Aalto University
School of Business

Legitimacy in the Mobile Era: Student Perceptions on Smartphones, Mobile Applications and Stakeholder Communication

MSc program in Corporate Communication

Master's thesis

Tomi Koljonen

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Department of Management Studies
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Abstract

Objectives of the study

The research is set in the context of Aalto University School of Business, where the students' practices with mobile technology and communication with the university are studied. The implications of the emerging mobile era for corporate communications are also emphasized, especially from the view of organizational legitimacy.

Methodology

The current study is a single case study conducted at Aalto University School of Business. The research data consisted of eight semi-structured interviews with the school's students.

Key findings

The study resulted in four main findings: 1) Users have an incredibly strong relationship with their phones, prior quantitative studies haven't completely clarified the intensity of the relationship. 2) Smartphones are primarily used for communication purposes, while entertainment and informative usage are growing in importance as well. 3) Utilization of smartphones and mobile applications at the case organization are almost non-existent. 4) Lack of successful stakeholder communication through appropriate channels may have implications for the lack of legitimacy.

Conclusions

Smartphones and mobile applications are extremely important for their users. The mobile era presents companies with possible legitimacy challenges as stakeholders' social environment changes. Focus on communicating with stakeholders through appropriate channels is key in dealing with this issue and answering to stakeholders' demands.

Keywords: smartphone, mobile, technology, stakeholder, legitimacy, corporate communication

Tiivistelmä

Tutkielman tavoitteet

Tämä tutkielma kartoittaa opiskelijoiden älypuhelinten ja mobiilisovellusten käyttöä sekä viestintää Aalto-yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulun kanssa. Myös mobiiliaikakauden mahdollista merkitystä organisaatioiden viestinnälle ja uskottavuudelle sidosryhmien silmissä tarkastellaan.

Tutkimusmenetelmät

Tutkielma koostuu yksittäisestä Aalto-yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulussa tehdystä tapaustutkimuksesta. Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu kahdeksasta puoli-strukturoidusta opiskelijan haastattelusta.

Tutkimuksen tulokset

Tapaustutkimus tuotti neljä pääasiallista tutkimustulosta: 1) Älypuhelinten käyttäjillä on erityisen voimakas suhde puhelimiinsa. Aiemmat määrälliset tutkimukset eivät ole kyenneet kuvaamaan suhteen intensiteettiä. 2) Älypuhelinten käyttö keskittyy eniten viestintätarkoituksiin, mutta informatiiviset ja viihteelliset käyttötarkoitukset ovat kasvussa. 3) Älypuhelinten ja mobiilisovellusten hyödyntäminen on tapaustutkimuksen organisaatiossa lähes olematonta. 4) Epäonnistunut sidosryhmäviestinnän ja uusien viestintäkanavien hyödyntämisen vähäisyys saattaa vaikuttaa negatiivisesti organisaation uskottavuuteen.

Johtopäätökset

Älypuhelimet ja mobiilisovellukset ovat tärkeä osa ihmisten arkea. Teknologian kehitys saattaa aiheuttaa yrityksille uskottavuushaasteita sidosryhmien sosiaalisen ympäristön muuttuessa. Oikeiden viestintäkanavien käyttö on yhä tärkeämpää, jotta organisaatiot voivat ratkaista tämän haasteen ja vastata sidosryhmien tarpeisiin.

Avainsanat: älypuhelin, mobiili, teknologia, sidosryhmä, uskottavuus, yritysviestintä

Preface and acknowledgements

The initial inspiration for this thesis was a trip to Seoul in spring 2012. The capital of South Korea and home of Samsung Electronics was then in the middle of a huge smartphone trend. Without exaggeration, it is reasonable to say 90% of the people travelling on the city's subways were absolutely hypnotized by their smartphones, looking down on their touchscreens while travelling through the city.

Not too long after that, the same phenomenon arrived in Finland. The adoption rate for the new technology was staggering, everyone wanted to have their own as soon as possible. And it was not only that people bought these phones, but the fact that people were so quickly immersed deep into the world provided by these smart devices. The mobile era had arrived.

I am incredibly fascinated by the relationship between technology and people. In this thesis I wanted to create a more detailed picture on what the relationship of people and their smartphones is, and what kind of business implications that may have for organizations as the technology unavoidably shifts the social environment, creating various challenges.

Finally, I would like to thank all the people interviewed for this thesis, the great participants of our thesis seminar, my patient and wise supervisor Leena, and finally my fiancée Elina for supporting me through all of last year.

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1. Introduction

“Business education today is anachronistic in both how it is conducted and what its content focuses on. Our brick institutions have in no way caught up with what today’s technologies make possible in terms of virtual learning and individualized, customized instruction.”

Jonathan Roos, Harvard Business Review (2 July 2014)

This thesis focuses on the usage of smartphones and mobile applications in an educational institution. The implications of the phenomenon for corporate communications are also emphasized, especially from the view of organizational legitimacy. The research is set in the context of Aalto University School of Business, where the students’ practices with mobile technology and communication with the university are studied. Students are regarded as an important stakeholder group for the organization.

1.1 The Mobile Era

The internet has been around since the 1990s, and its effects on communications and marketing have been well documented (e.g. Kotler & Armstrong, 2010; Kaplan, 2011; Cornelissen, 2014). However, online communications are now entering a new era, ushered in by a new generation of mobile devices. Technological advancements have led to better computing ability and advanced data access in mobile phones, leading to the creation of so-called "smartphones" (Middleton, 2010). Kim, Yoon and Han (2014) highlight ultra-broadband internet access as one of the main features that distinguish smartphones from previous phones, allowing users to access the internet anywhere, anytime. Middleton (2010) also emphasizes the importance of applications as a defining attribute of smartphones.

Market forecasts predict the number of smartphone users to hit 2.5 billion by 2017 (eMarketer, 2014). While the predictions of the exact number vary quite a bit, it is widely accepted that the number of smartphone users will continue to grow exponentially. According to Business Insider (Heggestuen, 2013) smartphone ownership bypassed personal computer ownership already in 2012. According to the Boston Consulting Group, in developing BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India & China) mobile phone subscriptions greatly outnumber personal computers (1.65 billion to 0.43 billion) and the overall global mobile penetration is around 70% (Kaplan, 2011). The technology giant Google is now planning to sell smartphones for less than $100 (Nieva, 2014), making the technology more affordable than ever. Based on these statistics and developments, it can be argued that when it comes to popularity of smartphones, we have only seen the start of the phenomenon.

As the popularity of smartphones continues to soar, we there is one very interesting and specific characteristic that embodies the usage of smartphones and merits a closer look: applications (Middleton, 2010). Böhmer et al. (2011) define mobile applications as dynamic tools used in mobile phones: they are used for various tasks, such as listening to music, navigating and accessing social media. According to Techcrunch (Perez, 2014) mobile application usage is currently increasing while mobile web browsing is declining. What this means, is that smartphone users are using mobile applications instead of traditional web browsers found in mobile phones (e.g. Chrome, Firefox and Explorer) to access online content. The commercial study referenced by Techcrunch claims that users are now spending more than 85% of their smartphone usage on applications and a measly 14% on mobile web usage, a dramatic shift when compared to desktop computer usage which is typically characterized by high browser usage.

Smartphones and applications are often talked about in relation to younger people, often referred to as the “generation Y” (e.g. Bhave, Jain & Roy, 2013) or “digital natives” e.g. (Vercic & Vercic, 2013). Because of this scope of interest, it would be easy to dismiss smartphones as a mere trend, another youth fashion. However, e.g. market researcher Nielsen (2014) actually found out very recently that 45-54 and 55+ groups are active users of smartphones as well, although not quite on par with the younger generations. The rise of smartphones and mobile technology is not exclusive to certain countries or demographics, it is almost a completely universal phenomenon.

A development of this magnitude surely warrants closer exploration. Considering the previously mentioned statistics and forecasts, it is surprising to see Kim et al. (2014) state, that while mobile applications are already an influential medium in the new media industry as a whole, these applications have received little academic attention within the communication and marketing literature. Indeed, when taking a closer look at what the most prominent corporate communication journals (Journal of Business and Technical Communication, Journal of Business Communication, Management Communication Quarterly, Public Relations Review, and Corporate Communications: an International Journal) have published during the past two years (2013-2014), it seems like smartphone communication has not yet captured the minds of corporate communication scholars.

Most of the research is still focused on more traditional subjects, but there clearly seems to be a growing interest in social media amongst researchers. While social media research is not entirely compatible with the topic of this thesis, many of the findings should be considered relevant, since many smartphone applications are indeed social media applications. For example, according to data collected by Böhmer, Hecht, Schöning, Krüger and Bauer (2011) social media usage is also a significant part of smartphone usage. The field of public relations research has been especially active on the subject of social media, producing many papers on the relationship between public relations and social media (Waters, Burnett, Lang & Lucas, 2009; Uysal & Yang, 2013; Paek, Hove, Jung & Cole, 2013).

In addition, Corporate Communications: An International Journal (CCIJ) has put out numerous articles on social media communications (Haigh, Brubaker & Whiteside, 2013; Agerdal-Hjermind, 2014; Dreher, 2014; Romenti, Murtarelli & Valentini, 2014). Altogether, it definitely seems like social media research has become an important theme for corporate communications and PR research.

In comparison, the field of marketing research has given more attention to mobile communications. For example Rohm, Gao, Sultan and Pagani (2012) focus on consumer acceptance of mobile marketing as do Watson, McCarthy and Rowley (2013). Although the focus has not yet shifted to applications, there seems to be considerably more attention on the mobile platform as compared to communications research.

There is one recent corporate communications article on smartphone usage. Avidar, Ariel, Malka and Levy (2013) state smartphones have many unique properties and features, thus making it important for public relations practitioners to understand this technology. The uses and applications offered by these phones have potential to generate significant change in consumers' thinking, communication and behavior.

Although not related to communications or marketing research per se, there has been some interesting research on mobile application communications. Böhmer et al. (2011) studied the nature of mobile application usage behavior, providing a thorough look at how applications are a part of their users' lives. The behavioral aspect of mobile phone and application usage has been studied on multiple occasions (e.g., Verkasalo, 2009; McMillan, Morrison, Brown, Hall & Chalmers, 2010; Villi, 2012).

However, despite our growing understanding of the user experience, the knowledge on business implications of smartphones and mobile applications remains extremely limited. Furthermore, the effects of mobile application usage on corporate communication functions remain almost completely unattended.

We can definitely see that there is considerable interest in the relationship between social media and corporate communications. As stated above, many mobile applications are actually just mobile versions of social media channels, making these two subjects highly associated with each other. While the research on the mobile applications is still lacking, it seems reasonable to predict that there will be considerable interest in the subject during the next few years. While Avidar et al. (2013) concentrate on the relationship between public relations and mobile applications, it does not seem reasonable to assume that the applications' effect is exclusive to the PR function. The view of this thesis is that this effect is significant in relation to the entire function of corporate communication.

Considering all the above, it is reasonable to state we have entered a Mobile Era, where mobile devices (mainly smartphones) and their applications are significant platforms for communication, information, and entertainment.

1.2 Stakeholder communication

In this section, the first key concept of the study that positions it into the field of corporate communications, stakeholder communication is introduced. Stakeholder communication is further discussed in Section 2.2.

In the current business climate, strategic management of organizations demands broader and strategically oriented communications in comparison to the older, more tactical approach (Cornelissen 2004, p.57). Corporate communications has emerged as a strategic management function that aims at communicating effectively with stakeholder groups that are important to the organization. Successfully integrating corporate communication into business operations and strategy can be a significant asset to any corporation (Malmelin, 2007).

Cornelissen (2004, p. 56) states that stakeholders are one of the three concepts (along corporate identity and reputation management) that are the cornerstones of all corporate communication. According to Cornelissen (2004, p. 57), stakeholder management is extremely important to almost any modern organization. In the stakeholder model of strategic management presented in Figure 3, all groups that have a legitimate stake in the organization are recognized. The relationship between an organization and these groups is always two-way (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 59), which recognizes the dependencies between organizations and its stakeholder. These stakeholders are affected by the organizations operations, but can also affect organizations.

In the present study, students are viewed as an important stakeholder group for the organization that is the university.

1.3 Organizational legitimacy

In this section, the second key concept of the study that positions it into the field of corporate communications, legitimacy is introduced. Organizational legitimacy is further discussed in Section 2.3.

Organizational legitimacy illustrates an organization's role in relation to the society (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). According to Palazzo and Scherer (2006) legitimacy is central for any organization, as it helps in acquiring resources and maintaining stakeholder support. Suchman (1995) has divided the research of organizational legitimacy into two perspectives: strategic and institutional. The strategic school sees legitimacy as a management tool, a result of an exchange between two sides. The institutional approach takes the role of a stakeholder and is more concerned with how they construct and communicate the organization's legitimacy. There are three primary forms of legitimacy according to Suchman: "pragmatic, based on audience self-interest; moral, based on normative approval; and cognitive, based on comprehensibility and taken-for-grantedness".

Palazzo and Scherer (2006) state communication with stakeholders is increasingly important for achieving organizational legitimacy, as the public raises its standards for legitimacy. According to Suchman (1995) the process of legitimacy management can be seen consisting of three parts: gaining, maintaining and repairing legitimation. According to Palazzo and Scherer (2006), the fact that legitimacy is based on the social environment means that significant changes in that environment affect expectations towards those organizations

The organization at the center of this study is the Aalto University School of Business. As the social environment of students is changing due to smartphones and mobile applications, the organization is presented with a legitimacy challenge.

1.4 University context

1.4.1 Aalto University

This thesis studies potential communications usage of mobile applications in a university context, specifically Aalto University School of Business. In 2013, Aalto University had nearly 20 000 students (Aalto, 2015). Nearly 4 000 of them study at the school of Business, making "Biz" the second biggest school in the university behind the School of Engineering. Today, Aalto University consists of six different schools. The university was originally founded in 2010, as a merger of three traditional universities of Helsinki: Helsinki School of Economics, Helsinki University of Technology and the University of Art and Design Helsinki. In 2013, Aalto had a funding of 418 million euros and almost 5000 employees, including nearly 400 professors.

The mission of Aalto University is to "work towards a better world through top-quality research, interdisciplinary collaboration, pioneering education, surpassing traditional boundaries, and enabling renewal. The national mission of the university is to support Finland's success and contribute to Finnish society, its internationalization and competitiveness, and to promote the welfare of its people."

The vision of the university is defined as "The best connect and succeed at Aalto University, an institution internationally recognized for the impact of its science, art, and learning."

The five values of Aalto are:

1. Passion for exploration
2. Freedom to be creative and critical
3. Courage to influence and excel
4. Responsibility to accept, care and inspire
5. Integrity, openness and equality

1.4.2 The world of higher education today

Universities have been around for a long time, and many of the most famous ones are hundreds of years old. However, despite their traditions universities are not immune to change. The aim of this subsection is to clarify what the position of students as stakeholders is within the university institutions and what kind of challenges universities are facing in today's operating environment. As a result, it should be easier to understand the views students have about the communication with Aalto University and how they see the nature of their studies.

According to Salter and Tapper (2002) universities are effected by their operating environment and need to shift their strategy accordingly. According to Lomas (2007), increasing numbers of higher education students and rising tuition fees (in the UK) have placed more focus on getting value from an education. Salter and Tapper (2002) state that universities differentiate by their ability to compete for state funding, attract private investments and creating collaborations with corporations. This puts significant pressure on improving university management.

