THE IMPORTANCE OF MEASURING CONTROL MUTUALITY IN B2B RELATIONSHIPS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

This study takes an exploratory look at the influence of control mutuality in B2B relationships. Control mutuality relates to the power relationship and decision-making processes that take place within business relationships and has seen limited application in relationship management literature.

Conventional approaches (for example Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Theron, 2008) found trust and commitment to be key influencers of successful relationships and act as mediating variables between relationship variables (for example shared values) and relationship success or intention to stay in the relationship. Therefore, the influence of control mutuality on trust, commitment (as mediators) and relationship success (as dependent variable) is investigated. The importance of including control mutuality in relationship management studies in developing countries like South Africa is investigated by looking at two separate studies that measured this variable. Both studies measured business-to-business relationships with the use of electronic surveys, rendering sample sizes of 154 and 31 respectively. Both studies found that control mutuality significantly influenced perceptions of goal attainment and relationship success.

Moreover, the significance of control mutuality in the measured relationships could also be context related. Lower levels of trust have been measured in some relationship management studies in developing countries (see Jo, 2003) and partners might need to place greater focus on the control mechanisms within the relationship.

The contribution of this study consequently lies in the addition of control mutuality to traditional relationship management studies. It also introduces new relationship management measures to B2B relationships in developing countries. By doing so, the findings points at differences in B2B relationship management strategies in developing as opposed to developed countries.