Editorial

In this first issue of *jbm* in 2010 all three articles are related to the main setting wherein companies are acting in business market management: relationships and networks.

The first contribution of Mantiaba Coulibaly and Loïc Sauvée picks up a development we can observe more and more in business and consumer markets: the combined utilization of at least two brands in the form of co-branding or ingredient branding. With their article on “Value Creation in Brand Alliances: A Dynamic Conceptualization” they aim to clarify how the value creation processes in such brand alliances proceed and which factors are driving them.

Based on a review of the literature on brand alliances and strategic alliances the authors see the context, the actors with their objectives and behaviors, resources and the governance mechanisms as the main value driving factors in this sense. From that they develop a dynamic approach of how value is created in brand alliances. Using a case study approach, the concept is employed to analyze the process of value creation within two types of alliances in the food market. As the main result the authors can show that the impact of value creating components identified before depends on the nature of the organizations involved, on the market they are acting in, and on the way the resources and governance mechanisms are combined during the process.

In the second article, Helen McGrath and Thomas O’Toole analyze the “The Potential and Challenge of the Network Realization Capability for SMEs in Ireland and Finland”. The starting point of their contribution is that managers, especially in small and medium sized companies, may have very different perspectives and interpretations of the relationships and networks they are acting in. Their ability to understand and visualize the inter-organizational linkages they are embedded in is often not fully developed. The authors argue that the marketing efforts could be enhanced if the actors would have a clearer understanding of the context they are part of. To overcome this shortage McGrath and O’Toole propose the concept of “realization capability” to ascertain the network perspective of the network participants. The concept was tested through a participatory action research in an Irish and in a Finnish setting. The results were very different between the two countries as the realization capability measured in Ireland was low compared to the one in Finland. The findings suggest that an underdeveloped realization capability may become a major barrier for many companies, especially SMEs, to participate in networks and so may hinder those firms to really make full usage of their resources.

Finally, David J. Burns, Homer B. Warren, and Rashmi Assudani open the perspective towards “The External Relationships in Relationship Marketing”. In their contribu-

tion which they themselves see as an “exploration” they aim at providing sellers with a “big picture” of long-term relationships which shows a lot more than the discrete business relationships that are typically analyzed. They develop an “External Relationship Marketing Component Model (ERMCM)” which besides the already mentioned buyer-seller relationships comprises also all relationships to other salient stakeholder. Thus, they develop a framework which enables practitioners, students, and researchers to better understand and cope with complexity which is a constituent part of relationships and of relationship marketing.

Enjoy reading!

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