Salter and Tapper (2002) described that the 1980s (in the UK) saw a discourse taken from the private arrive to discussions of higher education. The utilization of private sector management techniques was claimed to produce a significant increase in "efficiency, effectiveness and economy" of universities. The meaning of this was to maximize the use of public resources. Ramirez (2014) states that managerialism has gained considerable influence on US universities as well. Han (2014) has recognized similar dominating themes in the discourse of Chinese higher education.

It has been stated by Ritzer (1996), amongst others, that there is nothing special about higher education that differentiates it from any other service organization: hospitals and local councils are effected by managerial principles, and so are universities In addition, Lomas (2007) has argued that changes in higher education have made universities more similar to other types of organizations than before. Ramirez (2014) states that the impact of corporate language and culture on higher education is evident and proposes that modern universities are brands just like any other products or services. For example, different kinds of international accreditations are also a big part of the university branding process.

However, this kind of thinking has also induced a strong backlash (e.g. Birnbaum, 2001; Bartlett, Frederick, Gulbrandsen & Murillo, 2002), since many academics find the notion of “university as a corporation” repellent. The people sharing this notion firmly believe that the schools serve a higher purpose of educating and transforming the thinking of the students, making the relationship with them much more intricate than the usual company-consumer relationship. For example, the academic people interviewed by Lomas (2007) firmly believed that education is not a product or service that can be sold per se.

Customer satisfaction and customer service are nowadays priorities of student services in many universities (Lomas, 2007) and it is getting more and more common to think of students as consumers and customers of universities. According to Lomas (2007), although academic staff and students themselves rarely agree with the notion of students as customers it has not stopped the notion from becoming quite prevalent. Ramirez (2014) states that in today’s discussions about the role of higher education, discourses of managerialism and students as customers frequently converge despite their different nature.

While Lomas (2007) found out that there is external pressure from the government for universities to adopt customer-orientation practices, it seems like many academics contest this notion. They often argue that education is not like other services, it cannot be sold as a product to students. However, the interviewees of Lomas, while disagreeing with the notion of student as customer, agreed that students influence on education is increasing. The customer-oriented mindset can also be seen in the way universities market their services (Ramirez, 2014). Many higher education institutions are increasingly aware of their brand and use savvy marketing methods to attract students.

Lomas (2007) especially emphasizes the growing emphasis on customer satisfaction: students are often considered as customers of universities although this notion is often rejected by both teachers and students. Morley (2003) makes a fitting argument: students are now asking, “What can I get?” instead of “What can I do?” Furthermore, Lomas (2007) states that today’s students are not afraid of being demanding, and this is one of the main causes of change in the culture of higher education.

Research by Hölttä (1998) supports the views presented above, as similar changes observed in Anglo-American universities have become parts of discourse in Finnish education. Additionally, despite possible differences between different continents and countries, modern universities operate in a global environment (Ramirez, 2014,) and what UK and US universities are doing does have an effect on the Finnish universities, such as Aalto or University of Helsinki as well. Today, universities compete internationally, a fact emphasized by different global university rankings. Therefore, an important presumption for this study is that all these trends combine to make stakeholder communication between the school and the students more important than ever before.

How should we see the position of students in higher education then? While the initial conception of this thesis was that students could be considered as internal stakeholders, it seems that this notion is possibly out-of-date. It is more likely that the position of a student is a hybrid between an internal and external stakeholder. This position is further defined in part two of literature review that deals with stakeholder communication.

1.5 Research problems and research questions

As described above, there is very little doubt about the popularity of smartphones. While for example Böhmer et al. (2011) and Avidar et al. (2014) provide insight on how smartphones are used by their owners, this thesis is in addition concerned with the possible corporate communication implications of the usage. In addition to further exploring the nature of smartphone and mobile application usage (in the context of university students), the intention of the thesis is to understand what kind of organizational challenges and opportunities come along with the phenomenon. In order to narrow down the focus of the research, this thesis takes a look at students as stakeholders of a university.

During the early part of the research process Netprofile (Finnish technology oriented communications agency) CEO Juha Frey was interviewed. This interview is referenced to as “Frey (2014)”. Frey (2014) explained that while consumer goods companies (especially multi-nationals), technology companies and start-ups are generally agile in adopting new communications technologies for external and internal purposes, more traditional and hierarchical institutions (manufacturing companies, state bureaus and public organizations) have struggled in transitioning to mobile technologies.

The interest is in finding out how mobile technology and especially mobile applications could help improve communication between Aalto University and its students. The first research question is based on this. While consumers in general seem to be ready for different kinds of company branded mobile applications (e.g. Kim et al. 2014), the university seems to be slow in adopting these new communication possibilities.

The second research question concentrates on the students, the stakeholders of the university organization. My intention is to study how students generally communicate with the Aalto University and how they see the university performing in its communications operations.

The third research question considers the relationship between the emerging mobile era and the university’s legitimacy in the eyes of its students.

The research questions are:

Q1: “How are smartphones and mobile applications used by Aalto University School of Business students?”

Q2: “How do Aalto University School of Business and its students communicate with each other?

Q3: “What kind of implications does the mobile era have on the legitimacy of Aalto University among its students?

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is consists of five chapters 1) Introduction, 2) Literature review, 3) Methodology, 4) Findings, 5) Discussion and 6) Conclusion.

The current chapter, Introduction, has introduced the primary phenomenon studied in this thesis: smartphones and mobile applications. In the study, the phenomenon is related to the field of corporate communication research by an emphasis on stakeholder communication and organizational legitimacy, which is studied in the context of Aalto University. The introduction has also presented the three research questions the current study aims to answer.

Chapter 2, literature review, will provide a closer look at the three research areas central to this thesis through the following sections: 1) mobile applications and smartphones, 2) stakeholder communications and 3) organizational legitimacy.

Chapter 3, methodology, consists of three sections: it will first define and justify research and data analysis methods used in this thesis, then present the research design and finally, provide an assessment of the reliability and validity.

In Chapter 4, findings of the research are presented according to a categorization based on the three research questions and themes which emerged during the research interviews.

The findings are followed by Chapter 5, a discussion of the study's findings. Findings are discussed according to the study's research questions.

The sixth and final chapter includes conclusions which consists of a research summary, practical implications, limitations of the study, and finally, suggestions for further research.

2. Literature review

This literature review consists of four parts. Firstly, in Section 2.1 a look at previous research on mobile applications is provided. Secondly, in Section 2.2 a review of current literature on stakeholder communication is presented. Thirdly, in Section 2.3 the notion of organizational legitimacy is reviewed. Finally, a summary of the three prior sections of this literature review is presented in Section 2.4.

2.1 Mobile applications and smartphones

"I use my phone first thing in the morning and last thing at night."-Bhave et al. (2013)

The first part of literature review takes a look at research conducted on mobile applications, the main phenomenon studied in this thesis. According to Middleton (2010) ability to download various applications is one of the key features in modern day smartphones. As found out in recent consumer research (Perez, 2014) most of the time spent with smartphones is used on mobile applications. In this section, research on mobile application users and marketing and communications implications of applications are presented. Current research on smartphones is also reviewed, since the platform is very strongly associated with application usage. The intention of this is to form an understanding of how mobile applications and smartphones are used and what kind of research exist on them. The first Subsection 2.1.1 concentrates on previous research on application usage and smartphones, while Subsection 2.1.2 focuses on mobile social media.

2.1.1 Mobile application and smartphone usage

Verkasalo (2009) was one of the first researchers to discuss mobile applications (originally using word services), noting that the most important one of mobile services special characteristics is that they can be accessed at any point in time. One of Bhave et al.'s (2013) interviewees described his use of smartphone in the following way: "I use my phone first thing in the morning and last thing at night." echoing many other users' feelings. Smartphones are clearly a big part of their users' lives and have a considerable effect on their users (e.g. Avidar et al., 2013; Bhave et al., 2013). Avidar et al. (2013) claim, that due to their unique properties and features, smartphone technology is important to understand for any public relations professional. It seems evident according to the researchers, that thinking, communication, behavior, and socialization among everyday users can be altered by smartphones and applications.

While smartphones seemed to be an integral part of the respondents' lives, Avidar et al. (2013) find that mobile communication with corporations seem to be quite scarce. The interview phase further clarified that the young publics viewed smartphone applications much more desirable than corporate websites, which are now seen as unattractive and time-consuming platforms.

Böhmer et al. (2011) have arguably conducted the most extensive study on the nature mobile application usage. The research study collected application usage data from over 4,100 Android (popular mobile operating system) users, providing substantial insight on how consumers use mobile applications. According to the study, an average user spent approximately an hour a day using their device. Yet, a single application session took only 70 seconds, underlining the relatively "dynamic" nature of smartphone usage. However, most application sessions (almost 70%) only consist of a single application launch, meaning that the phone is put on, a single app is used and the phone is then put on standby again. The study by Böhmer et al. (2013) also provided interesting data on mobile applications patterns, for example news apps are used in the morning while games and social applications are generally popular in the evening. The data collected for the study goes into great detail about the usage patterns of different applications and research on this level of quantitative detail has not been reproduced since.

In a similar, but more recent study, Avidar et al. (2014) studied the smartphone usage of 21-31 year old Israeli consumers. Almost 70% of 550 survey respondents used their smartphone for informative purposes daily, and almost 55% for entertainment purposes, supporting the statement of Villi (2012), who argued that one defining characteristic of smartphones is the prevalence of information retrieval and entertainment tasks, in addition to the “classic” function of mobile phones, interpersonal communication. Photo and gaming applications were also relatively popular, but social networks were used daily by over 70% of respondents, providing a significant increase over Böhmer et al.’s (2011) findings, where social applications only accounted for 5% of application launches. It must be noted that the numbers are not entirely comparable, but difference does however seem significant.

There is also research on why are mobile phones used, for example, Kim et al. (2014) focus on antecedents of mobile application usage. They find out that mobile applications offer both informative and entertaining usefulness, echoing the findings of Avidar et al. (2013) and Lee and Kim (2014). However, in Kim et al.’s (2014) research, the social aspect of applications was not as meaningful as the two other aspects (entertainment and information), contrary to the researchers’ expectations. Researchers speculated that this was perhaps due to the fact that many social applications are web based and thus not thought of as mobile applications per se. Furthermore, it was found out by Kim et al. (2014) that user reviews had a strong influence on which apps became popular. In addition, pricing of mobile applications is discussed in the article. Overall, mobile apps are found out to be a very influential medium by Kim et al. (2014), not only in the mobile services industry, but in the new media industry as a whole. The researchers suggest that branded apps are already and will be a relationship building tool between brands and consumers. Branded apps are applications that are clearly branded by the company providing the app (e.g. McDonald’s, Finnair, Nordea) and are often single purpose applications, meaning they only intend to carry out very specific functions.

Watson et al. (2013) researched consumer attitudes towards mobile marketing in the "smartphone era". Their data shows that smartphone owners are significantly more active users of their phones than feature phone (a common term for a "non-smartphone") owners. It is argued by Watson et al. (2013) that due to the emergence of smartphones, mobile applications and wireless broadband, mobile phones are thus becoming more and more central in our lives. Consumer expectations towards mobile content is also increasing accordingly.

The respondents of Watson et al. (2013) had mostly negative attitudes toward SMS messages from companies, aside from ticketing and reminder services. QR codes (Quick response code is a physical "barcode" that contains a link or an application and can be scanned with a smartphone) were found out to have potential as a substitute for SMS marketing. Consumers felt like they had more control over marketing content and were generally quite accepting of the QR technology. The research of Watson (2013) is one of the few studies on mobile advertising focused exclusively on smartphones and largely replicates earlier findings: consumers have significant reservations against mobile advertising.

Bhave et al. (2013) take a similar approach to mobile phones as Watson et al. (2013), studying Generation Y orientation towards mobile applications and in-app advertising. For the purposes of this thesis, Bhave et al.'s study is extremely interesting since it focuses strictly on mobile applications instead of the entire smartphone platform. It is one of the only studies that have taken a closer look at mobile applications as a tool for marketing and communications. The researchers' finding that applications are used continuously and intensively is consistent with other research (e.g. Kim et al., 2014). In contrast with Böhmer et al. (2010) many users reported daily usage times of two or three hours. Although the data here is not as extensive as it is in Böhmer et al. (2010) study, the numbers hint at a significant increase in smartphone usage rates. Applications were found out to have become a social phenomenon by Bhave et al. (2013), for example friends' recommendations were important when choosing apps. Branded applications were seen as a positive, as Kim et al. also found (2014), if users could find usefulness and engagement in them. Interactive and game-like applications are seen as a very potential marketing communications tool. User attitudes toward in-app advertisements were dependent on the type of application, type of advertisement, personalization of ad, intrusiveness, usefulness and relevance of ad.

Overall, Bhave et al.'s (2013) interviewees were much more positive towards mobile advertising compared to respondents of the study by Watson et al. (2013). Cultural differences between England and India could offer an easy explanation to the differences in the studies' findings. However, it must be noted that Bhave et al. (2013) utilize a much broader (and arguably more current) picture on mobile advertising, including branded applications and in-game ads not included in the study of Watson et al. (2013), perhaps proving that these emergent marketing and communication practices might have significant potential. Specific research on these emergent practices seems to be largely lacking both in the field of marketing communications and public relations. Findings of Avidar et al. (2013) support the view that the consumers seem to be relatively accepting and willing to try these new communication practices.

While many researchers have focused on younger users of mobile phones (e.g. Avidar et al. 2013; Bhave et al. 2013), Lee and Kim (2014) have studied the overall socio-demographics of mobile use in South Korea. Their survey (400 respondents) found out that while innovativeness (defined by the researchers as willingness to try new technology and information) was not an antecedent for mobile use, but technological competence was - effective usage of smartphones still requires time and effort. Non-talking mobile usage was found to serve information seeking, entertainment, socializing and business purposes. While both men and women had the same usage rate, male respondents had a greater appreciation for their mobile devices. Bhave et al. (2013) also found out that while men and women used smartphones roughly at the same rate, men were perhaps more involved with their phones and for example discussed applications with their friends.

Unsurprisingly, Lee and Kim (2014) found that older respondents were more hesitant in adopting non-talking mobile features. Respondents of a higher socio economic status (SOS) were more likely to adopt mobile services than those with a low SOS. Interestingly, those lower SOS respondents who had adopted mobile devices, reported relatively high improvement in perception of life management. Overall, Lee and Kim (2014) did find socio-demographic differences in mobile phone usage rates and tendencies, but overall the findings are perhaps a little bit outdated since the actual nature of mobile usage is not defined beyond talk and non-talk.

In the data of Böhmer et al. (2011) mobile browsers only accounted for less than 7% of application launches, supporting recent trends in smartphone usage (Perez, 2014). Interestingly, browser launches were much more prevalent at airports, suggesting that air travel information was at the time not integrated into native applications (today, for example Finavia has their own application). This suggests that browsers are perhaps mainly used when native applications are not available, an important consideration for the purposes of this thesis. Among others, Kim et al. (2014) and Lee & Kim (2014) both discovered that informational features of applications are very important to the users.

