



International Journal of Marketing Management

ISSN 2454 - 5007



www.ijmm.net

Email ID: editor@ijmm.net , ijmm.editor9@gmail.com

Two people working together to solve an issue is an example of value co-creation in knowledge-intensive commercial services.

Vishwa K 1, Ajay Kumar M 2

a b s t r a c t

In the context of knowledge-intensive commercial services, this article investigates the collaborative process of value co-creation. Through 120 qualitative interviews with suppliers and purchasers of knowledge intensive services, the thorough exploratory research explores the actions, roles and resources of buyers and suppliers in the reciprocal value co-creation process, and their implications for the resultant value-in-use. This work is grounded on research on service dominance theory, marketing of solutions and professional services, and the economics of service provision. It offers a framework for visualizing value co-creation as a result of a collaborative problem-solving effort between two people, including steps like identifying the issue, brainstorming potential solutions, prototyping those ideas, arranging the necessary steps and resources, resolving any resulting value disputes, and putting the plan into action. As a management tool, the framework helps identify key resources, assign responsibilities to suppliers and customers, promote collaboration, and maximize efficiency. Knowledge-intensive and solutions-oriented businesses may both benefit from the study's findings.

Keywords: value co-creation, knowledge intensive services, business services, solutions marketing, service-dominant logic

1. Introduction

Value creation via interaction with suppliers and customers is essential to the success of business-to-business marketing (Lindgreen et al., 2009; Möller, 2006). Studies have shown that value creation is the primary goal of customer-supplier partnerships (Walter et al., 2001) and the "core purpose and central process of economic exchange" (Vargo et al., 2008). Recent research (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006; Grönroos, 2008, 2011; Payne et al., 2008) suggests that the interactions between customers and service providers contribute to the creation of value. Increasing specialization, information intensiveness, and technical complexity in many industries are making suppliers and customers more dependent on one another (Jacob & Ulaga, 2008; Möller, 2006; Sawhney, 2006; Nordin & Kowalkowski, 2010; Tuli et al., 2007). Although substantial communication and col-labor are obvious and of essential importance in value co-creation contexts characterized by complex commerce, the reciprocal processes of value co-creation have been seldom

experimentally examined. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate value co-creation in the context of knowledge-intensive commercial services via a dyadic, collaborative approach. Although it has been stressed in the services marketing literature that services are developed within interactive processes between seller and customer (Grönroos, 2000), little study has been done to explore these interaction processes from the viewpoint of value creation (Lindgreen & Wynstra, 2005). Similarly, the service-dominant logic perspective highlights the importance of collaboration in value creation; yet, there is a lack of empirical study on the nature of such joint activities (Grönroos, 2011; Payne et al., 2008; Vargo et al., 2008). For example, Nicosia and Wind (1977) and Verville and Halingten (2003) study purchase decision making procedures from the standpoint of the customer, but they do not investigate interactive value generating processes.

Director¹, Assistant Professor ²

The Indian Institute of Management Indore

This work seeks to identify and evaluate the major activities defining the dyadic value co-creation process of complex offers since further research is needed to explore the joint activities through which value arises in knowledge dense situations. While recent research suggests that interaction between actors can help them create value for and with one another, it provides little detail on the roles played or contributions made by the parties involved in this process (Grönroos, 2008, 2011; Payne et al., 2008). On a more theoretical and general level, the service-dominant logic discusses the roles of the supplier and the customer in creating value, with the supplier contributing by making a value proposition and the customer's role being to actualize the value by making use of the resource on offer (Gummesson, 2008; Vargo et al., 2008). To elaborate, Grönroos (2008) argues that a supplier's function shifts depending on how much sway it has over how its resources are used. However, the topic has not moved beyond the theoretical and the speculative. Various works in the field of solutions marketing (e.g., Skarp & Gadde, 2008; Tuli et al., 2007) investigate the part played by suppliers, but devote much less attention to the contributions made by consumers. This leads us to our second goal, which is to investigate how suppliers and consumers work together to create value.

