Interpret and discuss one or more configurations of the parts and/or whole of the text(s) in relationship with some overarching theoretical concept(s)

The rhetorical analysis of this study is grounded on traditional rhetorical theory to consider how the authors use the appeals of ethos, pathos and logos (Zachry 2009). Additionally, rhetorical theory which explains the social function of rhetoric and portrays the rhetorical situation where applied for a better understanding of value co-creation processes.

3.8. Reliability and Validity

Three of the most prominent criteria for the evaluation of business research are reliability, replication, and validity (Bryman & Bell 2007, p.40).

3.8.1. Reliability

Reliability (dependability) is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable. The term is commonly used in relation to the question of whether or not the measures that are devised for concepts in business are consistent. Reliability is particularly at issue in connection with quantitative research because it is likely to be concerned with the question of whether a measure is stable or not (Bryman & Bell 2007, p.41).

In a given paper, the identified rhetorical strategies were supported with quotes to prove their existence in the case study community. Since collaborative innovative communities have similar characteristics, it is highly probable that identified rhetorical strategies are happening in the communities of a similar practice. However, it is important to acknowledge that the Qualitative Research is too subjective.

3.8.2. *Replicability*

Study must be capable of replication in a case if other researches choose to replicate the findings, that will be possible only of the researcher describe the procedure of research design in great detail (Bryman & Bell 2007, p.41).

The Research Methodology chapter of this paper thoroughly describes the process of conducting this research. The case study's community has a great transparency and is opened for everyone; therefore this study is fully capable of replication.

3.8.3. *Validity*

Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research (Bryman & Bell 2007, p.41).

Measurement validity applies primarily to quantitative research and to the search for measures of social scientific concepts. It means whether or not a measure that is devised of a concept really does reflect the concept that it is supposed to be denoting (Bryman & Bell 2007).

To answer the research question, approximately 1/10 of available data set was study, however, the sample size answers the research question and therefore reflects the social scientific concepts, although not so thoroughly as it could.

Internal validity (credibility) is concerned with the question of whether a conclusion that incorporates a causal relationship between two or more variables is consistent and reliable. How confident can we be that the independent variable really is at least in part responsible for the variation that has been identified in the dependent variable (Bryman & Bell 2007).

In a given research, the data meet the internal validity instructions because it is the rhetorical strategies promote the participation, not vice versa, since it is a community with a narrow specialization and there is do not exist any other attractions and entertainments except the contributing and discussing ideas related to the product enhancement.

External validity (transferability) is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context (Bryman & Bell 2007).

A given research was studying one of the open collaborative communities. Since all such communities are established with the same purpose, namely to

generate, discus and evaluate ideas they all have the similar characteristics; therefore the result of this study can be generalized to other online collaborative innovative communities and consequently this study can be generalized and applied to the whole domain of a given practice.

Ecological validity is concerned with the question of whether or not social scientific findings are applicable to people's everyday, natural social settings (Bryman & Bell 2007).

This paper analysis the rhetorical strategies which are chosen by community member in order to persuade each other in necessity to implement specific not-existent ideas which could improve their daily professional life. The Netnography research method allows us to observe the community life without actual intervention in natural setting of those who we study. Therefore this paper captures the daily life conditions, values and attitudes of participators of collaborative innovative community.

4. Findings

The goal of this study requires a deep understanding of the inner processes and architecture of the online collaborative innovative community because such knowledge will contribute to understanding of a rhetorical situation where the rhetorical strategies take place. Consequently, this chapter starts with a case induction using the IdeaExchange platform as the empirical case. Accordingly, an overall picture of the innovating process is provided and functions of the online collaborative platform are explored. Next, ten rhetorical strategies are identified supplemented by thematic analysis.

4.1. Innovating processes in the online collaborative community

The observation of the case study community allowed understanding the role of the online collaborative community for the company's innovation processes that are shown on the figure 2 (figure was adapted from Rossi (2011, p.52).
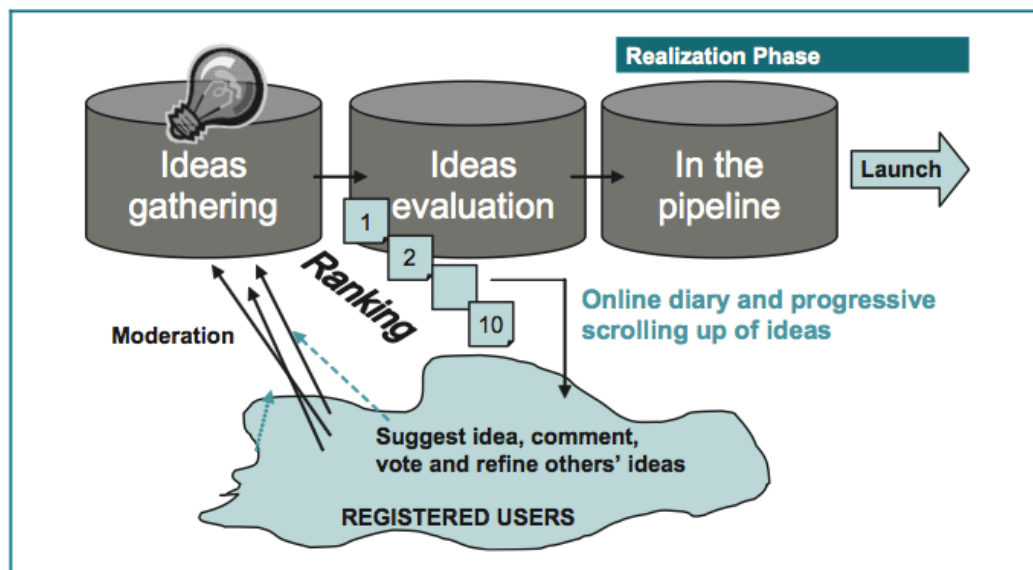
Figure 2: Role of the IdeaExchange Platform in innovation processes of Salesforce.com

As figure illustrates, consumers take an active role in ideas' generation and evaluation process. Among main activities of the collaborative community members are to suggest ideas, comment and vote for best ones to refine those that are worth to be implemented. Therefore this platform plays the role of a filter that absorbs innovative ideas from the customer perspective.