One important feature of feature and smartphones is actually very rarely discussed in academic articles: the ability to take pictures. Villi (2012) has studied the usage of mobile phone cameras as part of interpersonal communication and claims they are an integral part of mobile phone communication. So-called photographic communication is now a big part of mobile phone communications. Villi's interviewees and the researcher himself see photo communication as a very personal way of communicating often used with close friends and relatives. For example in a social media like Facebook, most photos are only seen by friends of a user. However, social media services such as Instagram have since arguably changed this notion. Millions of people share images of their daily life with strangers all over the world. However, more personal photo communication applications such as Snapchat have also emerged. Snapchat is a service where the sender of the image can define how many seconds the sent image can be seen for. Existence of such apps confirms Villi's (2012) speculation that mobile communication makes images more disposable and increasingly focused on communicating the present.

2.1.2 Mobile social media

"Mobile social media has the potential to bridge the gap between the virtual sphere and real life and, in doing so, might prove to be an even more important evolution than the initial introduction of social media itself." - Andreas Kaplan (2011)

While a consensus on the relative importance (compared to informational and entertainment value) of social media applications for smartphone users does not seem to exist, they are in anyway a significant part of smartphone usage (Avidar et al., 2013; Bhave et al., 2013). While numerous studies on the nature of social media and its relationship with communications and public relations exist (e.g. Waters et al., 2009; Paek et al., 2013), surprisingly few studies on the mobile usage of social media have been conducted. Social media in general is now a standard part of communication media available to companies and individuals (Kaplan, 2011).

According to Kaplan (2011), companies such as Gowalla and Foursquare were among the first mobile social media applications. Kaplan has defined four kinds of mobile marketing applications, differentiated by a) the degree of consumer knowledge and b) the trigger of communication (Figure 1). Push trigger signifies company initiated communication, while pull signifies user initiated communication.

		Trigger of communication	
		Push	Pull
Degree of consumer knowledge	High	**Victims** AT&T sent SMS text messages to 75 million customers suggesting they watch *American Idol* and vote for candidates using their AT&T phone	**Patrons** Pop icon Britney Spears enabled fans to receive—for $2.99 per month—*Britney's Diary*: a weekly text message about her life during a concert tour
	Low	**Strangers** Toyota teamed up with Fox Broadcasting to insert 10-second commercials into 26 short mobile movies, so-called 'mobisodes,' for the TV show *Prison Break*	**Groupies** Calvin Klein used Quick Response codes on billboards in New York to allow users to pull up an exclusive 40-second commercial

Figure 1. Four different kinds of mobile marketing applications (Kaplan, 2011)

Kaplan (2011) defines mobile social media "as mobile marketing applications that allow creation and exchange of user-generated content". Location sensitivity of these applications is one of the key differences in relation to "traditional" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) social media. Technologies such as Bluetooth and GPS make locating single mobile phone user more accurate than ever before. In addition to location sensitivity, Kaplan (2011) uses time-sensitivity in classifying mobile social media applications (Figure 2). Data on consumers' time and place make mobile social media a valuable market research tool. Although this provides many types of marketing and communications opportunities, according to Kaplan (2011) companies must be increasingly vary of becoming a nuisance (as seen by respondents in Watson et al. 2013). While Kaplan overall concentrated on the marketing implications of smartphones and mobile applications, his work helps us understand the multiple ways this new technology can be utilized. One could argue that most of the marketing applications described by Kaplan could as well be utilized in stakeholder communication.

Table 2. Classification of mobile social media applications

		Location-sensitivity: No	Location-sensitivity: Yes
Time-sensitivity	Yes	**Quick-timers** Transfer of traditional social media applications to mobile devices to increase immediacy (e.g., posting Twitter messages or Facebook status updates)	**Space-timers** Exchange of messages with relevance for one specific location at one specific point-in time (e.g., Facebook Places; Foursquare; Gowalla)
	No	**Slow-timers** Transfer of traditional social media applications to mobile devices (e.g., watching a YouTube video or reading a Wikipedia entry)	**Space-locators** Exchange of messages, with relevance for one specific location, which are tagged to a certain place and read later by others (e.g., Yelp; Qype)

Figure 2. Classification of mobile social media applications (Kaplan, 2011)

Kaplan (2011) describes that for example in Japan, smartphones commonly serve as personal identification, key cards, and payment methods. Starbucks launched their own mobile payment program there already in 2011. All in all, it can be seen that mobile technology is capable of very ambitious applications and provides endless opportunities to marketers and communicators.

2.1.3 Summary of literature review on smartphones and mobile applications

While the introduction of this thesis provided the statistics that back up the timeliness of mobile applications and smartphones, the first part of literature review has proved that the academics versed in the subject agree as well. Findings of for example Kim et al. (2014) and Avidar et al. (2013) support the notion that smartphones and mobile applications have become a major part of our everyday lives.

Research of Kim et al. (2014), Avidar et al. (2013) and Bhave et al. (2013) seem to indicate that mobile phone users are surprisingly positive about companies utilizing mobile applications as marketing and communications tools. Company branded applications, gaming application advertising and informative applications offer new and exciting communications opportunities to companies ready to seize and utilize opportunities. While the internet was once seen as a threat to communication, social involvement and wellbeing, the opposite seems to be happening (Kraut et al., 2002). Mobile social media and applications are breaking boundaries between real and so-called virtual life and expanding on the possibilities created by the birth of social media (Kaplan 2011).

Based on the literature referenced in this section of literature review, the conclusion is that mobile applications and smartphones are becoming more and more popular and influential in consumers lives. Thus, companies and organizations should increasingly explore communication possibilities offered by these new technologies.

2.2 Stakeholder communication

The second part of the literature review explores the concept of stakeholder communication, which according to Cornelissen (2004) is not only a central theme for corporate communication, but strategic management as well.

According to Cornelissen (2004) stakeholders are one of the three key concepts (alongside corporate identity and reputation management) in corporate communication. Cornelissen (2004, p. 57) claims the need for stakeholder communication is based on the growing importance of stakeholder management. In the stakeholder model of strategic management (Figure 3), all groups that have a legitimate stake in the organization are recognized. The relationship between an organization and these groups is always two-way (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 59), which recognizes the dependencies between organizations and their stakeholders. Freeman (1984) defined stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s purpose and objectives”.

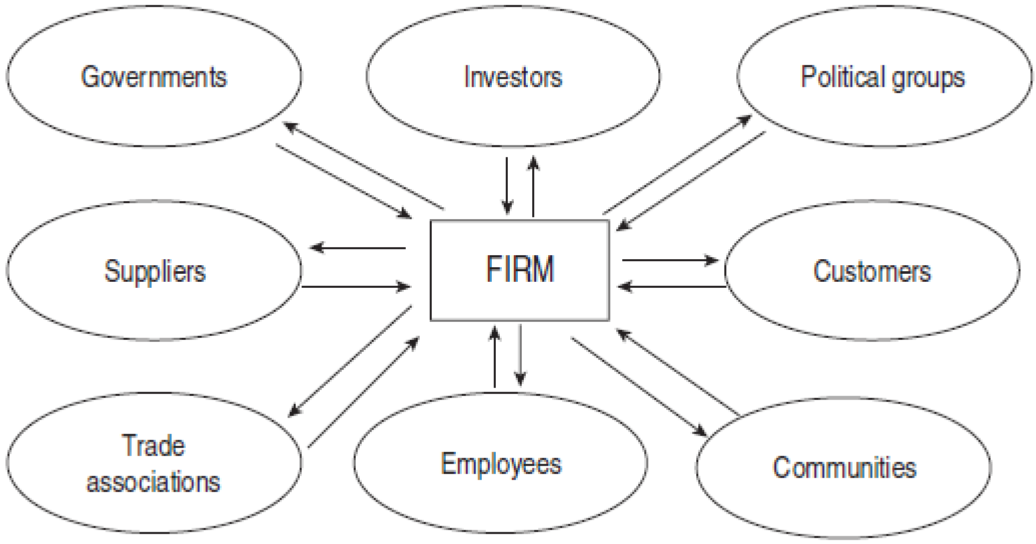

Figure 3. Stakeholder model of strategic management (Cornelissen, 2004)

From the definitions of Freeman (1984) and Cornelissen (2004) we can deduce that students are indeed stakeholders of the university. But to which stakeholder group do they belong? As discussed in the introduction, there are significantly differing notions among the researchers of higher education, on whether students are indeed customers of universities. Although there might be an inclination to simplify matters and call all students consumers, this approach does not fully appreciate the roles students have in universities. On the other hand, defining students strictly in terms of internal communication does not seem very straightforward either.

Clarkson (1995) has divided organizational stakeholders into two categories: primary and secondary. The primary stakeholders of an organization are involved in financial transactions and their existence is necessary for the organization to survive. Secondary stakeholders meanwhile are those who according to Freeman (1984) affect and are affected by the organization. Financial transactions are not made with these secondary stakeholders, but they however have some other interest in the organization. Members of the media and a wide range of interest groups (private and public) fall into this category. According to Clarkson, they can greatly influence public opinion and are thus important stakeholders in their own ways.

Charkham (1992) views stakeholders based on whether they have a contract or an agreement with the organization (Figure 4). Contractual stakeholders have a legal relationship with the organization while community stakeholders have a less binding relationship with the organization. Contractual stakeholders are often financially tied to the organization.

Contractual stakeholders	**Community stakeholders**
Customers	Consumers
Employees	Regulators
Distributors	Government
Suppliers	Media
Shareholders	Local communities
Lenders	Pressure groups

Figure 4: Contractual and community stakeholders (Charkham, 1992)

Cornelissen (2004, p. 107) has proposed a stakeholder analysis model for identifying and understanding the most crucial stakeholders. The meaning of the model is to understand the influence and consequences the organization and the stakeholders can have on each other by their actions. Additionally, an organization must consider what kind of reputation it has with the stakeholders and how can it affect the stakeholders' behavior. After identifying all stakeholders, the most important ones (chosen e.g. by utilizing the categories of Charkham or Clarkson) should be analyzed further. Cornelissen suggests Mitchell, Agle & Woods's (1997) categorization, where three attributes of stakeholder groups are used to prioritize stakeholders. The attributes are power (power of stakeholder on organization), legitimacy (of the claim stakeholder can make) and urgency (of action for stakeholder claims) which when combined in a Venn diagram lead to seven stakeholder types (Figure 5).

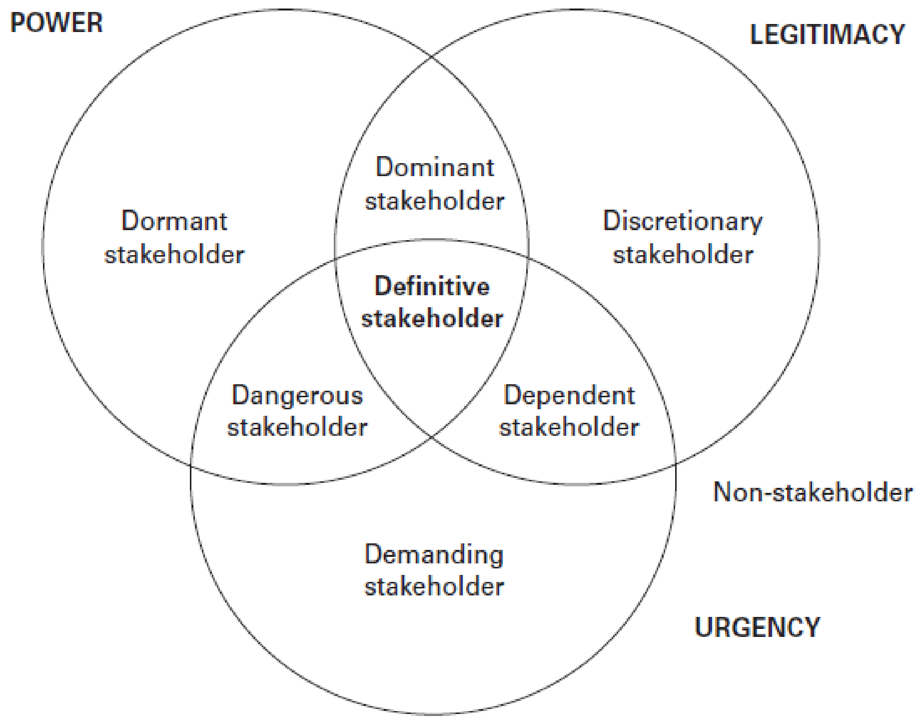

Figure 5: Stakeholder Mapping (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 108)

Looking at these three models, we can see that students are 1) primary stakeholders and 2) contractual stakeholders. The existence of students is a prerequisite to the existence of universities and the two clearly share a legal relationship. When we map stakeholders using Cornelissen (2004) and Mitchell et al.'s (1997) model (Figure 5), we can clearly state that students are so-called definitive stakeholders. They have a lot of power in universities (e.g. Lomas, 2007; Morley, 2003), they can make legitimate claims due to their close relationship with university and their actions arguably require urgent reaction. Definitive stakeholders

(Cornelissen, 2004, p. 109) can become active when their interests are not being served (think of student unions) and should thus be treated with considerable attention.

For this thesis, it is an interesting consideration that while students are key stakeholders for the organization of the university, the students often have full or part-time jobs alongside their studies. Thus, while students are definitive stakeholders for the university, the double role as an employee may have considerable effects on the level of commitment the students have towards the university.

2.3 Organizational legitimacy

The third part of the literature review explores the notion of organizational legitimacy, a complex theory on the relationship between organizations and their stakeholders.

Corporate legitimacy illustrates an organizations role in relation to the society (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). Maurer (1971, p. 361) defines legitimation as a process "whereby an organization justifies to a peer or superordinate right to exist." According to Suchman (1995) this definition, while narrow, has remained mostly relevant. Furthermore, subsequent definitions have highlighted cultural conformity in legitimacy in addition to its self-justification by organizations. Oliver (1996) sees legitimacy from the stakeholders view: it is a process where organizations adapt to norms, values, and expectations. Suchman (1995, p.574) describes legitimacy in similar words: "legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions."

According to Erkama & Vaara (2009) legitimacy is a well-known topic and it has been an important part in significant social theories as well as institutional organizational analysis. Suchman (1995) argues legitimacy is an expansive theoretical consideration that addresses normative and cognitive processes which affect organizations is multiple different ways. According to Palazzo and Scherer (2006), corporate social responsibility, sustainability, business ethics and stakeholder theory are often linked to the concept of legitimacy. While researchers have a wide variety of views on legitimacy, everyone seems to agree it is unavoidable that organizations have to adapt to the society in some way (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006).

Palazzo and Scherer (2006) claim legitimacy is vital for any organization, it is a prerequisite for acquiring resources and maintaining stakeholder support. Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) state that having organizational legitimacy always represents a favorable status, and it is acquired by acting and communicating according to expectations (of stakeholders). According to Suchman (1995) legitimacy is largely based on perceptions or assumptions about an organization, since the creation of legitimacy is subjective despite its objective nature. There are many reasons for organizations to pursue legitimacy, including pursuing continuity and credibility, and seeking passive or active support. Suchman (1995, 574) states legitimacy improves stability and comprehensibility of organizations' actions, creating continuity and credibility. Organizations that are regarded legitimate become desirable and appropriate, able to affect the public in a certain way towards the organization. In addition to affecting stakeholders' actions, legitimacy has an effect on how the organization is understood while at the same time building meaningfulness. Furthermore, according to Palazzo and Scherer (2006), losing legitimacy can be a disastrous situation as organizations find it hard to enter partnerships with new stakeholders as they cannot be trusted due to lack of legitimacy.