Finally, we note the dearth of studies that empirically examine value-in-use, the ultimate product of the value co-creation process (cf. Grönroos, 2011; Lapierre, 1997). Despite the importance of being able to prove the worth of a product or service to customers, little research has gone into identifying and quantifying the many value components of complex offerings (Lindgreen et al., 2009). As such, the purpose of this research is to isolate value components—the gains and costs that result in value creation—and analyze how collaboration affects them. This paper applies the conceptual thinking of S-D logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008b) and service logic (Grönroos, 2008, 2011) to analyze reciprocal value creation in buyer-seller relationships, and draws on the solutions and professional services marketing literatures to bring insights to value creation in the context of complex, knowledge based, processual offerings. We employ an extensive, qualitative field study in the context of knowledge intensive business services to explore the collaborative activities, roles and resources of buyers and

suppliers in the value co-creation process, and the implications for the resulting value-in-use. We propose a conceptual framework for value co-creation that occurs through a process of joint problem solving. The paper contributes to the value literature, and also to the domain of professional services and solutions marketing. The paper is organized as follows. The next section outlines a tentative framework for value co-creation. Following the theoretical discussion, we present the empirical study. The subsequent section presents our findings on value co-creation that occurs through a joint problem solving process. Finally, we examine implications for researchers and marketers within knowledge intensive businesses.

The traditional view that value is embedded in offerings that are outputs of suppliers' manufacturing processes has increasingly been challenged by the view that value emerges through the use of the offering in customers' value generating processes, as "value-in-use" (Grönroos, 2008; Kothandaraman & Wilson, 2001; Normann & Ramirez, 1993; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; Vargo & Lusch, 2008a). Actors make value propositions, i.e. "reciprocal promises of value, operating to and from suppliers and customers seeking an equitable exchange" (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006, pp. 334–335), and realize value by turning resources provided by other actors into specific benefits in their respective value processes (e.g. Lusch et al., 2008). The value of an offering is relative to an individual customer's subjective perceptions and experiences (e.g., Eggert & Ulaga, 2002). Customer perceived value is commonly defined as the trade-off between the benefits and sacrifices as perceived by the customer (Zeithaml, 1988; Ravald & Grönroos, 1996; Lindgreen & Wynstra, 2005). Customers weigh the benefits resulting from the performance and quality of the offering against the sacrifices (such as monetary cost, time, and effort) associated with the exchange (Ulaga & Eggert, 2005). Research assumes that customers seek to maximize the perceived benefits and minimize the sacrifices (Lindgreen & Wynstra, 2005). An *optimal value proposition* would involve the best possible balance between the value-in-use to be achieved and the required sacrifices.

In some contexts, suppliers can engage in extensive, personal interaction with the

customer, and thereby actively influence the customer's value process and the emergence of

value-in-use (Grönroos, 2011). Extensive interaction is prevalent particularly in service contexts where the buyers' and sellers' value processes run in parallel and in part simultaneously, and where the parties may directly influence each other (Grönroos, 2000). Value is then generated not only through the use of the object of exchange, but also through the process of exchange, as affected by the relationship and interactions between the supplier and the customer (Grönroos, 2008; Lapierre, 2000; Raval & Grönroos, 1996).

The supplier's ability to engage in active dialogue and interaction with the customer increases its potential to support the creation of value-in-use, i.e. to improve how the object of exchange is put to use (Grönroos, 2008; Payne et al., 2008). Researchers have increasingly stressed that value creation requires sharing critical information and accomplishing effective dialogic communication rather than one-way promotion (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). Ballantyne and Varey (2006) suggest that actors need to craft a value proposition jointly, which evolves as a result of negotiation between the parties. In other words, both supplier and customer need to put forward their perspectives on value, and be explicit about the benefits expected through reciprocal promises.

Creating effective dialogue may be particularly challenging in the context of complex offerings, where the suppliers are dependent on their customers to define their needs, requirements, and the usage context; but customers may lack the necessary knowledge and skills to articulate these elements to the supplier (Nordin & Kowalkowski, 2010; Tuli et al., 2007). Exchange complexity originates from the number and intricacy of the steps in the process (Shostack, 1987), and the high level of uncertainty, increased need for information search, and the non-routine nature of decision making perceived by the buyer (Alejandro et al., 2011; Brossard, 1998). The greater the information asymmetry between supplier and customer, the more dependent the customer and supplier are on each other in value creation (Möller & Törrönen, 2003). Many fields of business involve complex exchange, where value creation occurs through a process characterized as *problem solving*: high-tech, innovative product development (Lindgreen et al., 2009), tailored solutions comprising products and services (Nordin & Kowalkowski, 2010; Sawhney, 2006; Tuli et al., 2007), and professional or knowledge intensive business services (KIBS) (Gummesson, 1978; Løwendahl,

2005).