According to the company's strategy, *Ideas Community* designed for Salesforce users to submit product feedback and suggest new features. Only members of the community can post ideas. Comments are plain text responses to posted ideas that enable discussions about the ideas. Company employs the Ballot

Box Communication (BBC) to track the popularity of ideas among customers. Thus, the demote button subtracts 10 points from the idea's overall score and decrease its popularity ranking; the promote button adds 10 points to the idea. One idea can be promoted/demoted only once by one member.
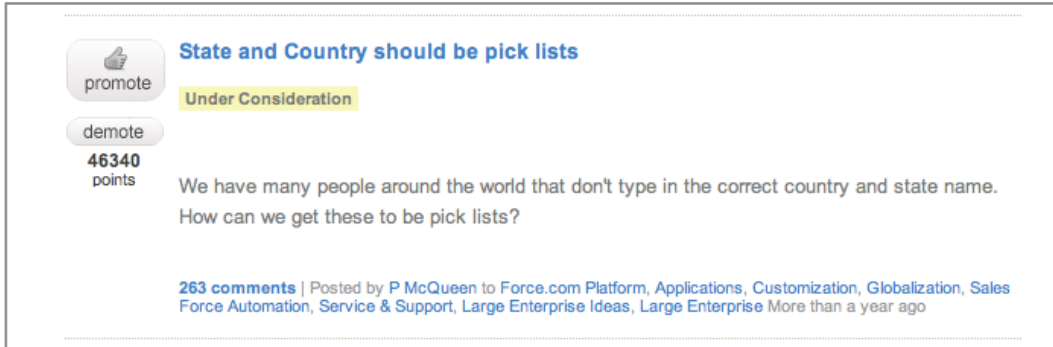

Figure 3: Salesforce's Snapshot of an Idea Discussion Thread (salesforce 2012e)

Figure 3 clarifies how the architecture of the case study community is constructed. According to a snapshot above, customers can contribute to the community in three forms:

1. *Suggesting new ideas, i-innovations, or service enhancements;*
2. *Voting for the best ideas (promote or demote);*
3. *Discussing the submitted ideas.*

This section proceeds with answering the research question one, namely, "*what kinds of rhetorical strategies are used by customers in online collaborative innovative communities?*" For this purpose the study sample of the ten most popular ideas is chosen for analysis based on the *Popular Ideas Search Tool*, which sorts all submitted ideas by an internal calculation that reflects the age of an idea's positive votes (salesforce 2012f).

4.2. Rhetorical strategies

Following Dawson (2002, p.116) regarding thematic analysis, presented below are the findings of this study accompanied by a brief analysis. Space limitations restrict the reproduction of lengthy extracts. Therefore descriptions are provided of how the arguments unfolded and excerpts from the transcripts are only used for illustrative purposes.

The analysis of collected data allowed identification of the ten distinctive types of rhetorical strategies, which take place in an online collaborative innovative community, including:

1. "Requesting Implementation" is one of the most popular rhetorical strategies and it is used in a case when customers like the idea and therefore request the company to deliver it. If potential enhancement covers the important gap, customers ask company to implement the solution to the gap problem as soon as possible. Followers of this strategy usually submit the short persuasive arguments with the request without dipping into details. This strategy has following characteristics:

a) Communication is of a neutral or positive polite tone:

> *"This is totally and completely necessary."*
> *"This is really required."*
> *"Definitely Needed!!"*
> *"Salesforce, please, please, please, put this in the Summer '09 release!"*

b) Normally, customers identify themselves with other community members or with their co-workers and colleges. In other words, they are trying to demonstrate that there are many other people behind the community's borders who need the implementation as well; this subcategory might be called as a "request through a group generalization":

> *"Everyone needs this".*
> *This is ABSOLUTELY HUGE!!!! We have been dying for this for years.*
> *"This idea is crucial for folks in marketing..."*
> *"We SOOOOO need this!!... Looks like demand is high..."*
> *"I am sure there are hundreds of other users who feel the same way."*

c) Moreover, customers tend to express the notion of urgency to get this solution as soon as possible:

> *"Salesforce needs to makes this happen now! We desperately need this".*
> *"My company has numerous "overlay" organisations and this is really beginning to hurt us very bad indeed, please, please, please introduce this capability ASAP"*
> *"Eagerly looking for this feature [User's real name]"*

2. "Advocating Strategy" is employed by those who publicly support the idea and provide the detailed arguments in favor of the idea's implementation. Generally, pleaders use the persuasive appeals to advocate for the idea's delivery in three main forms, such as:

a) Citing how many people in their organizations have a need for this solution:

> ..."our staff is unhappy that their work is not being reflected correctly if i create multiple reports to report on tasks they resolve in each object."

> "If you have worked with sales people, you know they are not going to enter all those contacts and activities, as it is excessively time consuming, taking away from selling time...."

> "My sales guys run into this problem all the time when they meet with several people..."

> "My team is in the same boat. We all touch many people every day and entering those activites is too painful."

b) Complaining how existing solution creates the bottlenecks in their organizations:

> "[Currently] I need to create a list of all Primary Contacts at companies that have an active contract. To achieve this I have been using Crystal Reports... [describes 6 steps how he does it]... it should not be this hard!!"

> "Please implement so that we can avoid doing extra steps and waste our time."

> "We have hundreds upon hundreds of reports and our folder system has become a nightmare."

> "To have an accurate history by contact, you currently have to go in and add another event for each contact. Very time consuming. Typically sales rep won't bother."

> "Our team is engaged in a variety of meetings, often with multiple participants. Using "events" to manage this is too cumbersome."

c) Citing benefits of how this potential solution will lead to value creation:

> "It would especially make the Reports tab a lot easier to navigate, and would help administrators be able to keep analytics better organized and easier to find - which would greatly help user adoption."

> "This would be good for reporting and history reasons, especially for contacts involved with the event outside the account."

> "Yes! This would be especially fabulous for conference call with multiple users on both sides of the call!"

> "This would save untold amounts of time for our representatives as well as improve user adoption."

3. "Approving Strategy". Customers who choose to follow this strategy persuade the company by showing that they are agreed with the author of the idea. Mainly sentences are composed of words such as: "I agree", "also", "too", "we", "not alone". Usually sentences are short, just an expressing the solidarity of with an author. Customers want to show that the idea found their support.