Suchman (1995) divides research of organizational legitimacy into two perspectives: strategic and institutional. The institutional perspective views legitimacy as a process of the public placing normative standards and expectations on organizational actors. Cultural pressures remove organizational control on legitimacy, forcing the acknowledgement of public opinion. The strategic perspective (e.g. Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990) takes the organizational perspective: how to communicate organizational actions to the society? The strategic perspective sees legitimacy as an operational resource, and Suchman (1995) even uses the verb manipulate to describe attracting support from the public. The presupposition here is that there is a high level of control over the process of legitimacy. Possessing legitimacy is viewed as an asset, and it should lead into tangible benefits such as increasing revenues and profitability. Legitimacy in its strategic perspective is thus calculated and purposive.

According to institutional researchers legitimacy is not an operational resource as legitimacy is constructed, communicated and given to organizations by external stakeholders (Suchman, 1995). How organizations are found, operated, understood and valued is defined by culture and norms, not the organizations themselves. Institutionalists see a strong link between organizations and stakeholders, because they more or less should base their decisions and reactions on the same kind of beliefs and values. Suchman (1995) states cultural frameworks are more important in the institutional perspective than tangible corporate actions studied by the strategic approach.

Legitimacy also involves several dimensions. According to Suchman (1995) there are three primary forms of legitimacy: “pragmatic, based on audience self-interest; moral, based on normative approval; and cognitive, based on comprehensibility and taken-for-grantedness” (Figure 6). What all the three forms have in common is that they view desirable or normatively correct organizational actions as the foundation for legitimacy. The difference between the dimensions is that they consider different behavioral dynamics. Suchman (1995) suggests gaining legitimacy becomes a more difficult task as organizations move from the pragmatic, to the moral and onwards to cognitive legitimacy.

FIGURE 1
A Typology of Legitimacy

	Actions	Essences	
		Disposition	
Episodic	Exchange	Interest	Pragmatic Legitimacy
Continual	Influence	Character	
Episodic	Consequential	Personal	Moral Legitimacy
Continual	Procedural	Structural	
	Comprehensibility		
Episodic	Predictability	Plausibility	Cognitive Legitimacy
	Taken-for-Grantedness		
Continual	Inevitability	Permanence	

Figure 6: A Typology of Legitimacy (Suchman, 1995)

Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) state that the complex nature of legitimacy provides multiple challenges to organizations of various types. According to Suchman (1995), while it is not possible to perfectly satisfy all audiences, organizational actions can have a serious effect on how the legitimacy of organizations is considered within cultural contexts. Suchman (1995) believes legitimacy management should mainly take the form of communication between an organization and its stakeholders. This communication takes many different forms and requires skill due to considerable situational challenges. According to Palazzo and Scherer (2006), communication with stakeholders is increasingly important for achieving organizational legitimacy, as the public raises its standards for legitimacy.

Ashforth & Gibbs (1990) state the process of legitimation often includes both substantive and symbolic practices. Utilizing technology in legitimacy practices is becoming more and more important (Yao, Brumette & Luo, 2015). According to Suchman (1995) the process of legitimacy management can be seen consisting of three parts: gaining, maintaining and repairing legitimation. The general view on maintaining legitimacy is that it is an easier task for organizations when compared to gaining or repairing legitimacy. However, even maintaining legitimacy has several concerns. Heterogeneity of audiences, rigidity caused by organizational stability, and opposition to institutionalization are common problems faced in legitimacy maintenance. Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) state fragmentation of organizations environment and stakeholders makes it impossible to satisfy everyone's needs, exposing organizations to unforeseen changes, such as innovations and external threats. This weakness is strengthened by the stability of the organization, as responsiveness and decision making considering legitimacy challenges grows slow and unresponsive. Furthermore, as organizations remain legitimate for an extended period of time, some stakeholders will become hostile towards the organization and raise legitimacy challenging claims.

Suchman (1995) states legitimacy can be maintained with two primary strategies: perceiving future changes and protecting past accomplishments. Predicting major changes and foreseeing up-and-coming challenges is extremely important. Stable organizations may become too focused on their own legitimation activities. Without proper predictions, many challenges may hit companies by surprise, eliminating possible legitimacy practices in the process. Suchman describes a manager without a clear picture of the future as someone who is "constantly struggling to regain lost ground". Many organizations use a variety of monitoring and analysis tools and personnel to stay ahead of legitimacy threats. According to Pfeffer (1981), in order to predict pragmatic legitimacy problems, organizations have to be vary of multiple interests within the organization's stakeholders. This can be achieved by involving various stakeholders in organizational decision making in order to gain insight on future developments and culture surrounding the operational landscape.

While according to Suchman (1995) research on organizational legitimacy is relatively fragmented and its voices dissonant, Erkama & Vaara (2009) argue there is little doubt legitimacy is closely associated with institutionalization of social phenomena and stability of social relationships. Palazzo and Scherer (2006) state, that because legitimacy is based on the societal environment, significant changes in that environment have a major effect on the expectations towards those organization. The change in expectations should cause changes in organizational actions. According to Suchman (1995), corporations that are reactive instead of proactive, risk losing legitimacy because they have limited legitimacy management strategies at disposal in the case of a legitimacy crisis. Legitimacy, or the lack of it thus becomes a crucial issue in the context of change, an important consideration because modern societies are subject to significant change (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). For this study, this is a significant consideration, since the evolution of mobile technology is arguably presenting a major change in the students' social environment.

2.4 Summary of the literature review

The final section of the literature review chapter summarizes the three themes of this literature review and aims to build connections between them.

While a significant amount of research has been conducted on mobile phones, and some studies on applications exist, the research scope has been quite narrow as can be seen from Section 2.1. Most studies on the topics mostly take a quantitative approach (e.g. Böhmer et al. 2010; Kim et al. 2014), and the research method has in most cases been a survey. While these prior studies have provided us with plenty of quantitative data on how mobile phones are used, the nature of usage and its implications are still largely a mystery. More inquiry into the specifics of this phenomenon and its implications to social environment is needed.

By studying stakeholder theory, we can see that students are 1) primary stakeholders and 2) contractual stakeholders. Students are also so-called definitive stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 108). Definitive stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 109) can become active when their interests are not being served (e.g. the voices and power of student unions) and should thus be treated with considerable attention. Stakeholder theory underlines the importance of recognizing the most important for any organization (Cornelissen, 2004). The thesis's focus on the students seems justified considering their increasing influence on the culture of higher education (Lomas, 2007). There is no doubt students are one of, or perhaps the most important stakeholder group for a university. As such, their behavior should be analyzed carefully, and their demands met with respect. Almost any behavior of students is a point of interest for the school, and thus a closer look at students' smartphone and application usage is warranted.

According to Palazzo and Scherer (2006) legitimacy is central for any organization, without it acquiring resources and keeping stakeholder support become difficult and even impossible. Suchman (1995) views research of organizational legitimacy as two perspectives: strategic and institutional. There are three primary forms of legitimacy according to Suchman: "pragmatic, based on audience self-interest; moral, based on normative approval; and cognitive, based on comprehensibility and taken-for-grantedness".

Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) state that the complex nature of legitimacy provides multiple challenges to organizations of various types. Palazzo and Scherer (2006) state communication with stakeholders is increasingly important for achieving organizational legitimacy, as the public raises its standards for legitimacy. According to Suchman (1995) the process of legitimacy management can be seen consisting of three parts: gaining, maintaining and repairing legitimation. For an established organization, such as Aalto University, maintaining legitimacy is the primary concern. Suchman (1995) states legitimacy can be maintained with two primary strategies: perceiving future changes and protecting past accomplishments. Losing legitimacy can be a disastrous situation as organizations find it hard to enter partnerships with new stakeholders as they cannot be trusted due to lack of legitimacy (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006).

While the link between legitimacy and stakeholder theory is often lacking in current literature, there is a clear link between the two: because the fragmentation of organizational environments makes it impossible to please everyone in the same way (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990), recognizing the most important stakeholders is more important than ever (Cornelissen, 2004).

In the case of significant increase in smartphone and mobile application usage (e.g. Middleton, 2010; Kim et al. 2014), we can definitely claim a major change affecting organizations is taking place. The presupposition of this study is that the university's definitive stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2004), students, have largely adopted technologies and capabilities provided by smartphones and mobile applications. According to Palazzo and Scherer (2006), the fact that legitimacy is based on the social environment means that significant changes in that environment affect expectations towards those organizations. Thus, the adoption of smartphones by the students affects their expectations towards the university. If an organization fails to claim legitimacy, it risks losing it, which is an incredibly damaging situation (Suchman, 2005). In addition, the students increasing power within higher education institutions (Lomas, 2007) highlights the issue at hand. By first understanding the students' smartphone and application usage, and the students relationship with their university, this study aims to discover possible implications the mobile era may have on organizational legitimacy.

3. Methodology: Data and methods

The present thesis aims to answer the three research questions Q1) “How are smartphones and mobile applications used by Aalto University School of Business students?”, Q2) “How do Aalto University School of Business and its students communicate with each other?”, and Q3) “What kind of implications does the mobile era have on the legitimacy of Aalto University among its students?, by interviewing students of Aalto University School of Business.

While the existing research on mobile applications has mostly taken a quantitative approach to the subject, this thesis will approach the issue from a different angle by utilizing qualitative research methods, particularly research interviews. The research approach is inductive, due to the relatively unknown nature of the research topic (smartphones) and small amount of previous research. The intention here is to first generate new information, and then based on the findings build cohesion and theory (Bryman & Bell 2004, pp. 12-13).

This methodology chapter is mostly organized according to a structure proposed by Zalan and Lewis (2004). Section 3.1, provides the justification of the methodology, Section 3.2, describes the research design, and lastly, Section 3.3 addresses reliability and validity of the study.

3.1 Justification of the methodology

3.1.1 Ontology

Research philosophy is related to the development of knowledge and its nature (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, p. 107). Research produces knowledge on a particular field (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 107), so it seems relevant to explain how that knowledge is produced. Research philosophy contains critical assumptions about the way the researcher sees the world. These assumptions influence the chosen research strategy and methods that form the research strategy.

According to Babbie (1992) the fundamental ontological question faced by management researchers is what the nature of reality is like: is it objective and external to an individual or is reality rather a product of the individual mind and cognition? This study takes more of a subjectivist view. Saunders et al. (2009) describe subjectivism as a view that believes social phenomena consists of perceptions and actions of social actors. In addition, social phenomena change over time through social interactions.

This research proceeds to consider its research questions through the interviewees' answers, opinions and views. The focus is on how the interviewees perceive they use their mobile phones, how they communicate with the university and what kind of routines and practices they are involved with while studying.

3.1.2 Epistemology

Zalan and Lewis (2004) describe epistemology as the theory of knowledge that is concerned with central issues of explanation, causality, generalization and external validity. While lines between positivist and interpretivist paradigms are increasingly blurred, there remains competition between the claims (Zalan & Lewis, 2004). According to Saunders et al. (2009) epistemology concerns what is acceptable knowledge within a certain field of study.

This study takes an interpretivist epistemological stance. Saunders et al. (2009, p. 116) state it can be argued that the interpretivist perspective is highly appropriate in the case of business and management research due to complex and unique situations. Saunders et al. (2009, p. 119) describe that interpretivist philosophy places emphasis on subjective meanings and social phenomena. There is considerable attention paid to the details of a situation and subjective meanings that motivate actions.

In terms of axiology (what roles do our values have in our research choices) interpretivism usually means that research is bound by values: the researcher is part of what is being studied and no division can be made. Research is thus subjective and does not aim to produce objective knowledge, unlike for example a positivist research philosophy. (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 119).

3.1.3 Methodology

The purpose of methodology is according to Zalan & Lewis (2004) to both demonstrate the theory of the method and explain general methodological considerations in relation to the research problems.

According to Zalan & Lewis (2004) the choice of methodology is defined, in addition to ontological and epistemological considerations, by 1) the objective of the study; 2) the nature of the research problem; and 3) the theoretical frameworks that inform the study.

Single Case Study

The objective of this study is to generate new information and theory on mobile phone usage in stakeholder communication. A case study is an appropriate option for this purpose (Zalan & Lewis, 2004).

Saunders et al. (2009) describe case study as a research strategy which involves investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in a real life context. In a case study, the context is crucial, and in many cases the phenomenon and the context cannot be entirely separated. In this study, smartphone usage and applications are the phenomenon and the Aalto University School of Business serves as the context.

Case studies include single and multiple case studies. In this case study, a single case study was chosen because it creates an opportunity to closely observe and analyze a phenomenon that has not been considered in depth before (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 146). While multiple case studies have merits, and are preferred by many (Saunders, et al. 2009, p. 147), considering the focus of this study and the depth of the single case used, using multiple cases would not necessarily lead to a better result. Furthermore, completing multiple large case studies on the research problem may be outside the scope of a Master's Thesis.

Although the present research takes on the form of a case study, the focus is not solely on the case organization. The organization rather offers the context for the phenomenon studied and narrows down the focus. Thus, this is an embedded case study.

Grounded theory

Although case study may be characterized as the primary research strategy in this thesis, many characteristics of grounded theory are also prevalent. Saunders et al. (2009, p.149) describe grounded theory as a strategy where data collection begins before forming an initial framework. Theory emerges from observations (in this case interviews), making grounded theory a very inductive approach. Grounded theory is useful in explaining behavior, a crucial part of business research (Saunders et al. 2009, p 149).

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Units and levels of analysis and sampling decisions

The study consists of a single case study, conducted at Aalto University School of Business. While a comparison with another university or company could have provided additional insights, it was decided a single case study would serve the scope of this study in an appropriate way. Considering the interpretivist approach of this research, it is better to "have an in-depth understanding of one case, rather than a superficial understanding of 100 cases." (Mintzberg, 1979)

The data set will consist of eight interviews conducted during December 2014 and January 2015. The interviews are quite consistent in their length, ranging from 25 minutes to 35 minutes. While there is skepticism towards small-sample studies according to Zalan & Lewis (2004), many of the most important studies in management and international business have included very small samples. For the purposes of this study, eight semi-structured interviews provided an adequate sample size, which could be validated by the repetitive nature of interview answers. As can be seen in the findings chapter of this study, the eight interviews have provided a lot of similar information. An addition of one or more extra interviews would have hardly contributed to the overall findings. Even before completing all of the eight planned interviews, it was clear that the returns from additional interviews were diminishing.

For example Yang, Zhou and Liu (2010) deemed college students an appropriate population for a mobile technology study, since they represent a segment of the population with significant new media skills. Additionally, researchers such as Avidar et al. (2013) and Bhave et al. (2013) have studied mobile usage of younger people. The student population has also been chosen because of practical purposes, since the researcher is a student, and therefore the acquiring of interviewees was not especially time consuming.

The interviewees were students at the Aalto University School of Business. The minimum requirement for the interviewees is that they are users of smartphones, present students (full-time or committing a similar effort despite working at the time of studies) and they have at least two years of studies at the school (so they have adequate experience about communications with the university). The demographics of the interviewees can be seen in Table 1.

While this study considers the interviewees first and foremost as students, with very little attention to their other attributes, some similarities and differences between the interviewees warrant mentions. First of all, the students are relatively similar in age, between 20-30 years old. The findings should be read keeping that in mind, since not all age groups might feel the same about the interview themes. However, for the purpose of the single case study, the age group is very relevant, since most students fall into that age category.