This study focuses on KIBS firms that are professional organizations whose primary value creating activities comprise the accumulation, creation, or dissemination of knowledge to provide a customized service or solution that satisfies client needs (Bettencourt et al., 2002). Examples of KIBS industries include IT services, R&D services, technical consultancy, and legal, financial and management consultancy. According to Muller and Zenker (2001), KIBS share three common features: 1) the knowledge intensity of the service provided; 2) the problem solving function; and 3) the strongly interactive or client related character of the service provided. Such characteristics are considered key determinants of "professional services" in the marketing and management literature, too, as their key features relate to the application of expertise, high customization and credence qualities (Gummesson, 1978; Jaakkola & Halinen, 2006; Lapierre, 1997; Løwendahl, 2005). A number of similarities exist also between knowledge intensive services and solutions (Nordin & Kowalkowski, 2010). The core of knowledge intensive services is the application of the supplier's specialist knowledge to benefit the customer (e.g. Løwendahl, 2005), making the object of exchange rather vague and intangible. Many authors describe the problem solving process in knowledge intensive business as complex and time consuming (Lindberg & Nordin, 2008; Tuli et al., 2007), involving problem identification, solution design and implementation, and the solution derived outcomes (e.g., Gummesson, 1978; Lapierre, 1997; Sawhney, 2006; Skarp & Gadde, 2008).

The problem solving process begins with the identification of exchange content and goals: what does the customer need, and how can the supplier deliver solutions to meet those needs (e.g. Sawhney, 2006). The supplier's high degree of specialization may manifest a substantial disequilibrium of expertise and experience between the professional and the customer (Løwendahl, 2005). Customers may have a limited understanding of their needs (Lapierre, 1997; Mitchell, 1994), which makes them dependent on the supplier to diagnose a problem (Tuli et al., 2007). Customer resources are nevertheless critical to the process: in industrial contexts, customers possess much of the knowledge needed for problem solving e.g. technological information, market insight and project objectives (Bettencourt et al., 2002). The complexity and information asymmetry inherent in knowledge intensive business challenges both

supplier and customer in value co-creation: it might be difficult for the supplier to communicate the value proposition in advance and to manage the service process to achieve the best service outcome; the customer might find it difficult to understand and evaluate the value potential. Customers place a heavy emphasis on the quality of interaction and the service process: research has identified professional service providers' responsiveness, flexibility, reliability and communication skills as important value driving benefits perceived by the customer (Lapierre, 2000; Liu, 2006). Besides monetary costs, the customer must sacrifice time, energy and effort to gain the benefits (Lapierre, 2000). The problems to be solved may be ill-structured, containing elements that are unknown, so a significant degree of judgment is needed in their resolution (Nordin & Kowalkowski, 2010). Supplier resources that are key in contributing to value creation include e.g. professional knowledge and competence (Liu, 2006), robust and relevant applied knowledge, procedures, facilities and equipment (Olaru et al., 2008). The expert service provider's judgment is guided by expectations of objectivity and professional ethics: when a supplier must weigh customers' preferences and expectations against objective professional judgment, the customer might not get the solution it would have preferred (Mills & Moshavi, 1999).