> *"I completely support this idea".*
>
> *"We have experienced the same limitation".*
>
> *"I agree with the million and one other people who are screaming that this is an OBVIOUS feature that should have been included since day 1".*
>
> *"It appears I am not alone in the amount of time spent exporting data..."*

Additionally, there is an alternative solution for customer who likes the idea to vote for it with a BBC element such as the "promote button". It can be used only once to give 10 points to one idea. Some customers choose to post additional message to increase the probability that their voice will be taken into consideration.

> *"Hello, hi highly vote for this feature, this should be a must in salesforce reports."*

4. "Instructing Strategy" stands for providing proficient instructions for further service improvement. By employing this strategy, customers give directions to the company what it should do, normally in a directive tone with use of the signal words such as "should", "must", "need", "have to" etc.:

> *"Leads and Contacts invited to an event should have the event in the Activitiy related list on their Contact and Lead records. This would be AWESOME for reporting purposes."*
>
> *"...when designing this solution, please also incorporate the following important features: 1)make notes... 2)create an activities view... 3)enable activities to be tagged...."*
>
> *"multiple users should be allowed with one activity....Without it, Salesforce is quite cripled as a tool."*
>
> *"You need to implement nested folders like the CrystalReports.com AppExchange product (Check out their online demo to see what I am talking about)"*

Moreover, some customers tend to act like experts and for many of them it seems not difficult to implement the solution:

> *"amazed that three years of IdeaExchange comments later this simple functionality is still yet to be built in."*

"Seems like a simple thing to offer."

"Did SF build their DB in such a short-sighted flat file manner that they cannot implement such a simple enhancement without a major overhaul?"

"I'm suprised that this wasn't discussed in the initial design…."

5. "Exploratory Strategy". Sometimes customers expand the posted idea to a new level and suggest adds-on to the potential solution. It is similar to the brainstorm practice where customers offer new ideas and afterwards ask each other to evaluate their suggestions:

"It would be great if we could create folder hierarchies for Reports. I have had several customers request this feature. It would make the Reports tab a lot easier to navigate in, and would help administrators be able to keep the reports organized… Anyone else think this would be useful?"

"I like the idea. How about just being able to see all the activities in an account; regardless how the activity is attached weather it be an Opportunity, Account or Contact".

"I would go a little further to give the flexibility to the SysAdmin role to even delegate that responsibility to be able to login as any role to other folks in the user list for eg the support reps can be assigned that role to login as any role or as any user. Make sense?"

6. "Warning Strategy". Customers who think that idea does not help them or contradicts to their values or social norms, try to prevent idea from being implemented.

"[In response to those who advocate for idea] Having a user approve that you log in as them is good karma. (because it)… builds a level of trust between the user community and the Admin team."

"While asking a user for login access maybe the "politically correct" way to get access to assist a user, it is not always timely. Also, how can you require a user to grant the login access to system administrators. There are legal implications to some of the modifications system administrators are required to make to user settings"

"I could not disagree more, assigning a task to a group of people is the best way to ensure that it does not get done. In all likelihood, the task is too broadly defined (and will never get done) or lacks a single point of accountability… ".

Additionally, the same function has a BBC element "**demote button**" which is attached to every idea's thread so that customers who do not like the idea can subtract 10 points out of its total popularity.

7. "Criticizing Strategy" used by customers who want the implementation of the idea so badly that they start to express their disappointment, sarcasm, or just complain that company does not listen to what they say.

a) Criticizing about prolonged waiting:

> *"So disappointed that Summer '07 custom report types failed to deliver what was needed! Hate to go back to our users now and tell them they have to wait even longer."*

> *"First joining tables was going to be delivered in spring of 2007 then in summer of 2007 and now it "may" be part of the spring 2008 update if what was posted in a similar topic is true."*

b) Criticizing company's ignorance to its customers:

> *"... Is anyone at Salesforce even reading these posts!? I'm a sales analyst and used to reporting on data from various unrelated tables (objects) using a date field e.g."*

> *"Come on guys - listen to your user base and sort it out!"*

> *"... This one has a pretty high promotion count. The app mentioned a few years ago isn't available."*

> *"This one has a pretty high promotion count. The app mentioned a few years ago isn't available."*

> *"Has someone from Salesforce even seen this feature request? Is this even on their radar? ...It seems that most ideas on the exchange have a moderator assigned, but so far this idea has no posts from a Salesforce employee. I certainly hope this request is not falling on def ears."*

> *"Does anyone at Salesforce ever have to deal with Salespeople? There are numerous idea's with >10,000 votes which there seems to be no progress on, and my Users are losing their appreciation for Salesforce!!"*

c) Criticizing company's unjust treatment of its customers:

> *"Ever since starting out with SF, I've been pretty shocked that this is not already an option."*

> *"This is to be implemented in Spring 12, but ONLY IF YOU PAY ADDITIONAL $$$! That is an unexpected disappointment."*

> *"I cant believe I cant do this kind of report. Its essential."*

> *"Does anyone at Salesforce ever have to deal with Salespeople? There are numerous idea's with >10,000 votes which there seems to be no progress on, and my Users are losing their appreciation for Salesforce!!"*

> *"Would someone from Salesforce please respond to this, and tell us what the status of this is?????!!!!!!"*

> *"it seems this feature is not on the roadmap... maybe because SFDC does not want to ruin their partners. In this case, I would appreciate some honesty: just tell your customers that you are not going to deliver this feature, because you want us to use the partners."*

"OMG Salesforce, this is such a no brainer. Get with it. What a vanilla feature. Why was "Getting Buy-in" once again such a persistent theme at Dreamforce? Because salespeople hate Salesforce. That's why. Why? Because of oversights like this...."

8. "Provoking strategy" typically is employed by those customers who desperately want the idea's implementation and therefore they request the solution under the threat of changing the service provider. That is in accordance with Dubois (2000) statement that repeated dissatisfaction usually leads to a feeling of deception provoking complaints, which can go as far as service rejection. Dissatisfied customers of the case study community construct the arguments in a provocative manner; for example, they mention the existing solutions offered by competitors or express other provocations such as:

a) Threating to quite subscription:

"This needs to happen. Our Leasdership is questioning whether the salesforce decison was a poor one based on this alone."