Secondly, all interviewees are Finnish born students. The study does thus not offer information on whether exchange or foreign degree students see the themes in the same way. Many international students might have very different communication and information needs compared to native students. Multiple applications are also specific to certain nationalities or cultures, so certain applications may not be mentioned in this research data, although they may be important for some student groups (Line for Korean students for example). However, many of the findings considering the studies and communication at the school are likely applicable to all student groups, because the discussed issues are not exclusive to a single group but rather such that they are important for all students (receiving course information and news from the department).

In addition, the interviewees include five male and three female students. In the findings chapter, no difference between male and female interviewees is made. It is not likely that university services would be designed with the students' gender in mind. The focus of this research is not on describing gender differences in relation to the study's themes.

Interviewee nr.	1	2	3	4
Major	Finance	Marketing	Corp. comm.	Strategy
Years at Aalto Biz	3	4	6	3
Sex	Male	Male	Female	Female
Job status	Self-employed	Occasional	Part-time	Full-time
Interviewee nr.	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
Major	Corp. comm.	Management and IB	Management and IB	Economics
Years at Aalto Biz	5	5	2	4
Sex	Male	Male	Female	Male
Job status	Part-time	Part-time	Study leave	Full-time

Table 1. Demographics of the interviewees.

3.2.2 Data Collection

The data consists of interview data, collected with qualitative interviews that followed a semi-structured format. Appendices 1 and 2 include some of the questions asked during the research interviews. The intention of the method was to give the interviewees room for expressing opinions and thoughts without too much constraint. However, a semi-structured format was chosen, because some of the interview themes may be unfamiliar to many interviewees. A structured may not have produced the desired amount of interview data nor enabled fluent interviews in terms of conversation.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face. Most interviews were conducted at Aalto University School of Business facilities, including silent working rooms, a student cafeteria and a school lobby. One interview was made at the researcher's own home. From the researcher's perspective, it did not seem like the interview locations greatly influenced the answers. However, there was a slight tendency that the busier locations seemed to relax the interviewees more. This could be caused by the participants' relative inexperience in acting as an interviewee, although personality differences are probably a more likely explanation. In addition, it must be noted that a single interview location would probably be optimal, but for the purposes of this research that would have demanded more time for scheduling and organizing interviews and facilities.

3.2.3 Data analysis and interpretation

According to Zalan and Lewis (2004) iteration between data collection and analysis is a feature of qualitative research. Discovery is also a big part of qualitative research. Zalan and Lewis (2004) describe intuition as part of discovery, making it an important component of qualitative research. However, Zalan & Lewis (2004) describe qualitative researchers as not often very good at verbalizing this creative process, which is very important in order to explain the entire research process.

The interviews were recorded by using an iPhone 6 as a tape recorder. The voice recorder application offers appropriate sound quality for transcribing. Permission for recording the interview was obtained from each interviewee.

After recording the data, the audio was transcribed manually. To help the labor intensive process, an online software "Transcribe" was used (https://transcribe.wreally.com/). Transcribe does not alter the audio, it only allows for quicker typing with its features.

The data was categorized based on the three research questions. Interview data from the transcripts were attached to these categories. The categories were further divided into more specific subcategories based on themes that emerged during the interviews.

3.2.4 Ethical issues

The research was conducted according to the academic standards of the Aalto University School of Business. To ensure this, the research project included both peer review from fellow students and guidance from the thesis's instructor Leena-Louhiala Salminen. The study was graded by two members of the faculty.

The privacy of all participants was carefully protected during the research process. In the present study, interviewees are not named at any point, nor does any of the raw data or notes contain the names of the interviewees. The interview participants all gave their vocal consent to be included in this study.

The participants were recruited by the researcher himself. The relationship between the researcher and the participants varies. Most of the interviewees are acquaintances of the researcher, but not close friends. One participant was noticeably closer to the researcher than others, possibly creating bias. However, the data of that interview does not seem to differ from others. In fact, the interviewee seems at least as or even more candid than other interviewees. The participants were not offered any kind of compensation for the interview.

This thesis uses the APA referencing format, according to the general practice of the Department of Management Studies. When someone else's ideas, views or research are referred, it is acknowledged in the text explicitly. As is the convention in English academic writing, the name of the referred author is given as soon as possible.

The results of the study are presented in a manner appropriate with the qualitative nature of the thesis, avoiding generalizations or exaggeration of findings.

3.2.5 Interview questions

The interviews include three themes: studies, usage of smartphones and applications, and the combination of those two. Not every interview included the same questions, but most questions were in some form asked during every single interview. A list of common interview questions asked during the research interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

3.3 Validity and reliability

In the third and final part of the methodology chapter, validity and reliability of this study are addressed. While authors, e.g. Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2008), Golafshani (2003), Merriam (1998) do not fully agree on the relationship between validity and reliability in qualitative research, they do all state both considerations are extremely important for all any qualitative research project.

Zalan and Lewis (2004) state that validation is one of the most critical, but in qualitative research rarely addressed parts of a study. Validity has long been acknowledged as a major challenge for qualitative research and at the same time a crucial limitation for the entire research philosophy. Validation can be seen as a broader concept than validity: validation includes issues of objectivity, freedom of bias, replicability and internal reliability. In addition, validation is an effort that takes place throughout the entire research process. According to Andersen and Skaates (2004) the criteria of evaluating validity does not only rely on methodology, but epistemological and ontological assumptions as well.

While for example Morse et al. (2008) see validity and reliability as overarching constructs and Golafshani (2003) disputes the need for reliability in qualitative research entirely, Merriam (1998) describes reliability in qualitative research with more detail. While it is unlikely that qualitative research can provide the same exact results in repetition, peer examination and usage of so-called “audit trail”, explicit description of methodology and findings, can be used to communicate the reliability of a qualitative study.

In terms of process errors (Andersen & Skaates, 2004), the study’s research questions have undergone continuous review by peers and the thesis’s supervisor to ensure the elimination of type three errors, asking the wrong research question. Additionally, the total amount of data produced enough replication (e.g. Andersen & Skaates, 2004; Morse et al. 2008) to be considered sufficient. To answer outcome validity issues (Andersen & Skaates, 2004), the current study has presented explicit detail of data collection, including the interview process. The study has also compared its findings with prior research when applicable as seen in Chapter 5. According to e.g. Merriam (1998) the use of external evaluators is also a helpful method in ensuring validity.

According to Andersen and Skaate’s (2004) recommendations, the current study has provided the following methods to ensure the validity and reliability of this study:

1. Explicating the rationale for qualitative inquiry: focus on providing a qualitative counterpart to previously performed quantitative inquiry.
2. Clarifying data selection process: single case study chosen to provide necessary depth and detail of information.
3. Explaining data handling processes: addressed in 3.2.2.
4. Clarify data analysis and interpretation: addressed in 3.2.3.
5. Using raw data to support claims: presented in chapter 4.

4. Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the research and the discussion of these findings. The findings are based on the eight research interviews conducted with Aalto University School of Business students. The data was categorized based on the three research questions, which form the three sections of this chapter:

Q1: "How are smartphones and mobile applications used by Aalto University School of Business students?"

Q2: "How do Aalto University School of Business and its students communicate with each other?

Q3: "What kind of implications does the mobile era have on the legitimacy of Aalto University among its students?

The categories were further divided into more specific subsections based on themes that emerged during the interviews.

4.1 Smartphone and application usage of students

"My relationship with my smartphone is close and warm. It is an extension of my arm"

This section and its subsections present how the interviewees described their relationship and usage of smartphones and applications.

4.1.1 Smartphone and mobile device ownership

Before the interviews, it was made sure that all interviewees owned smartphones. Four interviewees owned an iPhone (various generations), while both Nokia and Samsung devices had two owners. Two interviewees also owned a second phone, but only one of them actually used that phone. This user was the only interviewee who owned a phone provided by his employer.

Every interviewee had owned a smartphone for several years. Some mentioned owning multiple smartphones previously. None of the interviewees was particularly new to the phenomenon. It is noteworthy, that most of the interviewees had difficulties in remembering when they exactly first acquired a smartphone. Many describe having a smartphone for "several years".

The uncertainty about the length of ownership could hint that devices are becoming commoditized. A smartphone is a necessity, they are socially accepted even to the point that not owning one is strange. The point in time where a user transfers from a feature phone to a smartphone is not a big, memorable life moment, rather just something ordinary that happens.

A surprisingly large number of interviewees said they own a tablet, 5 out of 8. According to Statistics Finland (2014) in late 2014, about one in three households Finland owned a tablet. One of the tablet owners however stated he does not use the tablet despite owning it. One non-owner said he is seriously considering buying a tablet. When asked, the interviewees mostly described different uses for tablets in comparison to their smartphones:

INT 2: "It's more convenient to surf the web with a tablet. It's also more for entertainment purposes. I used to take it with me to this one class I had, I used to make small notes with the tablet."

INT 4: "I use the tablet a lot less. I sometimes take it to class or listen to music at home. I don't send messages or use social media."

INT 7: "I use tablet for school work a lot more. It's easier to carry around than a laptop. I also use it to watch TV. However, I don't always have the tablet with me."

Despite owning tablets, the users do not seem to describe a very close relationship with them. Tablets are mostly thought of as entertainment devices, akin to a television, albeit with a much broader set of features.

Page (2015) has predicted wearable technology will become much more popular in the next five years' time. However, none of the interviewees described using other mobile devices, such as smart watches or smart bands.

4.1.2 Relationship between user and smartphone

Smartphones seem to be extremely important to many users. Multiple interviewees describe an intimate relationship with their phones. Quite a few answers include descriptions of dependency and even addiction. Many users' usage rate of their smartphones seems significantly high.

It is noteworthy, that most of the respondents did not feel strange about describing their relationship with their smartphone. The phones raise feelings and emotions are attached to them. Some interviewees even describe the relationship in similar terms one would talk about personal relationships.

INT 2: "I'm probably too dependent on it. I've lost my smartphone a couple of times and during those times I can feel the dependency disappear. The flow of information is massive and it had to be checked out all the time. It's definitely addictive and actually quite distressing. It enables a lot, but also hooks you in."

INT3: "It's close and warm. Phone is an extension of my arm. Well, it does not even make sense to have so many ways (to communicate): WhatsApp, Facebook… If you check them out *all at once, it's quite a lot. Addictive, but useful. I have had to make some restrictions, for example I don't get my email unless I refresh it…"*

One interviewee even describes feeling lonely without a smartphone. The phone is seen as a companion, almost like a friend or even a companion:

INT 7: "It's always with me and it's very important to me. If I'm out downtown and run out of battery I feel 'lonely'. You could say it's too important to me."

However, some thoughts on smartphones are a lot more cautious. Some users are vary of how much they use the phone and do not like to have an overtly close relationship with their phone.

INT 6: "I try to be an 'old school' phone user, I don't want to interact with my phone all the time, especially if I'm with other people. It's disrespectful to browse your phone all the time. But it is useful: you can ready emails, use social media when you would otherwise be unproductive, for example on the bus or metro."

INT 8: "I used to have WhatsApp chats muted and I did not install Facebook Messenger. I don't want my phone to vibrate all the time. I'd rather just check my messages once every hour or so."

While the utility purposes of the phones are recognized, many feel they use the phone too much and too often. The worry over how much time is spent using a smartphone is repeated again and again by the interviewees. One interviewee describes a need to disconnect from the phone because it is taking away too much of his attention:

INT 1: "I use it all the time, I almost try and minimize it a little bit and look at my surroundings."

It is noteworthy, that in the prior studies on smartphones, negative user experiences and users' skeptical opinions on the technology have been largely missing. One of the facts that makes these opinions interesting is that these users have already adopted the technology, but they still feel relatively negative about it. These comments can be interpreted as hints that users may adopt smartphones despite negative feelings towards them because of certain fear of social exclusion.

Overall, most interviewees are very engaged with their smartphones. The finding matches those made by e.g. Avidar et al. (2013) and Bhave et al. (2013). Words like addiction and dependency are used to describe the user experience. The smartphones take up a lot of time from their users Humanlike features are attached to many users' phones, and some user-device relationships are akin to social relationships. Avidar et al.'s (2013) claim that smartphones and applications can alter thinking, communication and behavior seems very plausible according to the findings presented above.

4.1.3 Smartphone usage purposes

The interviewees use their phones for three purposes: communication, entertainment and information. These categories have been previously discussed by e.g. Kim et al. (2014), Avidar et al. (2013) and Böhmer et al. (2010). The findings of this study support the existence of those categories. However, all smartphone functions or applications cannot be clearly put into a single category. This is especially true for social media applications, which tend to integrate elements from all the three categories.

Naturally, all interviewees use their phone for communicating with other people. Communication applications include using the traditional phone function, text messaging, multimedia messaging and instant messaging.

Communication purpose is still the primary purpose for the interviewed users to use their phones, a finding made by Böhmer et al. (2010) as well. It is notable, that every one of the interviewees mentions using the application WhatsApp, a popular instant messaging program now owned by Facebook. It seems like WhatsApp application has replaced text messaging as the primary way of sending messages with a phone. In addition to being the dominant platform for messaging, it seems as though the application has to some extent replaced the need to make calls. One interviewee notes he now receives considerably less calls than previously. Almost everyone mentions the application as one of the two or three they use the most. In addition to the traditional one-on-one conversations, WhatsApp offers an opportunity to create chat groups. Many interviewees mention having various group conversations on the application. However, the utility of such conversations is disputed:

INT 3: "We have a group where about 80% is nonsense. Of course it's good to hear news and how everyone is doing, but if you are talking about which carpet to buy…"

INT 8: "Some groups are pretty irrelevant."

In addition to communicating, entertainment use of smartphones and mobile applications is mentioned. Users access music, video and other entertainment content to pass the time and entertain themselves. The most popular entertainment applications such as Spotify, Netflix or YouTube are all available for the most common mobile devices. In addition, although mobile gaming is a big trend, it is very interesting that none of the participants talk about playing games on their phone.

INT 6: "It's nice to have so much music with you all the time, which is probably the most important feature for me."

Access to information and informative resources are also an important part of smartphone usage. Work and school related tasks can be aided with smartphones. Many users also access the news with their phones. The phones also make it easy to make notes and check public transportation schedules. All in all, the utility provided by smartphones seems to be one of the key reasons users like their phones.

Although communication is the primary purpose of using any kind of smartphone (Böhmer et al. 2010), the users do not seem to use their phones because of one or just a few reasons. Most interviewees list a bevy of applications and functions they use on their phones. The findings suggest, there is not a single key factor that makes smartphones popular, rather the fact that the phones enable so many different things. In addition to enabling almost endless functions, the mobility of the phones is also important.

INT 5: "I use it to make my life easier."

INT 6: "It's very handy for reading emails, browsing social media when you are otherwise being unproductive."

INT 7: "I read the news and might search something on Google. Even if my not actually doing anything, I might look for some information related to school work and later transfer it to my computer."

INT 8: "I make a lot of calls for work. I send emails and other messages as well. I used to take a lot of photos with Lumia previously. I check out the news, some social media. Those are the basics."

In addition to WhatsApp, specific applications such as Spotify, Facebook and Twitter are mentioned by name. However, many also state they utilize mobile phone web browsers, but specific browsers (e.g. Safari, Firefox, and Chrome) are not mentioned by name.