The results attained through the problem solving process are difficult to interpret, and in some cases value only unfolds over time (Lindberg & Nordin, 2008; Tuli et al., 2007). Even routine buyers may experience significant insecurity when buying professional services, because they are only able to assess the value of the service to a very limited degree (Mitchell, 1994; Ploetner,

2008). The risk and insecurity with regard to the results and their evaluation can be considered sacrifices that impact the perceived value (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). Grönroos (2011) suggests that value-in-use for customers in a b-to-b context can be related to 1) effects on the customer's growth- and revenue-generating capacity (new markets, premium pricing), effects on the customer's costs (lower costs, higher margins), and 3) effect on perceptions (increased trust and commitment, interaction comfort, attraction). In general, there are very few empirical research findings available on value-in-use experienced by actors within knowledge intensive service contexts. Lapierre (1997) identified examples of value-in-use, defined as results derived from the application of professional services, such as cost reductions, reduction of accident rates, productivity, and better decision making. In the solutions context, value resulting from the implementation of the solution is usually described in rather general terms, such as a "better or easier life for the customer" (Miller et al., 2002), or "solving the end customer's problem" (Sawhney, 2006). Synthesizing the professional services and solutions marketing literature, Fig. 1 presents a tentative framework for the basic elements of value co-creation in the context of knowledge intensive services. Value co-creation is conceptualized as joint problem solving, which involves supplier and customer resources integrated in a collaborative interaction process. Suppliers apply their specialized professional skills, methods and judgment, while customers contribute resources such as knowledge, in order to create optimal value-in-use, i.e. the best possible balance between the value-in-use to be achieved and the required sacrifices.

3. Methodology

In order to study the collaborative process of value co-creation in the context of knowledge intensive business services – a phenomenon that is not sufficiently structured or analyzed in existing research

— an extensive qualitative research design was chosen because of the exploratory nature of the study (cf. Patton, 1989). The research followed an abductive process: data collection and analysis, and the search for complementary theories, constituted parallel iterative processes where the researcher moves back and forth between theoretical concepts and field observation, seeking to enhance understanding of both theory and data during that process

(Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Applying an abductive approach, researchers aiming to develop theory are able during the research process to exploit the systemic nature of existing theoretical models, and modify and iterate conceptualizations and the research frame in the course of the process, partly as a result of unanticipated empirical findings (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). The principal data collection method in this study was interviewing. The research process proceeded in three major phases. The first round of data collection (25 interviews) was enacted in 2005–2007 to study interaction between customers and suppliers within KIBS industries. As a result, the authors identified an

emergent theme, “value co-creation through joint problem solving”, evident in all the interviews conducted. These interviews were treated as so-called *activedata* (cf. Dubois & Gadde, 2002) which bring out an emergent re-search

theme. Comparing the findings with the literature identified a gap concerning the dyadic processes of value co-creation. In the second phase, the authors conducted a further 33 interviews in

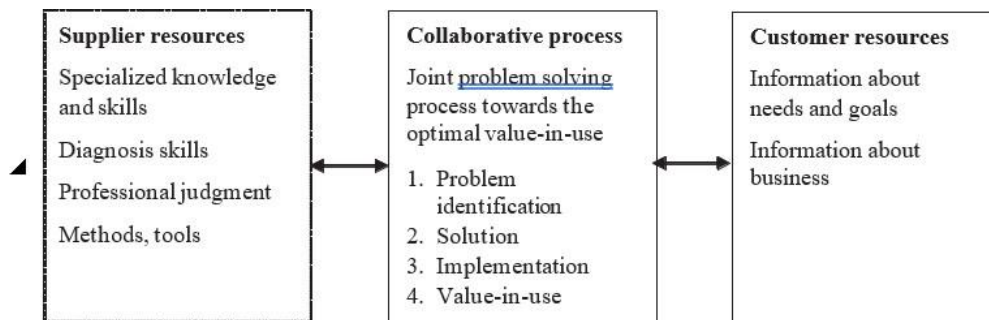


Fig. 1. Tentative framework for value co-creation as a joint problem solving process.

2008–2010 within diverse industries to elaborate the preliminary findings. Altogether, these 58 semi-structured interviews constitute Dataset 1.