"The main reason we chose to expand our business model within Salesforce.com was so we could have one source of data, one source of reporting, and get rid of all the various spreadsheets and other databases we were using. Because of this limitation, I have to export 3 separate reports into Excel and manually merge them together...a complete contradiction to the reason we invested more time and money into Salesforce.com"

"this request has been around since 2007, yet the status is still only at "under consideration". in my opinion, salesforce has already stopped improving the basic requirements, but rather focus to add more fancy features like chatter (like twitter) that most of us don't need. maybe those things are important to attract new customers for salesforce. i already gave up on salesforce to improve the basics... i just hope there will be strong competitor(s) to salesforce asap ..."

b) Mentioning the Salesforce competitors' solutions:

"A very MAJOR competitor to Salesforce.com has a BEAUTIFUL!!!!!! way of handling this. There are fewer than 200 countries in the world, and they've managed to do the research on every country's address format. You pick the country out of the picklist and it gives you the proper fields and format to use."

"Every freebie online DB in the world provides for a simple key between tables to allow for multiple joins. Did SF build their DB in such a shortsighted flat file manner that they cannot implement such a simple enhancement without a major overhaul? With the piecemeal way they have approached all enhancements to the underlying data structures

> *either this fear is true or they lay the technical prowess to implement such changes."*

> *"I've used ACT! (and Goldmine and Outlook) for years and this is standard functionality in any other CRM product…. We are scratching our heads as to why this isn't already a feature."*

Moreover, it is dangerous sign when customers employ this strategy because they might express not just dissatisfaction about one particular feature, but about the overall experience of dealing with the company. In other words, it leads to a "snowball effect" of critics:

> *"…. since the upgrade to Winter 2011 release, i found it takes longer to load a Salesforce page than before. i like the previous sidebar which the user can choose to hide / unhide very easily. I like the previous search box which the user can specify which object they want to search very easily but I cannot do those anymore with Winter 2011 release. also, apart from basic input for basic objects like account / opportunity / contact, SalesForce is actually not so user friendly when it comes to input / edit details, like opportunity products / quotes."*

9. "Advisory Strategy". Since customers discuss solutions, which could improve their daily operations, they also want to share experience how the obstacles, which they face, could be overcome already today because in some cases, it can take years for the official solution to be delivered. This strategy could be described as a problem related discussion where customers help each other to deal with their difficulties. This positive experience, according to Füller et al (2009) creates a culture of collaboration that leads to empowerment and therefore enhances customers' motivation to participate in the future projects. This rhetorical strategy is characterized by:

a) Asking advice:

> *"Does anyone have a current workaround for this? "*

> *"Is there anything that does this currently or are we in the waiting stage??"*

b) Giving advice:

> *"We get around this in two ways: campaigns and opportunities. I'll use mtlcanuck's average day example (offering multiple training sessions at one site) above. First technique: using campaigns…(explanation). The second way is by using an opportunity….(explanation) So think about the Opportunity object or the Campaign object to help you."*

c) Cheering and supporting each other:

> *"[User name]: Thank you for your input - glad we are all thinking out here. The input, however, is not an overall solution to the issue".*

10. "**Self-governing Strategy"** indicates that customers take control of the community because they try to avoid the similar ideas to be published twice. It reveals the sense of membership, which was described by Ridings et al. (2002) who state that when members form relationships with each other it leads to the formation of strong codes of conduct. One of the examples of such behavior is that "the voluntary community officers" take attempts to keep the community in order.

> *"this idea is same as (link)"*
>
> *"Shouldn't this idea be merged with this one:s (link)"*
>
> *"This request seems repetitive of the one (link)"*

Moreover, "the voluntary community officers" take care hat the information is easy to use for all community's members:

> *"Can somebody maybe relabel the idea, because it's very misleading? "without reports" had me thinking Tadd was asking for reports that don't use reports (for whatever that would be good), while he really meant "Outer Joins" or "Reports on missing records". Both terms are much better to understand."*
>
> *"This title should most definately be updated to include outer join. Granted you can still find this with a keyword search but it would make this at a glance much more clear. Is there anyway an admin or the original poster could add to the title?"*

To sum up, above were presented the identified rhetorical strategies. Analysis chapter will continue to discover the identified patterns by applying persuasive appeals of rhetorical analyses to each strategy.

5. Analysis

This chapter is devoted to analyze the findings in relation to the aim of this paper to study the rhetorical strategies that are employed by customers to co-create value and collaboratively innovate online. For this purpose, the persuasive appeals of the rhetorical strategies are analyzed in the first part of this section. Second part is devoted to the analysis of value co-creation experience, which consists of the analysis of the rhetorical situation and social functions of rhetoric. The chapter ends with the constructing of the Value Co-creation Model, which explains the value co-creation processes.

5.1. Analysis of the identified rhetorical strategies

To answer the first research question of this study, the classical rhetorical analysis is applied to the findings because it allows to recognize: "*how language and other symbolic forms influence the way an audience thinks, feels or acts*" (Green 2004; Cyphert 2010 in Higgins & Walker 2012, p.197). As it was described in the previous chapter, the careful analysis of the collected data resulted in the identification of the ten types of rhetorical strategies. There are **"Requesting Implementation", "Advocating Strategy", "Approving Strategy", "Exploratory Strategy", "Warning strategy", "Criticizing Strategy", "Provoking strategy", "Instructing Strategy", "Advisory Strategy"** and **"Self-governing Strategy"**. These patterned strategies were grouped based on the rhetorical purposes of the message. Additionally, as Smith argues (McCloskey 1994) that person is always attempting to persuade others, the identified rhetorical strategies could be named persuasive strategies because participants of the online collaborative innovative community employ them for interpersonal persuasion.

As the theoretical chapter explains, traditional rhetoric recognizes three forms of persuasive appeal, namely logos, ethos, and pathos (Aristotle 2006, Amossy 2005; Meyer 1994). Therefore the newly discovered rhetorical strategies were carefully examined to determine the dominating means of persuasion in each strategy. However, the arguments generated in this study are multidimensional and complex. Therefore the findings of this study were understood through the lens of the most persuasive appeal in the argument. It is also important to notice that not all arguments consists jointly all three appeals, however, when the whole data set is analyzed, the patterns appear. Results are presented in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Rhetorical Analysis of the Rhetorical Strategies.

