



Editorial

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Since 1996 the Special Interest Group “Relationship Marketing” of the American Marketing Association (AMA) organizes the International Conference on Relationship Marketing. From September 30 to October 2, 2010, the 9th conference of this series took place in Berlin—for the second time hosted by the Marketing Department of the Freie Universität Berlin.

The current issue is one of two Special Issues with contributions of the conference to be published in the Journal of Business Market Management. The three articles in this issue focus on different aspects of relationships between suppliers and customers in B2C and B2B settings and have followed different empirical approaches: from case study research to structural equation modelling for investigating several facets of relationships.

The first paper is a single case study on differentiation strategies of a co-operative retailer in UK regarding issues of Corporate Social responsibility such as democracy, mutuality, and community care. The author, Martin Hingley, aims to identify knowledge gaps concerning the implementation of social aspects in B2C and B2B marketing relationships. In co-operative retail settings, consumers and B2B firms have to be members of the association for getting the customer status and to be able to buy from the society. Due to the exploratory nature of the research topic, the investigation is incorporating depth interviews of several managers of the Lincolnshire Co-operative Society, interviews with farm producers and secondary data. The paper presents strategies for co-operative retailers in their market development and competitive, niche positioning by using social issues. The findings of the paper are expected to contribute highly to the research field of sustainable and responsible market strategies.

In the second article the focus is on value offerings for customers. For years, questions such as what is the value of a relationship and how each business partner perceives that value are intensively discussed in marketing research and practice. Consequently, the focus of the paper from Aurélia Lefaix-Durand and Robert Kozak is on the assessment of perceptions of suppliers and customers comparing similarities and differences of value offerings, i.e. taking benefits and costs into account. The results show that benefits and costs are rather equal in determining the perception of value offerings leaving room for some differences in the subunits of both value drivers, e.g. the relevance of personal interactions for customers in building value benefits. Nevertheless, costs for both, suppli-

ers and customers are rated as more important in value offerings. The authors discuss the different results on a detailed level of benefits and costs.

The third and last paper in this *jbm* Special Issue focuses on the effect of patronage concentration of retail banking customers on customer loyalty. Laszlo Sajtos and Henning Kreis follow the observation that customer entail more than one relationship to service providers in one industry to fulfill their needs. Hence, patronage concentration is defined as the average number of bank accounts a customer has with every bank. In consequence, suppliers have to incorporate that “hidden” competition into their relationship management strategy. The large-scale study builds on the conceptual framework by Storbacka et al. (1994) on patronage concentration and tests main parts of that framework in a structural equation modelling approach. In their work, the authors compare the relationship strength resulting from economic and relational aspects of customers with a single provider to customers with multiple providers. The main result is that customers with many bank relationships (i.e., low patronage concentration) perceive the customer value and the quality of the relationship toward the main provider more negative. The findings of this study are seen to be beneficial for several industries where customers can have multiple suppliers.

We hope you enjoy reading the three contributions and we are already looking forward to the next issue which will be a Special Issue on a service-dominant logic perspective on relationships guest edited by Robert Lusch and Steve Vargo.

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