These interviews were structured as a set of open ended questions and discussion themes, which enabled the interviewees to raise matters that were not specifically queried (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 125). Thus, semi-structured interviews provided the formality to analyze complex phenomena, and enabled the emergence of unexpected issues (see Wengraf, 2001). The interviews comprising Dataset 1 lasted around one-and-a-half hours each, and were audio recorded and transcribed. The dataset provided for exploratory analysis and acted as a source for citations used in illustrating the reported findings. In the third phase of the research process, an additional 62 face-to-face interviews (Dataset 2) were conducted in 2009–2010 by auxiliaries who were carefully instructed to use a structured list of questions and a framework figure prepared by the authors (Appendix 1). Dataset 2 comprises structured interview reports (see Flick, 2002) that document interviews conducted with buyers and suppliers of knowledge intensive services, reported in writing in a predetermined, structured form. The framework figure was used in order to gather detailed information on both parties' contribution to the process through roles taken and resources invested, and value-in-use perceived. Dataset 2 provides snapshots of different aspects of value co-creation from buyers' or suppliers' perspectives within various KIBS industries. It complements and validates the empirical findings from Dataset 1; as these data are taken from multiple industries and gathered using the elaborated framework according to a

well structured procedure, they constitute detailed information for close analysis, and strengthen the generalizability of the results.

Interviews for both datasets took in the following themes: 1) the special features of and challenges in buying/providing complex services, 2) collaboration and interaction during the service process, 3) participation, roles and resources contributed by both parties, and 4) expected results and perceived value-in-use. Within the interviews, the informants reflected the diverse aspects of the value co-creation process from both parties' perspectives. The data types and their utilization in the study are summarized in Table 1.

The sampling decisions — whether to select critical examples where the relationships to be studied are especially clear, to select typical examples or to pursue maximal variation — are essential, since generalizability of results depends on the selection strategies (Flick, 2002). In this study, sampling with maximal variation within the KIBS industries was preferred in order to identify solid patterns of value co-creation, and to justify the findings for their wider implications. Therefore, data were acquired from customer and supplier perspectives, and from a range of KIBS industries, in organizations of different sizes. The sampling process included also features of theoretical sampling, in which informants are selected according to their expected level of new insights for the theory under development (Flick, 2002). The interviewed supplier organizations represented industries such as management consulting, advertising, engineering consulting,

IT consulting, accounting, and corporate banking, which are typical KIBS industries (e.g. Løwendahl, 2005, pp. 22–23). Only one key informant per organization was recruited. The informants in supplier firms were most often CEOs, members of top management such as marketing managers, or entrepreneurs from micro to large sized organizations (Table 2). The informants in the studied customer organizations were mostly CEOs or managers who played a key role in buying knowledge intensive services. The customer organizations were mostly medium or large in size and represent divergent industries (Table 3). The interviewees represented European firms or branches of global corporations.

The principles of abductive research were followed during the analysis (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Reichertz (2004) stresses the innovative nature of abduction, as it brings together concepts that have not been associated with each other before. We aimed to make a contribution in creating new insights by applying an extensive repertoire of theories and vocabularies (cf. Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). Andersen and Kragh (2010) suggest that by employing different theoretical frameworks and treating them as language games, the experienced values. Because of the strong empirical foundation and the large volume of data, we employed QSR NVivo software and MS Word tabling to manage the data and analysis, and thus amend the formation of conceptualizations and theory construction (see Bazeley, 2007). Employing

these tools, we analyzed differences and similarities in the data concerning the phenomena, coded text segments with similar features under the same category (such as “resources by suppliers”, “conflicts”), and text segments that were allocated to the same category were retrieved for further analysis and checking. Such analysis also conceptualizes, as the empirical phenomenon can be viewed in terms of categories, and the abstraction level increases (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The two datasets provided different types of knowledge for analysis. Dataset 1 played the main role in identifying the activities, roles and resources in the co-creation process, and also offered many citations to illustrate the phenomena. The analysis of Dataset 2 confirmed the relevance of categories identified using Dataset 1, contributed to conceptualization, and provided additional exemplars for value-in-use potential and the required resources within diverse industries. The reported results are based on both datasets. In general, analogous data collection methods regarding datasets 1 and 2 enabled comparisons and the accumulation of understanding.

The study applied triangulation in its various forms in order to enhance the quality and robustness of the research. Gathering two different datasets created by multiple researchers strengthens data triangulation and adds rigor, breadth and depth to the investigation rather than examining the validity of measures (see Jick, 1979, pp. 603–604). The datasets were analyzed from multiple theoretical perspectives which enables theory triangulation.

