

# **Customer-Perceived Value in Business Relationships: A Cross-Sectional Survey Among Purchasing Managers in Germany**

Andreas Eggert, University of Kaiserslautern  
Wolfgang Ulaga, EDHEC School of Business  
Luc Drapier, EDHEC School of Business

## **Abstract**

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the value construct. Delivering superior value to customers is a major concern of management in many business markets of today. In addition, « value » is considered as a fundamental constituent of relationship marketing. In fact, delivering superior value to customers is key to creating and sustaining long-term industrial relationships. From an empirical point of view, however, it is still not clear how the construct interacts with other prominent marketing variables. For example, researchers have recently questioned the role of satisfaction and called for a replacement of the construct by customer value as a more powerful predictor of behavioral outcomes in business markets (Gross, 1997).

## **Research Objectives and Methodology**

The present study investigates the interaction between the two fundamental constructs: customer-perceived value (CPV) and satisfaction. It addresses three specific research questions:

- How can CPV be conceptualized and measured in a business-to-business relationship ?
- Do CPV and satisfaction represent two theoretically and empirically distinct constructs ?
- Which of both constructs is the better predictor for behavioral outcomes such as repurchase, search for alternatives, and word-of-mouth?

Two alternative models that link relationship value to behavioral outcomes are developed. In the first model ("mediated impact model" ), a distinction is made between three levels of variables: cognitive, affective, and conative. The impact of CPV on behavioral outcome variables is mediated by satisfaction. (Ravald and Grönroos 1996; Patterson and Spreng 1997). In turn, the second model ("direct impact model" ) poses a direct relationship between CPV and behavioral outcome variables. Both models are empirically tested in a cross-sectional survey among 302 purchasing managers in Germany. The data is analyzed using structural equation modeling.

## **Findings**

Our study confirms that value and satisfaction in a business-to-business relationship can be conceptualized and measured as two distinct constructs. As the mediated impact model fits significantly better to the empirical data collected in the survey, our research suggests that CPV is not a substitute for satisfaction. Hence, our results do not confirm the criticism concerning the predictive power of affective variables such as satisfaction in B-to-B markets. Researchers should take into account both constructs when assessing outcomes of relationship value. Value must first be created and then translated into satisfaction in order to result in positive behavioral intentions.