RHETORICAL STRATEGIES	RHETORICAL TRIANGLE		
	LOGOS	**ETHOS**	**PATHOS**
Requesting Implementation	Providing the logical proof of existing gap and reasons to cover it.	Revealing the personal and professional identity (requests are signed with first names and job titles)	Framing requests as positive emotional appeals, expressing emotional excitement.
Advocating Strategy	Providing logical evidence and citing facts related to business metrics: time efficiency, labor productivity, costs, and negative side effects of existent solution.	Underlying the job title and business area (highlighting the managerial position or decision-making role in organization (my team, our marketing department, we are in the medical equipment business)	Vivid descriptions of prospective benefits, evoking a favorable emotional response other community's members to support the solution implementation.
Approving Strategy	Indicating agreement with logic that was articulated by previous speakers.	Pronouncing the professional group identity of "we"	Emotionally loaded language which demonstrate solidarity
Exploratory Strategy	Explaining the reasoning behind the emerged idea	Claiming authority as a lead user	Using questioning to activate the emotions
Warning strategy	Examining observance of legal norms, political correctness of solution; explaining how solution may contradict to human values.	Talking from a higher hierarchical position (chef of system administrators, managers of a group of people)	Appealing to karma concept, conformity with human values such as appropriate behavior.
Criticizing Strategy	Delivering the credible support for critics such as declaring the violation of business logic, citing statistics of losses, claiming breach of obligation	Enunciating personal and collective opinions.	Highly negative tone and language; expressing sarcasm and disappointment
Provoking strategy	Comparing services, questioning price policy, demanding an explanation to misconduct.	Portraying themselves as experienced customers whose loyalty should be regained.	Highly negative tone from displeased customers who use all means, which make them to be heard.

Instructing Strategy	Providing informed opinions, recommending alternative solutions, summarizing the collective opinions.	Portraying themselves as experts, professional consultants.	Call to action by using modal verbs of obligation such as should, must, have to.
Advisory Strategy	Using the real life examples, telling personal stories	Formulating identity as virtual colleges	Demonstrating the "same boat" values, storylines about personal experiences, emotionally loaded personal examples.
Self-governing Strategy	Calling to order; restoring and maintaining the community in a proper order	Playing a role of the community's officers, so-called "Arm of the law"	Appealing to the community values, initiating new ethical customs

It was revealed that community's members employ various rhetorical strategies in their arguments so that their opinions and contributions would be viewed as important, relevant, useful, and worth consideration. They do so by building credibility and demonstrating that they posses enough knowledge to be regarded as trustworthy contributors. Depending on rhetorical purpose, some customers point out their expertise (**ethos appeal**) by signing with the first names, job title, revealing the managerial position, presenting interests of subordinates, summarizing collective opinions, or by way of the representation of a group wish. However, it is interesting that a person may choose the different identities in light of rhetorical strategy s/he employs. So, those who employ "Self-governing Strategy" are not revealing their names and not signing with job titles. Moreover, all analyzed cases have exposed that people do it anonymously without deriving attention of other members to their persona. At the same time, when customer employs "Requesting Implementation Strategy" in most cases s/he uses personal pronounces and signs the message with a real name. The explanation of this personal approach could be the willingness to show the decision makers that there are real people behind the screen with real needs that should be satisfied. Likewise, those who employ the "Advocating Strategy" emphasize that they are belonging to a bigger group by using terms such as: "my team", my department", "my company" and even "whole industry" that could be explained as an attempt to demonstrate the scale of problem. However, when customers get the feeling that company doesn't care about their needs, the distinctive signals to demonstrate ones ethos are practiced. Participants make the explicit and

implicit claims that they are in charge of decision-making in their organization when it comes to question to prolong the subscription with a given company. Therefore, under of threat of quitting a service, customers request the solution. However, very similar by rhetorical purpose "Criticizing Strategy" defers by ethos appeal, which is broadly employed to describe the personal or group desperate situation they are forced to deal because of company's sluggishness.

Logos or reasoned discourse (Aristotle 2006), provides the credible support for argument, widely presented in the online collaborative community through exemplifying cases with the real life situations, giving business metrics, citing statistic etc. It was noticed that *inductive logic* applies more often than *deductive*, which can be explained as the most customers share their personal professional obstacles more often than trying to generalize the problem as a whole. Especially it is observable while analyzing messages of those who employ the "Advocating strategy" where personal specific examples cited extensively and general conclusions are logically derived from those data. Therefore, facts in inductive logic are determined by repeated examples. At the same time, followers of "Requesting Implementation Strategy" mostly use the deductive logic behind their reasoning, which could be described as:

> Software increases my productivity.
>
> Discussed feature will improve the software's productivity.
>
> Therefore, my productivity might be also improved.

As this example shows, conclusion logically follows from two premises therefore it falls to the category of valid syllogism (Aristotle 2006) and therefore the reasoning behind it is logical. No wonder, that this strategy is practiced by the majority of community members who basically request the new feature to be added by supporting it with "promote button" or leaving a short request in a thread without time-consumed advocating for it or dipping into details as followers of "Exploratory Strategy" do. It is also explicable from observation, that those whose demand of the solution is high, tend to use such demonstrative measures of influence as "Criticizing Strategy" and Provoking Strategy". The arguments here are splendidly reasoned, both in "top-down" (deductive) and 'bottom-up" (inductive) directions and a logical evidence of author's position is clear; therefore it often evokes a similar cognitive response from the other community's members. It also was established that opinions might be biased by a previous rhetor. As a result of

such interpersonal influence, the ideation process may change its direction to not related discussion.