Conclusion

In this paper, we make a contribution by constructing an empirically grounded framework that presents a dyadic problem solving process through which value co-creation occurs in the context of knowledge intensive business services. Despite acknowledging the importance of customer participation in knowledge intensive services and solution research, these streams have remained rather supplier oriented in their approach, as they predominantly stress value-for-

customer instead of collaborative value creation with the customer. Previous studies have analyzed this complex process from the supplier's perspective (Skarp & Gadde, 2008; Tuli et al., 2007) or from the customer's perspective (Lindberg & Nordin, 2008). Our research is among the first empirical studies that have adopted a dyadic view on analyzing value co-creation in b-to-b service and solution contexts.

References

- Alejandro, T. B., Kowalkowski, C., Ritter, J., Marchetti, R., & Prado, P. (2011). Information search in complex industrial buying: Empirical evidence from Brazil. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(1), 17–27.
- Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2007). Constructing mystery: Empirical matters in theory development. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(4), 1265–1281.

- Andersen, P. H., & Kragh, H. (2010). Sense and sensibility: Two approaches for using existing theory in theory-building qualitative research. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 39(1), 49–55.
- Ballantyne, D., & Varey, R. J. (2006). Introducing a dialogical orientation to the service-dominant logic of marketing. In Robert F. Lusch, & Stephen L. Vargo (Eds.), *The service-dominant logic of marketing. Dialog, debate, and directions*. (pp. 224–235) New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Bazeley, P. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bettencourt, L. A., Ostrom, A. L., Brown, S. W., & Roundtree, R. I. (2002). Client co-production in knowledge-intensive business services. *California Management Review*, 44(4), 100–128.
- Brossard, H. L. (1998). Information sources used by an organization during a complex decision process. An exploratory study. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 27(1), 41–50.
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Dubois, A., & Gadde, L. (2002). Systematic combining: An abductive approach to case research. *Journal of Business Research*, 55(7), 553–560.
- Eggert, A., & Ulaga, W. (2002). Customer perceived value: A substitute for satisfaction in business markets? *The Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 17(2/3), 107–118.
- Flick, U. (2002). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (Second edition). London: Sage Publications.
- Grönroos, C. (2000). *Services marketing and management: A customer relationship management approach*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Grönroos, C. (2008). Service logic revisited: Who creates value? and who co-creates? *European Business Review*, 20(4), 298–314.
- Grönroos, C. (2011). A service perspective on business relationships: The value creation, interaction and marketing interface. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(3), 240–247.
- Gummesson, E. (1978). Toward a theory of professional service marketing. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 7(2), 89–95.
- Gummesson, E. (2008). Extending the service-dominant logic: From customer centrality to balanced centrality. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 15.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (2006). *The practice of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Jaakkola, E., & Halinen, A. (2006). Problem solving within professional services: Evidence from the medical field. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 17(5), 409–429.
- Jacob, F., & Ulaga, W. (2008). The transition from product to service in business markets: An agenda for academic inquiry. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 37(3), 247–253.
- Jick, T. D. (1979). Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: Triangulation in action. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24(4), 602–611.
- Kothandaraman, P., & Wilson, D. T. (2001). The future of competition: Value-creating networks. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 30(4), 379–389.
- Lapierre, J. (1997). What does value mean in business-to-business professional services? *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 8(5), 377–397.
- Lapierre, J. (2000). Customer-perceived value in industrial contexts. *The Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 15(2/3), 122–140.
- Lindberg, N., & Nordin, F. (2008). From products to services and back again: Towards a new service procurement logic. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 37(3), 292–300.
- Lindgreen, A., Antico, M., Palmer, R., & Tim, V. H. (2009). High-tech, innovative products: Identifying and meeting business customers' value needs. *The Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 24(3/4), 182–197.
- Lindgreen, A., & Wynstra, F. (2005). Value in business markets: What do we know? where are we going? *Industrial Marketing Management*, 34(7), 732–748.
- Liu, A. H. (2006). Customer value and switching costs in business services: Developing exit barriers through strategic value management. *The Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 21(1), 30–37.
- Løwendahl, B. R. (2005). *Strategic management of professional service firms*. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Lusch, R. F., Vargo, S. L., & Wessels, G. (2008). Toward a conceptual foundation for service science: Contributions from service-dominant logic. *IBM Systems Journal*, 47(1), 5–14.
- Miller, D., Hope, Q., Eisenstat, R., Foote, N., & Galbraith, J. (2002). The problem of solutions: Balancing clients and capabilities. *Business Horizons*, 45(2), 3–12.