All in all other applications are mentioned much more often than browsers (the common way to access web content with a desktop computer), a finding made by e.g. Kim et al. (2014) as well. It is noteworthy, that the amount of applications mentioned by name is relatively small.

Notifications are alerts given by applications when something noteworthy happens. Examples of this include receiving an instant message, someone commenting at you on Facebook or someone following you on Twitter. Almost all applications have some sort of notifications, but they can always be enabled or disabled according to the user's needs. The customization options for notifications vary application to application. A majority of applications suggests the user to turn on notifications, making notifications an opt-out consideration (meaning the default is having them on).

Most interviewees describe having some notifications on, but none of them have them on for all applications.

INT 2: "I have quite a few notifications on, but not on email. I get so many messages there."

INT 4: "I used to have all on, now just WhatsApp and Facebook."

INT 7: "I want to have messages immediately, stay on top of it if there is a change to meeting plans or something."

A couple of interviewees describe disabling all notifications, because they see them as a nuisance. Continuing notifications can be a significant disturbance, especially for an active smartphone user.

INT 5: "I do not have any sounds or notifications on. I'm very strict about what applications on my phone are allowed to do, I always choose check "ask me first" if possible. I usually disable all kinds of notifications."

INT 6: "I don't even understand why people have the on. Many friends use mobile data all the time, it really drains the battery. One of the reasons is that there are so many conversations in WhatsApp that have around 100 messages per hour."

4.1.4 Information provided by smartphone

Overall, the interviewees feel that smartphones and their applications provide a large amount of information. Almost every one of them mentions having to restrict the flow of information in some way, because there so much of it available. A telling sign is, that no one says there is too little information provided by the phones. Several interviewees describe the amount of information provided by phones as significantly larger than what was provided by feature phones in the past. Social media has a considerable influence on the information overload provided by the smartphones.

INT 3: "There is a lot of it. It's a lot because it has to be restricted."

INT 2: "Social media is full of information and there is always more coming. And it (information) is not even important in anyway"

INT 4: "Yes, there is quite a bit of it. For example on Facebook what people are doing, and then all the news around the world. If you are not on Facebook for a couple of days, you have no idea what is going on. Not getting the information is worse than having it."

INT 7: "There is a lot of it. That is for sure. You cannot even compare to the time before smartphones. Now you are connected all the time and you receive new information throughout the day as well."

However, it seems like the expansive amounts of information does not bother most users. The interviewees have their ways to adapt with the information overload and many even see the amount of information as a positive. It is interesting, that while many feel the need to limit the information they receive, none of the interviewees suggests they want less information available to them. This suggests the users are relatively quick to adapt to increased amounts of information, and instead of shutting down information sources or returning to older technology, they rather develop strategies in order to cope with the fact, as the previous quotes show.

INT 5: "There is a lot of it, but it does not bother me."

INT 6: Its good there is a lot of it, because I can control it anyway. When I want to receive it and can receive it, I can do it. I do not feel it as disturbing or causing anxiety. I do not know why people do not control the information more, but maybe it's a trend that everything must be known right now."

4.1.5 General opinions on smartphones

Generally, the interviewees see smartphones as a positive thing. They provide a lot of information and enable various ways of communication, while also keeping their users entertained.

INT 5: "Smartphones are a great thing!"

INT 8: "Anyway, in my opinion there is definitely a need for smartphones and they are a really good thing."

However, many doubts about them are raised as well: many are conscious of using their phone too much, as it takes away time from more important things, and even reduces or effects social interaction.

INT 6: "Well, I feel in many cases smartphones decrease the amount of interaction people have face-to-face. Overall, I am not sure that smartphones are a good thing. In some cases, they control some people's lives too much. For example, when you are spending time with your friends on a weekend night, everyone is checking their phone and seeing where all the people are. But for me as an individual, they have many good purposes."

INT 7: "I see it as a positive, although they consume a lot of time. Well, that time was probably spent on a computer or something in the past, so... It makes things easier, for example having bus timetables with you all the time."

One interviewee mentions them being a part of general technological advancement, a sign that our society is moving forwards and developing.

INT 8: "Smartphones are positive progress. Maybe they are not utilized in the best way possible yet. Technology is always developing step by step and were still figuring it out with these new devices. That is always the case."

It is worth noting, that despite various concerns, there does not seem to be any kind of yearning for a return to feature phones by any of the interviewees.

4.2 Communication between the students and Aalto University

"It is not efficient at all. You could say overall the communications are regularly irregular."

4.2.1 Communication of study related information

Email seems to be the prevalent channel of interaction between the university and its students. However, the choice of email seems to be more by default than by choice. The students do not report there being another relevant option for carrying out the communication between students, the faculty, and the organization.

INT 3: "For a corporate communications student, it's mostly a mailing list. But if you don't always read it, it's very easy to miss something."

INT 5: "I get quite a bit of emails from the school. I don't think most of the stuff I receive is very current. Email is a good channel but in the end most things aren't newsworthy.

In addition to emails, multiple online platforms exclusive to educational institutions are also used to communicate general and course information. Noppa, Optima and Moodle are used on courses, while Oodi is a platform for planning university studies. Overall, the students do not seem very content with the current organization and usage of these additional information platforms.

INT 3: "Some things are in Noppa, Optima or Moodle. It is absurd there isn't a one single platform for this. For example, Noppa is like a cemetery for old courses."

INT 4: "I feel like it's mostly what is in Noppa and Oodi. I use them daily, either at home or with my mobile phone."

Many interviewees mention multiple online platforms used in courses, such as Noppa, Optima and Moodle are a source of confusion and frustration. It is mentioned that information sometimes overlaps in different platforms and at times it is completely missing. It seems like the services cause a lot unnecessary trouble to students.

INT 2: "In my opinion, I don't know if it's my fault, there are so many overlapping platforms that it's hard to find things for yourself."

INT 7: "Noppa, Oodi, Moodle and all of those. Some things are in some service, others in other service. You better have everything in your calendar to keep track of things."

However, not everyone sees finding information as a difficult task. A couple of students find themselves quite content with the current situation. However, in these cases, the positive experience seems to be more due to the students' great IT-skills, rather than merits of the platforms.

INT 4: "I'm pretty capable at using the different services. There might be some hiccups, but for example planning your studies is easy."

Additionally, it is worth noting that Aalto University has recognized the need to simplify the course platforms and fix the current issue. Noppa, Optima and Moodle will be replaced by a new service called MyCourses beginning this fall.

Many students mention that important information often has to be searched for by a student's own initiative. When the information has to be searcher for, it is often hard to find.

INT5: "It's very hard to find things when you look for them on your own. There are some things that just can't be found."

INT 7: "I usually look for it myself. If I can't find it, it's tough to guess who to ask for help. However, if there are short-term changes on courses, those are communicated very well."

It is especially mentioned how interdisciplinary courses and programs are poorly communicated. This finding is very concerning, since these courses and programs organized in cooperation with the different school of Aalto and other stakeholders should be cornerstones of the new university. Interdisciplinary and surpassing traditional boundaries are even mentioned in the mission of Aalto University.

INT 1: "It's often up to one's own activity. There is so many things going on, for example this MIND class with ESADE University. Well, it's too late to enroll, because I only heard about it last week."

INT 8: "When you try to find out about which courses to take, minors, exchange etc. it gets very hard sometimes and takes up a lot of time. When I did an internship all the paperwork and everything was exhausting. It would be nice if things could be done in less time. When a semester starts or you apply to some program it eats up quite a bit of your time."

The interviewees also offered some opinions about the efficiency of the communications. Overall, the thoughts were not too positive. One even mentioned that students of Otaniemi seem more informed than Biz students located at the Töölö campus.

INT 1: "It doesn't feel too effective. Maybe the information is lost in all the channels. It's very mixed. Some things are said in one place but not the other. People seem to be more in the know in Otaniemi compared to Töölö campus. "

INT 4: "It's not too efficient. You could say overall the communications are regularly irregular."

The interviewees did not feel there was too much information being shared by the Aalto University, Aalto Biz or the study departments at the moment. This seems to be in line with the finding that most interviewees are very skilled in filtering information for the bits they need.

INT 4: "It's too little or just enough. It could be somehow more efficient, not sure how. Maybe it could be more focused, some things are very hard to find right now."

INT 6: "Well most courses offer enough information. I don't think there can be too much of it though, that's something I've never experienced."

INT 7: "There isn't too much of it. The Monday newsletter and some career stuff as well. Lectures and courses are often left to students to find out.

In addition, many mentioned some of the information that was communicated now was irrelevant and poorly targeted.

INT 5: "Well I would focus on the fact that most information I receive is pointless. Amount might be okay and the pace as well, but the information needs to be more relevant. There is too much nonsense included."

INT 8: "I don't know. It's not very focused to say the least. Some things are informed about in painstaking detail. It's hard to find what is relevant and what is not. For example, some multi-disciplinary courses you can only hear from a friend or something. The information should be more customizable."

4.2.2 Mobile devices and communication with the university

One point of interest was to find out how the students use their mobile devices to communicate with the school. All the participants had sent emails to the school and many check their Aalto emails consistently with their smartphones, but other communication with the school using a mobile phone was very scarce. This is not a very surprising finding, because as stated previously, the students mainly use email to communicate with the school. All in all, smartphones seem to be an almost nonexistent communication platform between the school and its students. While according to Frey (2014), this is an ordinary state of things at many public organizations, it is surprising there is so little utilization of mobile at Aalto, since the students themselves are very active smartphone users according to the findings of this study.

INT 3: "Not really, email sometimes. I might check something minor. There isn't much offered in terms of mobile by Aalto."

INT 4: "I use email a lot with my mobile phone. Nothing else really. I might check something, but I don't communicate with the school."

Many interviewees mention the communication channels are poorly optimized to mobile browsers and mobile specific applications are also missing. Usability issues are also mentioned as reason for not accessing information through smartphones.

INT 2: "Not from my side. I sometimes read my mail. Not voluntarily, if it's not an absolutely critical situation. It's too clunky, for example mail is not mobile optimized, and it shows a desktop version."

INT 5: "I've written some emails, but nothing else really. I might look at Oodi and Moodle, but that's not really communicating. Even emailing is quite inconvenient on mobile because it's not optimized."

The interviewees were also asked whether they utilized school's different IT platforms on their mobile devices. A couple of interviewees reported accessing the platforms on their mobile phones, but only if they were in a bind.

INT 1: "I sometimes use the platforms if I'm on the move. I'll rather use a browser on PC than my phone for doing that."

4.2.3 Mobile devices and technology utilization in communications by Aalto University

The interviewees offered some very interesting insights on how Aalto University utilizes modern information technology and mobile devices in their communications. Overall, the utilization of information technology, including e.g. mobile devices and applications, and social media is clearly lacking the students' eyes. Most opinions on the utilization of mobile communications by Aalto were explicitly negative.

INT 4: "Not very well, especially considering the image Aalto tries to cultivate. Aalto should be a top school, best in Finland etc. There is a lot to improve, both in terms of mobile and social media.

INT 6: "It's hard to say. On most courses it's done quite well. There is quite a lot of out-of-date information around in many cases which annoys me. That's something that needs to be improved."

INT 7: "Well there is room for improvement. There are some things being done, but there are things that could be done. The application is one thing. The organization is so big that things could be made clearer. It seems like email is still the primary tool for communication."

INT 8: "Well it's used to some extent. But a lot of information is very scattered, everything is in a different place. Some things are easier to find with Google than by navigating the sites."

One interviewee mentioned how his exchange university in USA used a mobile application to provide students with information.

INT 1: "It's clearly lacking. For example, when I was studying in San Diego, the school had their own application. It was very useful, especially for exchange students. Aalto could do a lot more. Now there is basically a weekly email or something. Maybe everything should be in the same place, now it's all over the place. There is a lot to improve in terms of mobile utilization.

Some interviewees felt the organization was very slow to adopt technologies.

INT 2: "No. Aalto is on Facebook, but is that even relevant? The worst thing is that things aren't native to mobile. That's something very ordinary these days."

INT 3: "I might not be an expert, but my gut feeling is that the school has been slow with these things. Most organizations do this stuff when they are forced to. Usually the content is quite bad."

One interviewee had a more positive opinion. Participant seemed moderately satisfied with the situation and saw that the university is making an effort.

INT 5: "Well it's getting better. When I started it used to be really bad. I've seen and heard that some things are starting to become more mobile optimized which is nice. The change is very slow though, that's for sure!"

4.2.4 Views of possible Aalto University mobile application

The interviewees were presented with the scenario of Aalto launching its own mobile application. The overall notion was definitely positive, and students seemed to think the application could provide high utility value.

INT 2: "I would download it. I guess platforms would have to be united. I believe it could be very useful and good.

INT 3: "It think it could be good, of course it depends on the content. As an idea it's good. Of course it depends on what information was provided."

INT 4: "If the information was gathered from all the platforms I think it could work. Aalto doesn't really have mobile versions so it could make life easier."

One interviewee was lukewarm about the prospect. The opinion is largely in line with some of the other critical sentiments the respondents had on smartphones. The biggest worry is that the application will send too many alerts and take up too much time.

INT 5: "I would be terrified if it started to send too many notifications or email alerts. But it's not a bad idea altogether, there are things that should be improved. For me to download the application, it should have little information and only a few relevant things.

In addition, one interviewee was very skeptical of the possible application. The participant did not see the benefits other respondents did. It is a relevant consideration that not all students would adopt the application and that some portion of students may not own smartphones or just use their capabilities.

INT 6: "I don't really see the use in that. It's hard to see what I could gain. Of course if you could combine all the courses and services in some way it could make sense, but personally I don't think I would use it too much. I don't really have too many applications anyway."

The students had multiple wishes for the content of the application. For many, the customization of application content is a very important feature, as it serves as a way to filter the information provided by the application. Obviously, students would also consider different kinds of information useful depending on their school and major.

INT 3: "It would be very important to have current information. Maybe a collection of what is going on and things like that. It would be nice to know about special courses for example."

INT 4: I would like to have access to study guides, study regulations, personal schedule, course applications and all the other basic information."

INT 8: "I'd like access to lecture slides for example. All the basic things!"

INT 5: "I'd like to receive information about grades I just got and things like that. Customization would be extremely important to me and would likely dictate if I would use the application."

Two interviewees saw usability of the application as a crucial point. This is in line with the finding of Kim et al. (2014), who found ease-of-use is a major driver of application adoption.

INT 7:"If the application had good usability and relevant information of course. Responsive interface would also be nice, so that you would actually want to use it."

One interviewee stated every platform or service should have its own application. This is in line with a comment made by Frey (2014), who considered so-called single purpose applications (application that mostly offers a single, very focused functionality) as a very significant trend.

INT 2: "Maybe every service could be in their own applications as well. You need them all so I guess every one of them should exists on mobile as well."

Almost all the interviewees felt that the student population in general would find the applications useful. The consensus of interviewees seemed to be that students are generally very capable users of smartphones and would like access to many of the same features they now access with their personal computers. This is a relevant finding, since for example Kim et al. (2014) previously found out favorable evaluations of peers are important in application adoption.

INT 2: "I believe the students would use it if it was good. If it made things easier. Customization would be very important."

INT 4: "People are quite responsive to applications, I believe it would be received well."

INT 8: "I believe they would like it as well. You could use the services you use on desktop on your phone, it would be helpful."

The interviewees would be open to receiving notifications from the application, with certain reservations.

