



“Sustainable value creation through business models”

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Aim and motivation

Value creation, associated with how organizations create, propose, and deliver products and services that are of value for customers, while they try to capture a share of the overall value created, is a core issue in business model research (Massa et al., 2017; Wirtz et al., 2016). Although business model scholars sometimes refer to value creation with and for stakeholders (e.g., Evans et al., 2017; Upward & Jones, 2016), this notion is mostly limited to value propositions for customers and contributions from and to business partners such as suppliers or investors. Such limited notions of value, value creation and the dispersion of value among stakeholders, in turn lead to correspondingly limited perspectives on business models and business model innovation, which are insufficient to deal with important and pressing issues of, for example, ecological and social value creation (see in particular the critique in Upward & Jones, 2016).

This call for papers shall therefore motivate authors from various disciplines, first, to take a closer look at theories, concepts, and cases that apply more comprehensive and stakeholder-sensitive notions of value and value creation (cf., Freeman, 2010), second, to consider diverse forms of value (e.g., economic, ecological, social, cultural, relational, psychological etc.) and their underlying values (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017), and third, to explicitly connect such comprehensive notions of value and value creation to business models and business model innovation (cf., Massa et al., 2017; Wirtz et al., 2016).

Scope and topics

The special issue will particularly deal with, but will not be limited to, forms of sustainable value creation, understood as integrated approaches to creating ecological, social, and economic value and to explicitly dealing with and overcoming the trade-offs associated with sustainable value creation (e.g., Hahn et al., 2010). Sustainable value creation takes into account the risks of negative impacts on ecological systems and human societies as well as the challenge of surviving as an organisation. But truly sustainable value creation is not only about avoiding harm. It is also about achieving net-positive effects for a prospering natural environment and human livelihoods – a perspective that is sometimes referred to as strong sustainability (e.g., Upward & Jones, 2016). While we would like to motivate authors to consider more recent concepts such as value created, missed, or destroyed for stakeholders (e.g., Yang et al., 2017), it is also worthwhile to revisit earlier concepts of sustainable value creation (e.g., Hart & Milstein, 2003; Figge & Hahn, 2004, 2005), general frameworks of corporate sustainability and triple bottom line management (e.g., Schaltegger & Burritt, 2015; Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017), and recent developments in the discourse on business models for sustainability (Schaltegger et al., 2016).

In addition to considering ecological and social issues, the special issue also welcomes sociological, cultural, and psychological perspectives (e.g., values shifts in society, stakeholder perceptions of value offerings) as long as they are clearly connected to business models. In terms of methods, the special issue is open to all forms of qualitative, quantitative, theoretical, and empirical research. Innovative approaches are most welcome, such as psychological analyses of business model experiments or developing and testing (material) artefacts to support business model innovation and value creation with and for stakeholders.

Taken together, this special issue aims at exploring the variety of stakeholders and their particular needs which can – and should – be considered in organizational value creation, the variety of forms of value offered to them, and how business models contribute to creating these forms of value. Besides value creation, value destruction or cases where important forms of value are neglected should also be considered (e.g., Yang et al., 2017).

Contributions to this special issue can address but are not limited to the following indicative questions and topics:

- What is value and how is it created? Which forms of value and value creation processes are missing from current business model research? Which value theories, from fields as diverse as economics, psychology, business ethics, philosophy or design, can help to broaden the current scope of business model research towards sustainable value creation? Besides sustainable and integrative forms of value and value creation, we are also interested in perspectives and theories from outside of management studies (such as cultural, psychological, or design research).
- Which instruments can be used to help organizations develop and implement new value creation processes in practice? How can these instruments and processes be tested and evaluated? Besides these practical questions, new research instruments and strategies that are rather under-represented in business model research, such as lab experiments (e.g., eye tracking) or large sample studies (using statistical means), are also of interest, as long as these further our understanding of sustainable value creation.
- Value creation is increasingly becoming an inter-relational, interorganizational, and network-based issue. How can value be created in relationships, multiorganizational and network settings? How can members of such settings define and negotiate their individual and joint interests, value definitions, and resulting synergies but also conflicts? What does true sharing of value mean in such settings, beyond rather narrow and instrumental definitions of value and value creation?
- Where suitable, case studies may be used to look into the above proposed research questions and topics. Single cases as well as larger samples of comparative cases are welcome, as are longitudinal studies of organizations and the evolution and transformation of their approaches to value creation. Since this special issue addresses several gaps in current business model research, systematic practice and literature reviews may also be suitable formats.

Contributions

Full original research papers are invited – we are looking for 6-8 full papers. In addition, we also aim at publishing 2-3 short papers in this special issue, according to the new short paper format introduced by the Journal of Business Models.

All submissions must follow the editorial guidelines of the Journal of Business Models, which can be obtained from the journal website. Submitted papers should make clear their academic significance and contribution, and their relevance for business model management in practice.

Schedule

The final set of papers shall be ready 18 months after initial submission. Authors considering submitting to this JoBM special must make sure that they are able to follow the special issue schedule:

- Full paper submission: 15 January 2018
- Initial review: 15 April 2018
- Revised papers: 15 July 2018
- Second review: 15 October 2018
- Revised papers: 15 January 2019
- Handing in papers for final review by JoBM and production: 15 February 2019
- Publication of Special Issue: Summer 2019

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