- Mills, P. K., & Moshavi, D. S. (1999). Professional concern: Managing knowledge-based service relationships. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 10(1), 48–67.
- Mitchell, V. (1994). Problems and risks in the purchasing of consultancy services. *Service Industries Journal*, 14(3), 315–339.
- Möller, K. (2006). Role of competences in creating customer value: A value-creation logic approach. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 35(8), 913–924.
- Möller, K., & Törrönen, P. (2003). Business suppliers' value creation potential: A capability-based analysis. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 32(2), 109–118.
- Muller, E., & Zenker, A. (2001). Business services as actors of knowledge transformation: The role of KIBS in regional and national innovation systems. *Research Policy*, 30(9), 1501–1516.
- Nicosia, F. M., & Wind, Y. (1977). Emerging Models of Organizational Buying Processes. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 6(5), 353–369.
- Nordin, F., & Kowalkowski, C. (2010). Solutions offerings: A critical review and reconceptualisation. *Journal of Service Management*, 21(4), 441–459.
- Normann, R., & Ramirez, R. (1993). From value chain to value constellation: Designing interactive strategy. *Harvard Business Review*, 71(4), 65–77.
- Olaru, D., Purchase, S., & Peterson, N. (2008). From customer value to repurchase intentions and recommendations. *The Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 23(8), 554–565.
- Patton, M. Q. (1989). *Qualitative evaluation methods*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Payne, A. F., Storbacka, K., & Frow, P. (2008). Managing the co-creation of value. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 83–96.
- Ploetner, O. (2008). The development of consulting in goods-based companies. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 37(3), 329–338.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2000). Co-opting customer competence. *Harvard Business Review*, 78(1), 79–87.
- Ravald, A., & Grönroos, C. (1996). The value concept and relationship marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 30(2), 19–30.
- Reichert, J. (2004). Abduction, deduction and induction in qualitative research. In U. Flick, E. von Kardorff, & Ines Steinke (Eds.), *Companion to qualitative research* (pp. 159–164). London: Sage Publications.
- Sawhney, M. (2006). Going beyond the product: Defining, designing, and delivering customer solutions. In Robert F. Lusch, & Stephen L. Vargo (Eds.), *The service-dominant logic of marketing: dialog, debate, and directions*. (pp. 365–380) New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Shostack, G. L. (1987). Service positioning through structural change. *Journal of Marketing*, 51(January), 34–43.
- Skarp, F., & Gadde, L. (2008). Problem solving in the upgrading of product offerings — A case study from the steel industry. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 37(6), 725–737.
- Slater, S. F., & Narver, J. C. (1994). Market orientation, customer value, and superior performance. *Business Horizons*, 37(2), 22–28.
- Tuli, K. R., Kohli, A. K., & Bharadwaj, S. G. (2007). Rethinking customer solutions: From product bundles to relational processes. *Journal of Marketing*, 71(3), 1–17.
- Ullaga, W., & Eggert, A. (2005). Relationship value in business markets: the construct and its dimensions. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, 12(1), 73–99.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(January), 1–17.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). From goods to service(s): Divergences and convergences of logics. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 37(3), 254–259.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service-dominant logic: Continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 1–10.
- Vargo, S. L., Maglio, P. P., & Akaka, M. A. (2008). On value and value co-creation: A service systems and service logic perspective. *European Management Journal*, 26(3), 145–152.
- Verville, J., & Haltingen, A. (2003). A six-stage model of the buying process for ERP software. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 32(7), 585–594.
- Walter, A., Ritter, T., & Gemünden, H. G. (2001). Value creation in Buyer–Seller relationships: Theoretical considerations and empirical results from a supplier's perspective. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 30(4), 365–377.
- Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Woodruff, R. B. (1997). Customer value: The next source for competitive advantage.

Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,
25(2), 139–153.

Zeithaml, V. A. (1988). Consumer perceptions of
price, quality, and value: A means-end model

and synthesis of evidence. *Journal of
Marketing*, 52(July), 2–22.