Value-in-Use: Antecedents, Dimensions, and Consequences

by

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Executive summary

This research builds on the currently emerging paradigm that value in the marketing context does not primarily emerge from attributes of objects as exchanged in market transactions but from processes of use as carried out by the customer, hence a shift from value-in-exchange to value-in-use. Extant research has already tackled the issue of conceptualizing and measuring value-in-use in that sense; however, most approaches remained restricted in viewing value as a merely holistic phenomenon or ignored its contingency on the use context. In this research our first aim therefore is to demonstrate how value can be measured as a multidimensional and context-specific concept. Second, we also want to shed light on how value-in-use originates. Service research in particular took up this question and developed new perspectives for marketing according to which customers and suppliers co-create value together by mutually contributing resources into a use process. We propose how to also conceptualize this resource contribution and include this in a comprehensive research model. Third and finally, we also aim at supporting our conceptualization of value-in-use by linking it to relevant consequences of value creation, specifically customer satisfaction and customer word-of-mouth.

As a context for our research we choose customers’ usage of a specific category of applications (apps) for mobile smartphones, in our case an app to support users in weight loss/fitness activities. We consider this choice of context appropriate since it ensures the presence of extended use processes and extensive co-creation.

Methodologically, we proceeded in two steps. A first and qualitative analysis based on the repertory grid technique and including ten respondents served to discover value dimensions as they prevail in the described context. This resulted in a list of seven distinct and context-specific value dimensions. This list parallels findings from similar research but is not completely identical to it. Hence, it validates our basic assumption of value being contingent on context. Based on the list we developed hypothesis on how customer and supplier resource contribution precedes those value dimensions and how customer satisfaction and customer word-of-mouth results from them. These hypotheses were submitted to a large scale questionnaire based survey including 1,128 users of the respective smartphone app category. The data was analyzed by applying structural equations modeling. Most of our hypotheses, in fact, received support. For those that could not be supported, we were able through post-hoc analysis to demonstrate some effect from goals as articulated by customers in the survey and related to the value dimensions.

On the theoretical side the major contribution of this research consists in demonstrating how value-in-use can be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct, how it can be empirically captured, and how it is linked to relevant antecedents and consequences. This
will help future research to integrate value-in-use into extended research frameworks that help to better understand the mechanisms behind market related collaboration between suppliers and customers. For marketing decision makers we provide first hints on what drives value-in-use and on how dimensions of value-in-use differ with respect to impact on relevant outcomes from value co-creation.