Pathos or emotional appeal aims to activate emotions (Aristotle 2006) is extensively applied for persuasion in the collaborative innovative communities. For example, those who employ the "Requesting Implementation Strategy" often express the excitement about the getting of new feature so that they often use words such as "please" and "thanks" all over the thread. Such positive loaded language inspires other community's members to support the idea. However, pathos can be also used to draw the negative emotions such as anger that was vividly noticed in the arguments of "Criticizing and Provoking Strategies" followers. The explanation could be that displeased customers try to prompt company's actions toward to the solution's delivering. Therefore, the most popular rhetorical approaches of the above-mentioned rhetorical strategies are complaining, accusing, blaming, threating, offending, etc. Conversely, there was also identified the different pattern of rhetorical behavior among those customers who employ the "Exploratory Strategy" with a quite neutral tone of messages but with raised queries in the end of their messages that are addressed to the opinions of other community's member. Normally such kind of advisory tactic evokes many responses and therefore increases the popularity of a particular idea.

As analysis demonstrates, the absolute majority of messages posted in the online collaborative innovative community can be labeled as belonged to one of the ten identified rhetorical strategies based on rhetorical analyses of their persuasive appeals, i.e. logos, pathos and ethos.

5.2. Analysis of value co-creation experience

The second research question of this study requires the answering of: "*what kinds of rhetorical strategies promote and impede the value co-creation experience?*". Therefore it is essential to understand how value is co-created in the online collaborative innovative communities. In light of it, the rhetorical situation of the online collaborative innovative community is described and the social functions of rhetoric are studied because such comprehension gives insight of the social relationships and ties, which occur between members of the online collaborative innovating community. Analysis ends with construction of the "Model of the Value Co-creation" that associates rhetorical strategies with the value co-creation in the online collaborative innovative communities.

5.2.1.   *Analysis of Rhetorical Situation*

As it was discovered in the Findings chapter, company uses virtual environment to create its own rhetorical situations. Reasoning behind applying Bitzer's concept (1968) of the "rhetorical situation" to the collaborative innovative community is that it provides the valuable insight about three distinct characteristics of "rhetorical situation", namely exigency, audience, and constraints.

In the online collaborative innovative community, **exigency** refers to the rhetor or audience, or the necessity for action. The exigency of the case study community follows from the official mission statement: *"The IdeaExchange lets salesforce.com customers get involved. You can suggest new enhancements, vote and comment on your favorites, and interact with product managers and other customers"* (Salesforce 2012c). Therefore the exigency of this platform is to generate and evaluate ideas in order to improve the company's products. The community's contributions are altruistic in nature and dedicated for those who want to help company to deliver a better product; yet it is customers who buy this product to satisfy their needs. Thus, while people are basically helping themselves, they are also helping Salesforce to become the most innovative company in the world (Forbes 2012). Company basically does what Füller et al. (2009) recommended: it created the virtual environment in a way to enable and motivate consumers to play an active role in product development processes through generating and evaluating new product ideas; elaborating, evaluating, and challenging product concepts; discussing and improving optional solution details; demanding information about or just consuming the new product. Therefore, as author articulated, consumers take on the role of co-creators.

Audience refers to those who receives the messages, or to whom the messages are targeted, namely community members and company. Since Salesforce sells its products and services to other business companies, the absolute majority of contributors are those that interact with software in their professional practice on a daily basis. As innovation occurs through combining different knowledge bases (Rossi 2011), the customers getting the ideas of how to i-innovate the product after they become familiar with it. For instance, they may either have problems that need to be solved, or have solutions to the problems that others may have. Consequently the audience is connected by interest and experience with company's services. The online collaborative innovative community is a platform for audience to connect with each other,

share ideas, increase knowledge, answer particular questions about a software programs and without such platform it could be difficult to accomplish.

Constraints refer to the restrictions of the rhetor or audience in receiving the message and acting upon it. The biggest constraint on the online collaborative communities is the circumstance that there may simply be too much information available. In 2012 company had more than 100 thousand customers who published more than 22 thousand ideas and gave more than 440 thousand votes but only about 900 ideas were delivered (salesforce 2012d). Therefore it may be difficult for the average user to find the information they need. Nevertheless, by giving customers the power to comment on each other ideas, the company effectively uses the "wisdom of crowd" to evaluate the best ideas which should be implemented in the first place. However, as von Hippel (1986) assumes that the participative architecture of virtual environments opens the way of cooperative innovation not only to the lead users but also to the "ordinary" consumers. As analysis of the case study community shows, the number of idea submissions is so huge that proponents of particular ideas have to draw attention to their favorite ideas by actively employing persuasive arguments. In fact, the amount of posts that this community hosts may be scary for the potential new users who might have the brilliant ideas how to enhance the product, but navigating through existing ideas' threads may discourage them from submitting it. Moreover, as identified "Criticizing and Provoking Strategies" demonstrate, customers repeatedly complain that company does not pay attention to what they say and it is a main demotivating factor for customers to not enroll in the value co-creation processes that in some cases may trigger the dissatisfaction experience. Therefore in this case the value co-creation is impeded because of company's ignorance to its customers' needs.

5.2.2. *Analysis of social functions of rhetoric*

In order to construct the value co-creation model it is necessary to understand the varieties of relationships and ties that exist in the online collaborative community. In other words, it is essential to distinguish the social functions of rhetoric suggested by Herrick (2000) through the lens of identified rhetorical strategies.

As theoretical part explains, the art of rhetoric has six social functions, namely ideas are tested, advocacy is assisted, power is distributed, facts are discovered, knowledge is shaped, and communities are built (Herrick 2000). The identified

rhetorical strategies clearly support the accuracy of this statement for collaborative communities because they are built with purpose to test new ideas publicly, which could emerge around the existing products. Therefore audience who experiences a need in a proposed idea has to advocate for it in a memorable and persuasive manner by using for example, such strategy as "Requesting Implementation" which is claimed to bring up the new idea or "Approving Strategy" to demonstrate the consentient with others and thus directing company's attention to the issuing the solution. Additionally, "Advocating Strategy" allows to understand the value of the potential solution from the perspective of customer's lens so that the unforeseen evidences of unique value proposition could be discovered; "Exploratory Strategy" contributes to the promoting valuable adds-on so that new knowledge could be shaped; at the same time "Warning strategy" which is constructed on counterarguments, prevents the creation of the inappropriate product which would contradicts to the values and cultural norms therefore this strategy refines false and destructive ideas. Power is also distributed in the online collaborative innovative communities via influence on a company's decision-making process and might be expressed through "Criticizing and Provoking Strategies" where customers profile their thinking about company and evaluate its services from critical point of view. Finally, such important social function as building community is also presented by "Advisory Strategy", which enable community members to seek advices, share concerns and aspirations with each other; and "Self-governing Strategy", which serves as an untold code of conduct that help to keep community's threads in order.