INT 2: "Yes, if the amount was decent. Perhaps weekly notifications from the dean or something could be nice. Usually organizations want to give you the big picture as well. My own workplace used to have these updates from the CEO, which were nice."

4.3 Relationship between the university and its students

"I do not feel too close to the school, but I have some pride on the fact I study there."

In order to better understand the research context, interviewees were asked questions about the content of their studies: how much time they spend at the school and at lectures, do they study full time or work at the same time, whether the study remotely or at school? The interviewees' relationship with Aalto University and Aalto University School of Business was also explored in order to create background on the state of legitimacy the school has with its students.

4.3.1 Content of Aalto students' studies

According to the findings of this study, there is not a single characterization that fits all students. While all the interviewees were full-time students, many also held jobs at the same time. Some were even putting in double the effort, working and studying full-time at the same time. A few indicated combining studies and working is challenging, with school work often taking the back seat if there is pressure on working more hours. However, many employers seem flexible about combining studies and working. It is not always clear which role is the dominant one for a student, and situations change very quickly. It seems clear, that at least for the students of Aalto University School of Business, working on the side of studies is a regular practice. Surprisingly few were only concentrating on their studies.

INT 3: "I consider myself a full time student. But I also work, the division between them is very vague. Couple of days at work, couple at school. If both activities overlap, school is usually where I compromise.

INT 5: "Yes I am a full time student, but I'm not entirely sure if my employer would agree with that statement because I work every week as well."

The study practices of students seem to be quite diverse. While a lot of courses and teaching still include lectures, many courses can be completed mostly remotely and some product development or business projects include very little class hours.

INT 1: "I do not always go to the school. I do have classes, but not every day. It varies a lot depending on what I am studying at the moment. I am doing a product development project *which does not really have a clear structure, it is mostly about communicating with others, managing people. Traditional studying, like going to the library with your books, I do not really do anything like that. No day is the same."*

INT 1: "It has changed a lot since I started here (3.5 years ago). I used to have more classes first year, but I have since learned to study my own way."

INT 2: "I try to make it to school as early as possible. Classes are usually scheduled around 12 or 14. Usually I am slow to get up so days take until 18, or even 20 sometimes."

INT 3: "Usually I have classes, but not right now. It is more like meeting with companies and doing group work. I have two to four hours of classes each day, plus some individual and group work in addition."

INT 5: "I usually have one class every day. I wake up, go to class and come back home. I work with quite a slow pace, so I might work late in to the night because I keep so many breaks in between.

INT 5: "I try to avoid the school building, it makes me anxious somehow. I only do group work here. I do not really hang around the school."

INT 7: "There is very little contact teaching. A lot of independent work, especially now. All in all there has been a lot of that here. The big lectures have usually been so that everyone just sits around quiet and there is little contact with teacher or other students."

Some interviewees said they prefer working at school, but on the other hand some felt very strongly about not "hanging around" at school premises if there were no lectures.

INT 6: "School is pretty much about studying independently right now. It has been like that for the past few years. I do most of my studies from home."

INT 8: "I prefer working here. Sometimes I have to prioritize because of work and skip lectures. I prioritize according to what stresses me out the most. Sometimes you just have to do some work and try to do schoolwork according to deadlines. I usually know the schedule for the next few days."

The lack of physical presence at the school is strikingly present in the interviewees' responses. While most interviewees state they attend lectures, presence is not mandatory on many classes and even when it is it takes up a relatively small part of the students' week. It seems reasonable to suggest that because the students' physical presence at the school and thus face-to-face interactions with the faculty and staff decrease, there would be an increased need to communicate to students effectively via multiple other communication channels. Seeing as most students are somehow involved in the working life alongside their studies, it is easy to conclude that the environment for communicating with the students is increasingly demanding, especially since they represent a group of definitive stakeholders.

4.3.2 Relationship between students and Aalto University School of Business

The students were asked about the overall perception of their studies at Aalto University School of Business. Most students say they have enjoyed their time at the school, but the positivity seems a little bit cautious.

INT 1: "It's an important place for me because it's where I study. But to be honest, I have mixed feelings about our school. There is the good and the bad. Overall, I see a lot of good things, especially with Aalto in general. The change is positive and I feel like I want to be a part of it. In Aalto Business, there is a stronger sense of bureaucracy, some things are sometimes very hard to get done. "

INT 4: "I've had a pretty good time. However, I'm more interested in work right now, it just feels like working life offers much more challenges and opportunities. Anyway, I have no big complaints about Aalto."

INT 6: "I feel okay about the school. Not super excited, but not bad at all. I'm not super invested in my studies, I've never been like that. But I know I want to work with the things I study right now. So I'm motivated to do well and I feel like I've done my job quite well."

INT 7: "In the end I've had a good time here. The studies are very independent, although at this phase of studies and life you should be able to handle that. Of course because I moved from another school I wish there had been a longer introduction. There were tutors and all, but it would be nice to get more support. Overall, I've done quite well and stayed in schedule."

Many raised some concerns about their studies related to changes in departments and degree regulations.

INT 3: "I feel a little bit cheated. Aalto presented itself as a new innovative university, but reality has been quite harsh. Multidisciplinary studies don't really work as they should. I've been very active trying to find and take those classes, but it's mostly for my own good, since I cannot include a lot of them in my degree studies.

Only two interviewees were clearly positive on the overall study experience at Aalto University School of Business:

INT 2: "I have quite a close relationship with the school. Good place to study, good atmosphere, friends and nice location."

INT 8: "I've really liked it here, I have nothing bad to say.

In addition, one interviewee described the experience at Aalto University as quite negative. However, this seemed more based on the interviewee's personality than actions of the school.

INT 5: "I haven't liked it here. I don't know… I have a feeling I don't really belong here. I may not be hungry enough for this, I don't have the sort of salesman's attitude you need around here?"

INT 5: "To put it together, I don't like this school at all. But if there is a nice teacher on some class it makes it more bearable."

The interviewees were also asked about their relationship with Aalto University and the Aalto University School of Business. The question was interpreted differently by different interviewees. Some were a little bit confused of a suggestion that there is a strong relationship between the school and its students, which in itself is a telling finding. Nonetheless, the question produced some very interesting answers. Overall, there seemed to be a consensus that the school as an organization does not really have a strong relationship with its students, which is quite surprising considering stakeholder relationship between the two sides. After all, students can definitely be seen as definitive stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2004).

INT 5: "Well it's hard for me to think about the relationship, because to me the teachers and students represent the school. I don't really know what is going on with the organization."

INT 6: It's a strange question. I study here and the organization provides support for that and gives classes but I don't really feel like it's a close relationship. And I'm not sure it could or should be? It's an organization after all."

Many described the relationship between themselves and the university as distant. Many interviewees use the exact word to describe their feelings about the relationship. All in all, it is striking how similar most of the answers are. It is worth noting, that none of the interviewees has a clearly positive stance on the relationship with the university, despite most interviewees saying they have in at least some way enjoyed their time at Aalto University School of Business. The answers were strikingly similar:

INT 2: "Well as a student you feel distant. Maybe I'm more like a lonely wolf just wandering from class to class. The teachers communicate with me, but that's mostly it.

INT 3: "It's a very distant relationship. But it's my fault as well. I just don't care anymore since I'm graduating quite soon, it's not my problem. I feel quite pessimistic about all this (Aalto)."

INT 4: "Well, it's not distant but neither is it close. First year I felt more involved, but now I'm concentrating more on my studies."

INT 6: "Well, in the end it's quite distant. But I don't feel like an outsider or anything. Maybe I could've been more involved (with other students).

The organization of Aalto University School of Business and its personnel are quite poorly known by the students. For example, one student mentioned not knowing the deans name. The organizational structure closest to the student, the department of studies, is often seen as a source of confusion and even irritation instead of providing information, support and communication.

INT 2: "I don't really know much at all about the department (Marketing) or the organization as a whole."

INT 4: "For example, in the entrance exam I really liked studying management and strategy, but when I've studied it, the department is a mess.

INT 5 "For example, I don't know who the dean is, or the vice-dean for that sake."

The relationship is also described as weak, and there seems to be a lack of interaction between the school and its students. Many interviewees seem like they would want to have a closer relationship with the school and especially more interaction between the students, teachers and organization is needed.

INT 2: "I don't feel like there is a lot of contact or co-operation."

INT 4: "I don't really feel there is a strong connection. You get to be quite self-reliant and make your own choices. There is little interaction outside the class room, there isn't really too much advice or support available.

INT 5: "There isn't really any interaction, not from my side at least. I don't feel there is anyone listening to me, not that I'm trying to say anything. I don't really feel like there are too many ways to be influential after five years at this school. It feel like my train has left."

INT 8: "I don't know, there isn't a strong connection or feeling. But I feel positive about the university developing, the right things are being done. However, the relationship isn't very personal."

Some students highlight very particular shortcomings that have affected the relationship between themselves and the university. Many raised concerns about changes to departments and degree regulations, issues that have a significant effect on studies. In the past few years, Aalto University School of Business has gone through several name changes and several key positions in the organization of the School of Business have seen new people come in. In addition, a new study regulation was introduced in 2013, which was a significant change for both students and members of the faculty. In autumn 2015, bachelor level students of Aalto Biz will be moving to Otaniemi, marking another major transition.

INT 1: "Professors are mostly hiding in their rooms here. I have very different experiences from taking classes in Otaniemi, many faculty members are much more accessible."

INT 4: "The execution of courses and information is very confusing."

INT 7: "Well there is interaction on some level, but at the same time you feel like you are lost in the numbers. There is a lot of changes with departments and programs going on which makes it harder. Many things are unclear.

The power structures of the university seem like a common source of dissatisfaction and an embodiment of the distance between the students and the organization. The students perceive the university as a very hierarchical organization, which seems to affect the relationship negatively. There seems to be some sense of a lack of goodwill between the students and the school.

INT 1: "There seems to be quite a significant power distance at Biz There are plenty of structures and hierarchy, it's almost like the university seems to wear this uniform of tradition. I wonder why it's not more like a community where professors and students would do things together."

INT 3: "It's always like: "No you can't." or "No, it doesn't go like that." There is tons of bureaucracy. Sometimes I feel like what is the point, who is this school for? The students or the employees?"

While being a bit cautious at the same time, a couple of interviewees did state they are proud of being an Aalto student or that they appreciate getting a good degree and education from the university, despite some of the disconnect between themselves and the school. Aalto University School of Business still seems to have pragmatic legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) with its students. Although the relationship between the university and its students may be distant and unclear, the end result of the relationship (exchange as Suchman would say) still seems like a good proposition to the students. The students' view is replicated by more objective analysis: for example, according to Financial Times's (2014) influential business school rankings, Aalto Biz is considered one of the top business schools in Europe, top two in Scandinavia and by far the best in Finland.

INT 4: "I appreciate that you get a very good degree from here. But in the end, despite all the shortcomings I feel quite good about all of this."

INT 6: "I feel some sort of pride about being an Aalto students, but then again I don't go around advertising the fact. It's not a huge part of my identity I guess. I don't feel too close to the school, but I have some pride on the fact I study there."

5. Discussion

The fifth chapter of this thesis discusses the primary findings of the study. The discussion is organized according to the research questions as presented in Chapter 1.

The first research question was: *"How are smartphones and mobile applications used by Aalto University School of Business students?"*

Technological advancement has brought us smartphones (Middleton, 2010), a mobile device that is increasing its popularity exponentially (e.g. Kaplan, 2011; Kim et al. 2014). As proven by several studies (e.g. Böhmer et al. 2010; Watson et al. 2013; Avidar et al. 2013), mobile phones and especially their brand new, smarter generation are a significant social phenomenon with potential to influence society on a significant level. Similar to the previous studies concentrating on smartphones and corporate communication such as Avidar et al. (2013) and Bhave et al. (2013), this study concentrated on young people as users of mobile phones. In contrast to those studies, the intention of this thesis is to provide a more qualitative view on smartphone usage.

Firstly, it is very evident in the research findings, that many users have an incredibly *strong relationship* with their phones. Smartphones seem to be extremely important to many users and some interviewees even describe an almost intimate relationship with their phones. The smartphones raise *feelings and emotions* are attached to them. Terms like addiction and dependency are used to describe users' thoughts on smartphones. Some interviewees even describe the relationship in similar terms one would talk about personal relationships. While a strong relationship between smartphones and their users has been discussed previously (e.g. Bhave et al. 2013), the quantitative studies have not completely clarified the intensity of the relationship.

Secondly, despite a variety of capabilities, smartphones are still primarily used *for communication* purposes. This finding supports prior research of Böhmer et al. (2010), although informative, entertainment and social media purposes are extremely important for users as well, finding made by e.g. Avidar et al. (2013) and Kim et al. (2014). Instant messaging application WhatsApp seems to have an extremely high penetration with smartphone users, a finding which should merit further research. Increasing performance of wireless broadband (Middleton, 2010) is likely to serve entertainment purposes well, further distorting the line between utility and entertainment purposes. To organizations, the high communication use of smartphones is an extremely important consideration. As users increasingly prefer mobile communications, organization should seek ways to move their communication practices to mobile platforms.

Thirdly, in prior studies on smartphones, *negative user experiences and users' critical opinions on smartphones and applications* have not really been discussed in depth. Despite a generally favorable view on smartphones, many negatives on smartphones are discussed in the findings of this study. For some users, smartphones are a source of *dependency, addiction and even anxiety*. There are also hints that users may adopt smartphones despite negative feelings towards them because of certain fear of social exclusion. This information is valuable for both communicators and researchers. However, despite various users' concerns, the general consensus on smartphones seems very positive.

The second research question was: *"How do Aalto University School of Business and its students communicate with each other?*

According to Cornelissen (2004, p.56) stakeholders are one of the key concepts in all corporate communication and managing stakeholder relationships is crucial for any modern organization. All groups that have a legitimate stake in the organization are not only affected by organizations, but can also affect those same organizations themselves. By utilizing Cornelissen's (2004) stakeholder mapping tool and descriptions of e.g. Lomas (2007) and Morley (2003) we can deduce that students are definitive stakeholders for the university, meaning they should be treated with considerable attention.

Firstly, the students seem somewhat *dissatisfied with the overall state of communication* at Aalto University. Problems are not exclusive to any single level of organization, but seem to be present all around. It is mentioned by several interviewees that interdisciplinary courses and programs are poorly communicated. Overall, it seems that important information often has to be searched for by a student's own initiative. When the information has to be searcher for, it is often hard to find. The interviewees did not feel there was too much information being shared by the Aalto University, Aalto Biz or the study departments at the moment. However, many mentioned some of the information that was communicated now was irrelevant and poorly targeted. Many interviewees mentioned online platforms used in courses, such as Noppa, Optima and Moodle are a sources of confusion and frustration. However, Aalto is currently launching a new service to unify and replace the three platforms.

Secondly, it appears *the utilization of information technology*, including e.g. mobile devices and applications, and social media *is clearly lacking* the students' eyes. As an example, communication channels are poorly optimized to mobile browsers and mobile specific applications are almost completely missing. All in all, smartphones seem to be an almost nonexistent communication platform between the school and its students. Overall, there is a lot of room for improvement in providing the students communication in channels they want to use.

Thirdly, it seems like the students would welcome *an Aalto branded mobile application* with great enthusiasm. Students seemed to think the application could provide high utility value. For many, *the customization of application content* is a very important feature, as it serves as a way to filter the information provided by the application. Some saw usability as a crucial point for the application's success. Almost all the interviewees felt that the student population in general would find the applications useful.