Therefore, the identified rhetorical strategies are employed in the online collaborative community for different social purposes depending on the social function they perform. This analysis of the online collaborative communities has contributed to the accurate outlining of the "Model of value co-creation" which is presented next.

5.2.3.   *Value Co-creation Model*

Theoretical framework regarding the value co-creation experience points out that customers increasingly seek ways to exercise their influence on business processes in order to decrease their dissatisfaction with existing services. As a result, consumers want to interact with firms and thereby "co-create" value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004).

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The case study community shows that company exploits the service-dominant logic comprehensively. It provides the infrastructure centered on the customers to encourage the active participation in all aspects of the personalized co-creation experience because company recognizes that its customers may have unique desires and preferences. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2003), personalizing the co-creation experience means fostering individualized interactions and experience outcomes. Hence companies should enable the rich dialog with customer. As analyzed community displays, company scores big successes and makes a great progress of value co-creation understanding, however, in some cases it takes a "wrong step" by fostering dialog incidentally solely between its customers instead of taking initiative of being a timely contributor to the discussion. This unacceptable negligence to ignore the customers' opinions leads to the dissatisfaction experience that articulated by customers through arguments of the "Criticizing and Provoking Strategies". Consequently customers obtain a sense of powerlessness described by Füller et al. (2009). As authors explain, the powerlessness leads to lack of responsibility and demotivation. Moreover, such behavior turns the value co-creation experience into value co-destruction occurrence. However, as it was noticed by Plé and Chumpitaz (2009), this co-destruction process may result either from accidental or intentional actions of service systems. Definitely, company cannot implement all submitted ideas; consequently in some cases its actions should be considerate as intentional misuse of resources. However, the empirical data was collected from the ten most popular ideas in the whole community that reveals a high demand for these ideas. Therefore the argument of Plé and Chumpitaz (2009) could explain this rhetorical situation as "*doing so, this system plans to increase its well-being and its capacity of adaptiveness to the detriment of another system's well-being and capacity of adaptiveness*". However such kind of company's actions can lead to the customer dissatisfaction (Buttle 2010), and feeling of deception that may result in boycott (Dubois 2000).

On the opposite side, when customers employ such strategies as "Requesting Implementation", "Advocating Strategy", "Approving Strategy", "Instructing Strategy", and "Exploratory Strategy", it indicates about high customers' involvement in the value-co-creation process that also leads to the customers' empowerment, and increase self-determination, efficacy feelings, heighten enjoyment and persistence of a task performance (Füller et al. 2009).

The figure below unites the findings and insights of this study and explains through the lens of the identified rhetorical strategies the processes of value co-creation and co-destruction, which exist in the online collaborative innovative communities.
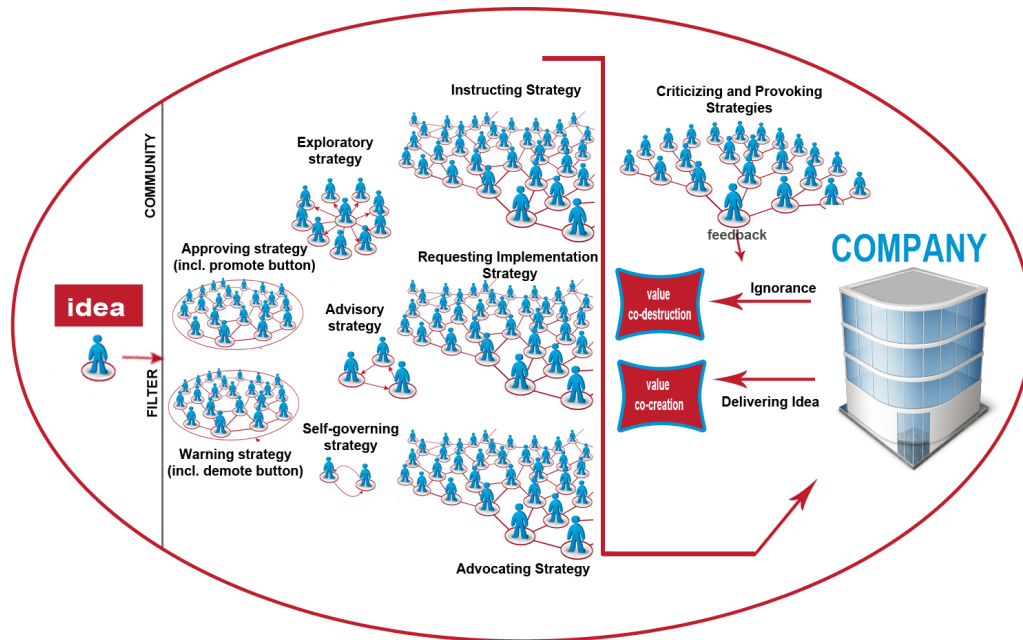

Figure 4: Value Co-Creation Model of the Online Collaborative Communities.

As the figure shows, the rhetorical situation of the online collaborative innovative community consists of audience (company and community), exigencies such as idea generation or evaluation, and constrains such as a massive number of ideas. Therefore, community's members take role of a filter and use arguments to persuade the company that idea is good or not. The better idea is, the more supporters it gets who promote favorite ideas by using such rhetorical strategies as "Requesting Implementation Strategy", "Advocating Strategy", "Approving Strategy", "Instructing Strategy", "Exploratory Strategy" and "Warning Strategy". However, if idea turned out to be extremely popular but company ignores this fact, situation apparently stirs up frustration and negatively affects customers' wellbeing because ideas, as it said, intended to covers the problem gap. For example, as one customer expressed it via "Criticizing Strategy":

> There are numerous idea's with >10,000 votes which there seems to be no progress on, and my Users are losing their appreciation for Salesforce!!"

The feeling of powerlessness or that their voices are not heard, according to Füller et al. (2009), may decrease customers' intention to participate in future projects. Therefore "Criticizing and Provoking strategies" brightly illustrate how value could be impeded in the online collaborative innovative communities. Nevertheless, intentional value co-destruction could be avoided and accidental value co-destruction could be minimized if company, according to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) would learn as much as possible about the customer through rich dialogue because it is essential to encourage active participation of customers in all aspects of the co-creation experience. Online conversations in the network of online innovations, according to Rossi (2011) can become a source of getting the customer insights and a fresh understanding of customer beliefs, values, habits, desires, motives, emotions or needs.

Moreover, there were also identified two strategies, i.e. "Self-governing Strategy" which is employed by so-called "community officers" who take control that innovative ideas are not published twice, and "Advisory Strategy", which is mainly employed for interactions between community members with a purpose to share experience. These strategies have indirect impact on the value co-creation because according to Antikainen (2011) there are various causes that motivate customers to contribute, and a sense of community and an open and constructive atmosphere among them.

To sum up, the identified in this study ten rhetorical strategies should be considerate within the rhetorical situation of the online collaborative community because they aim to delivery the certain social functions such as to test ideas, assist advocacy, distribute power, discover facts, shape knowledge and build community. It was also recognized that some rhetorical strategies promote the value co-creation while others impeded it.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to study the rhetorical strategies employed by customers to co-create value and collaboratively innovate online. This study was made from a customer perspective and through the approach of exploratory research of a case study community. Findings of this study prove that collaborative innovative community is characterized by high customers' involvement and reach customers' experience, which trigger the customer satisfaction or on contrary, dissatisfaction.

In order to answer the research question one, the rhetorical and discourse analyses were applied for identification of the ten rhetorical strategies based on the Aristotle's persuasive appeals and on the main rhetorical purpose of an argument. Results of this study clearly show that the community members have developed a distinct set of rhetorical strategies. For example, such strategies as ""Requesting Implementation Strategy", "Advocating Strategy", "Approving Strategy" and "Instructing Strategy" indicate about high customers' need for the idea's delivery, but "Warning strategy" indicates that submitted idea contradicts to the personal values or social norms. Additionally, "Exploratory Strategy" takes place between lead users who brainstorm the idea further to get it to the even higher level of effectiveness. Moreover, the identified "Advisory Strategy" is employed by those who need help from other community's members in terms of sharing experience regarding how to deal with a particular problem, which is related to the discussed idea. Additionally, customers, who choose to take control that ideas are not published twice, employ the "Self-governing Strategy". However, this study also identified the two strategies such as "Criticizing Strategy" and "Provoking strategy" which indicate about high level of customers' dissatisfaction as a response to a company's ignorance for its customers' needs.

In order to answer the research question two, the analysis of the rhetorical situation was implemented which clarified what are the exigency, audience and constraints of the online collaborative innovative community. Moreover, matching the social functions of rhetoric with the identified rhetorical strategies helped to understand the social relationships and ties, which occur between members of an online collaborative innovating community. As a result of this study the "Model of Value Co-Creation" was constructed that shows what kinds of rhetorical strategies promote and impede the value co-creation experience in the online collaborative innovative communities.

6.1. Managerial Implications

Over the last few years, the number of online communities has increased exponentially. This research will be useful for those who are looking for the ways to effectively manage innovations in the online environments.

Rhetoric is the artful use of language, and the purpose of rhetoric is to persuade the audience. After identifying the rhetorical strategies by persuasive appeal, we may come to a better understanding of how customers express their needs and interact in the collaborative innovative communities. Therefore, the rhetorical approach of this study is crucial for understanding the means by which customers articulate and evaluate ideas and therefore establish the interactive relationship within a given rhetorical situation.

The main value of this research is the providing insights about the value co-creation processes of the online collaborative innovative communities through the lens of the rhetorical strategies, which are illustrated in the "Value Co-Creation Model". This model proves, that harmonious community will be build only in a case, if a rich dialog will be ensured. Otherwise, one-side communication may lead to dissatisfaction, feeling of powerlessness and value co-destruction. As both building a community and dealing with specific exigencies involve mobilizing rhetorical acts to encourage people for active participation, the identified rhetorical strategies should be taken into consideration. The company's apt and timely respond to the needs of customers, which they express through certain rhetorical strategies, is central because it defines the direction and scope of value creating processes.

The potential for the value co-creation through the customers' collaboration is huge. But so are the jeopardies and problems that might come with them. Therefore, the risks of interactional value co-destruction should not be overlooked. For example, the company's ignorance of collaborative community's needs may demotivate customers to participate in the future projects. Therefore, company should be aware that certain actions might trigger not only the empowerment but also powerlessness among customers. Hence, patterned rhetorical strategies of this study might become an important indicator of value co-creation experience and lead to the better understanding of how customers manifest their needs.

6.1. Research Limitations

When discussing the art of rhetoric it is easy to cross the border from business to philosophy research. This thesis does not deal with the philosophic discussion of persuasive means other than understanding how certain appeals shape the strategies that in turn indicate about value co-creation experience.

The data collection for conducting this research was limited to only one collaborative innovative community. Although the sample of this study consists of more than 2000 messages; yet a case study community stores much more data. Therefore it is not excluded that in addition to the ten rhetorical strategies that have been identified in this study, few others could also be added in a process of more scrutinized examination. Henceforth the purpose of this paper is to presents the first results of a research that needs to be deepened and widened via study the additional collaborative innovative communities.

6.2. Future Research

This study is the first one that applies the rhetorical analysis for understanding the value co-creation processes of the online collaborative community. Therefore this thesis presents the primary results, which have been received by applying rhetorical approach to study the collaborative innovative communities. Thus this study should be deepened and widened via further studies.

The data collection of this research was limited to only one case study community. Therefore other kinds of business sectors should be also investigated for a greater understanding of the value co-creation processes via lens of rhetorical strategies.

Current understandings of the online ethos could be culturally biased therefore persuasive appeals could vary in the "context of culture". Furthermore, the globalization of business and society requires the testing of a designed in this study the "value co-creation model" via lens of the cultural perspectives.

6.3. Reflections on the Thesis

The chosen topic is related to my professional interests and therefore was enjoyable to research overall.

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Appendix 1

Figure 1: The Salesforce IdeaExchange Platform: index page view (Salesforce 2012a). Salesforce.com, Inc.: index page. [Elektronic]. Available: https://www.salesforce.com [2012-07-28].