Additionally, regarding the research context, it was found that there is considerable variety on the studying practices of students. Remotely performing courses, out-of-classroom learning, and full- or part-time work during the studies are just some of the issues affecting the students and their teachers. The lack of physical presence at the school buildings is clearly present in the interviewees' responses. While the qualitative nature of the study does not allow to make strong conclusions related to those findings, it seems likely that the content and changing nature of higher education studies may be a source of many challenges for stakeholder communication at various universities.

The third research question was: *"What kind of implications does the mobile era have on the legitimacy of Aalto University among its students?*

Palazzo and Scherer (2006) describe corporate legitimacy as an organization's role in relation to the society. Furthermore, having legitimacy is a must for any organization hoping to acquire resources efficiently and maintain stakeholder support. According to Suchman (1995), there are three forms of legitimacy: pragmatic (based on audience self-interest), moral (based on normative approval) and cognitive (based on comprehensibility). Palazzo and Scherer (2006) claim that communicating with stakeholders is a key in acquiring organizational legitimacy. Additionally, as legitimacy is based on the social environment where the organization operates, all significant changes in that environment have an effect on those organizations. Therefore, it is reasonable to speculate that technological advancements such as smartphones have an effect on what stakeholders expect from organizations.

Firstly, the pragmatic legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) of Aalto seems to be relatively intact. Multiple interviewees did state they are proud of being Aalto students or that they appreciate getting a good degree and education from the university, despite some of them feeling disconnected with the school. Although the relationship between the university and its students may be distant and unclear, the end result of the relationship still seems like a good proposition to the students.

Secondly, there seemed to be a consensus that the school as an organization does not really have a strong relationship with its students. The findings' suggest Aalto may be having problems with its cognitive legitimacy, which according to Suchman (1995) is the most difficult type of legitimacy to acquire, maintain and repair. Many interviewees described the relationship between themselves and the university as distant. The similarity of interviewees' answers on this topic was significant. The organizational structure closest to the student, the department of studies, was often seen as a source of confusion and even irritation instead of providing information, support and communication. The relationship is also described as weak, and there seems to be a lack of interaction between the school and its students. Many interviewees seem like they would want to have a closer relationship with the school and especially more interaction between the students, teachers and organization is needed. Some students highlight very particular shortcomings that have affected the relationship between themselves and the university. Many raised concerns about changes to departments and degree regulations, issues that have a significant effect on studies.

The qualitative nature of the study does not enable claiming a strong relationship between the shortcomings in the lack of utilization of mobile technology and the possible legitimacy problem. However, it is clear that there are problems of communication between the school and its definitive stakeholders, the students. Furthermore, it is reasonable to claim that the so-called mobile era is causing a shift in social environment of the students, which according to literature on legitimacy may be a source of problems between an organization and its stakeholders. While the links between the issues remain vague, it is at least an interesting consideration to think that lack of technological adaptation by organizations may cause legitimacy problems.

6. Conclusions

The sixth and final chapter of this thesis presents a summary of the research, proposes practical implications based on the research, addresses various limitations of the thesis, and finally, suggests related topics for further research.

6.1 Research summary

The purpose of this thesis was to study university students' smartphone usage and communications with the Aalto University School of Business. The study is tied to the field of corporate communication by the concepts of stakeholder communication and organizational legitimacy. The more general goal of the thesis is to understand how smartphones are used by the users, utilized in communication and whether they have potential as channels in stakeholder communication.

Currently, research combining smartphone usage to corporate communication themes is currently very scarce and the few studies on the subject (Avidar et al., 2013; Bhave et al., 2013) have taken a mostly quantitative approach by utilizing surveys to study the topic. This has created a need to take a more focused and deeper look at the subject. In addition to the existing research gap, a practical need for this study exists as well: according to e.g. Frey (2014) many companies both public and private have been slow to adopt opportunities offered by smartphones and mobile applications.

Because of the breadth of the themes discussed in this thesis, the study was narrowed down to a single case study. The case study took a look at students of Aalto University School of Business and their relationship with mobile technology. This focus also offered interesting insights on the nature of the students' studies in addition to the primary research topic. The research data consisted of eight semi-structured interviews with Aalto University School of

Business students. All interviews were carried out face to face and lasted from 25 to 35 minutes.

The three research questions of this study were:

Q1: "How are smartphones and mobile applications used by Aalto University School of Business students?"

Q2: "How do Aalto University School of Business and its students communicate with each other?

Q3: "What kind of implications does the mobile era have on the legitimacy of Aalto University among its students?

The main findings of the research regarding smartphone usage and stakeholder communications and legitimacy are presented below.

1. Users have an incredibly strong relationship with their phones. While a strong relationship between smartphones and their users has been discussed previously (e.g. Bhave et al. 2013; Watson et al. 2013), the quantitative studies have not entirely clarified the intensity of the relationship. The intensity of this relationship is arguably causing a shift in users' social environment, which demands attention from all organizations.
2. Smartphones are primarily used for communication purposes, while entertainment and informative usage are growing in importance as well. This finding supports prior studies made by e.g. Böhmer et al. (2010), Avidar et al. (2013) and Kim et al. (2014).
3. In addition to some overall dissatisfaction about the state of communications at the Aalto University, it appears the utilization of smartphones and mobile applications at Aalto University and its Business School is clearly lacking in the students' eyes. This supports findings of e.g. Avidar et al. and Kim et al. (2014), as the public has more readily adopted these new technologies compared to most organizations. The students would seem more than happy to receive an Aalto branded mobile application.

4. Lack of successful stakeholder communication may have implications for the lack of legitimacy. While the pragmatic legitimacy of Aalto seems to be intact (students are happy with what they get out of their education), the organization seems to have at least some sort of issues with cognitive legitimacy. The finding supports the view of Palazzo and Scherer (2006), who have stated communication is the key in achieving legitimacy. It may be the case that inability to communicate with the students through the appropriate medium has decreased the cognitive legitimacy of the organization, and they no longer accept the organization as strongly as before, even considering alternatives for the current relationship. Furthermore, the lack of adapting to changes in social environment (here smartphones, mobile applications and other information technology capabilities into serving stakeholder) as described by Palazzo and Scherer (2006) may well contribute to the dip in legitimacy and stakeholder relationship.

6.2 Practical implications

Firstly, the findings of this study further highlight the need for organizations to understand their stakeholders and their relationship with the organization. While it remains in this case impossible to establish causality, it seems that successfully communicating with stakeholders is connected to organizational legitimacy. While this implication is nothing new, further focus on stakeholder management is needed especially within the field of higher education as the modern student looks for his place as a stakeholder. In addition to the changing role of the student, the fragmented content of studies and ongoing switch to more digital services and communication provide further challenges for organizations trying to stay legitimate.

Secondly, for corporate communications professionals, it is crucial to grasp how involved audiences are with smartphones and mobile applications. Not utilizing the potential hidden in those possibilities would be a mistake, and downright stupid. The question should not be if companies should be present in the mobile platform, but how fast are they able to move into the mobile world. It is essential to realize, many users are ready to receive organizational communications on their smartphones, and many even expect that from companies. The apparent growth in smartphones' informative usage also supports this view.

Thirdly, as the adoption rates of new technologies grow faster, more focus on connecting with stakeholders through appropriate channels provided by these new technological capabilities is needed. Whether the organization operates within the technology sector or not, increasing capabilities in understanding new technologies is needed. Smartphone and mobile applications users are more than ever willing, and even demanding, to receive corporate communications through the mobile device.

6.3 Limitations of the study

This section takes a critical look at the study and its research process and thus addresses the multiple limitations. Zalan and Lewis (2004) argue, that qualitative researchers should always accept the limitations of research methods and use caution when presenting their findings. The more carefully limitations are presented, the more valid and believable the findings will be. Ontological and epistemological considerations are also considered as part of limitations, as they indicate that the researcher has a certain view of the world he studies.

Firstly, the existing literature on smartphones and mobile applications is very fragmented. Many of the articles referenced come from various fields of research, as corporate communications research on the theme of this study remains extremely scarce. This undoubtedly has an effect on the literature review.

The second limitation is the researcher's own view on mobile technology. While the researcher is not a technology enthusiast per se, he has a relatively positive view on the technology and its benefits. This point of view may, and probably will affect the analysis of research data.

The third limitation of the thesis was that the data collection consisted of a qualitative study of a single case organization. Multiple case studies have merits, and are preferred by many over single case studies (Saunders, et al. 2009, p. 147). The results are accurate for this particular case only and there should be great care taken when generalizing the findings of such as study.

The fourth limitation lies in the nature of the data, which consists of eight interviews. The sampling decisions cause many limitations, including the relative homogeneity of respondents. The interviewees and the case context do not form a perfect representation of the phenomenon. For example, the choice of a university as the research context automatically narrows down the research into well-educated research subjects. Business students are often thought of as a homogeneous group, due to which the data might seem more consistent than it would be in some other context. Additionally, there was an intention to find participants that are somewhat familiar with the subjects, which might mean that more skeptical and even negative views will be under represented. The number of participants is also relatively small, and the conclusions should thus be interpreted with restraint. It is important not to generalize based on any of the findings (which is not the intention of a single case study either). While for example Yang, Zhou and Liu (2010) and Avidar et al. (2013) deemed college students an appropriate population for a mobile technology study, the data might give an overly positive view on the technology and its possibilities. This type of qualitative data is also much more susceptible to researcher's subjective interpretation than many other types of research data.

Lastly, the reporting language of this thesis presents a limitation. The interviews were made in Finnish, because that is the native language of both the researcher and the interviewees. The translation process may transform the meaning of some of the data. In addition, there is a possibility that the researcher makes mistakes in translation.

The results and conclusions of qualitative research are also very much dependent on the researcher's interpretation. As the phenomenon of the study is quite broad, it allows for many kinds of interpretations and it can be argued it is thus even more dependent on the researcher's own views on the subject.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

The final section proposes some topics for further research based on this study's findings and prior research in the field. As discussed throughout this thesis, discussion of smartphones, mobile applications and mobile technology related to corporate communication topics is almost non-existent, offering numerous opportunities for future research topics

Based on the findings and discussion of this thesis, four suggestions for further research are presented:

First of all, even more focused studies on smartphone and mobile application usage is needed. While the quantitative studies such as those by Böhmer et al. (2011), Avidar et al. (2013) and Bhave et al. (2013) have provided a good basis for academic research on the phenomenon, more detailed, qualitative studies in academic journals are needed to fully understand the nature and importance of smartphone usage. At the same time, discussion by leading researchers and journals is needed to recognize the urgency for organizational change caused by the rise of smartphones.

Secondly, in this study, students represent a sort of a hybrid stakeholder. They are similar to an internal stakeholder, but are also seen as customers of the university. Studies with several different stakeholder groups would offer additional insights on how smartphones and applications can affect stakeholder relationships and organizational legitimacy. In terms of developing mobile communication capabilities, external and internal stakeholders could definitely have significantly differing needs, especially because of different views of legitimacy. For example, according to Frey (2014), several companies are currently developing internal mobile communication capabilities in addition to services provided by Microsoft and other IT companies. Usage of informal communication channels such as WhatsApp for work purposes could also be studied.

Thirdly, usage of smartphones within different organizations should be conducted. It is reasonable to assume, an organization with an older age structure would provide different user opinions on smartphones and their utilization in internal communications. Many major Finnish companies including Finnair, Nordea, OP-Pohjola and SOK have also developed mobile applications for their stakeholders (mainly customers), providing possible opportunities for case studies on external communication use of mobile applications.

Finally, multiple interviewees described negative feelings and experiences related to smartphones. It is noteworthy, that in the prior studies on smartphones, negative user experiences and users' skeptical opinions on the technology have been largely missing. More research on the negative effects of smartphones are needed in order to understand possible harms and risks related to smartphones. This is not only a relevant issue for the field of corporate communications (e.g. how to not trouble stakeholders with unnecessary communication), but also for fields including but not limited to psychology, pedagogy, and medicine. Considering the intensity of some users' smartphone usage and descriptions of addiction, it is not unreasonable to suggest that smartphone usage may have various types of effects on physical and mental health of their users.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questions for the semi-structured interviews (English)

Theme 1: Studies at the Aalto University School of Business

Tell me about your studies? How long have you studied for? What kind of phase are your studies in?

Tell about your regular day studying?

Are you a full time student?

How does the university usually communicate with you?

Which university provided digital services do you use? How often? With what do you access them?

How do you acquire information considering your studies?

Are there differences in receiving and seeking information?

Describe your relationship with Aalto University and the School of Business?

Would you say there is interaction between you and the university? How does it occur?

Theme 2: Utilizing smartphones and mobile technology

What kind of a phone do you have?

Do you own other mobile devices (a tablet, other phone)?

How long have you had a smartphone?

How would you describe your relationship with your phone?

How do you usually utilize your phone?

Which applications do you use the most?

Do you keep notifications on for them?

What do you think about the amount of information provided by your phone?

What is your general feeling about smartphones?

Theme 3: Communication with Aalto University School of Business

Do you use your phone to communicate with the university?

What about school work?

Do you have corporate applications installed?

Are you familiar with unofficial Aalto applications?

What is your opinion on Aalto having its own application? What about other students?

What kind of information should the application have?

Would you keep notifications on?

What do you think about the current amount of information offered by the university?

Describe how you think Aalto utilizes technology in communicating with you and other students?

Appendix 2: Questions for the semi-structured interviews (Finnish)

Teema 1: Opiskelu Aalto Yliopiston Kauppakorkeakoulussa

Kerro opinnoistasi? (Kauan opiskellut? / Mikä on opintojen tilanne nyt?)

Kerro tavallisesta koulupäivästäsi? Kokopäiväistä?

Kuvaile suhdettasi Aalto yliopistoon?

Miten koulu yleensä viestii sinulle (oppilaalle)/miten saat informaatiota?

Mitä yliopiston tarjoamia verkkopalveluita käytät? Kuinka usein? Miten käytät?

Koetko olevasi vuorovaikutuksessa yliopiston kanssa? Miten tämä vuorovaikutus tapahtuu?

Onko siinä eroa etsitkö vai saatko informaatiota?

Teema 2: Älypuhelimen käyttö ja mobiilisovellukset

Mikä puhelin? Entä pädi?

Kauan olet omistanut sen?

Miten kuvaisit suhdetta puhelimeesi?

Miten yleensä käytät puhelintasi?

Mitä sovelluksia käytät eniten?

Millaisia sovelluksia nämä ovat?

Pidätkö hälytyksiä päällä?

Teema 3: Viestintä Aalto Yliopiston kanssa

Käytätkö puhelintasi koulun kanssa viestimiseen?

Entä koulutehtävien tekemiseen?

Onko sinulla muiden yritysten/yhteisöiden sovelluksia?

Miten suhtautuisit jos Aallolla olisi oma sovellus? Entä muut opiskelijat?

Mitä informaatiota haluaisit? Miten sovellus voisi tukea opiskelua?

Ottaisitko ilmoituksia vastaan?

Miten informaation määrä nyt, sopivasti, liikaa, liian paljon?

Onko joku seuraavista sovelluksista sinulle tuttu, Aalto Info, Aalto Uni Student Guide, Aalto Menus?

Kuvaile miten Aalto mielestäsi käyttää uuden teknologian tuomia viestintämahdollisuuksia?