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Kirsten Frandsen (born 1982) is a researcher within the field of relationship marketing. Her thesis presents her interest within the topic of relationship value, and focuses on interaction in collaborative relationships. In her thesis, she shows that relationship value is a complex matter that requires a fundamental change in business mindset. The thesis incorporates business networks, business models and relationship activities into the field of relationship value.

Kirsten obtained her BA in Entrepreneurship and Innovation from the University of Southern Denmark in 2009, her MSc in International Business Development from the University of Southern Denmark in 2012, and her PhD degree in 2016 from the Faculty of Social Science at the University of Southern Denmark.



Industrial PhD – research and business

An Industrial PhD project is a three-year industrially focused PhD project where the student is hired by a company and enrolled at a university at the same time. The industrial PhD programme is managed by Innovation Fund Denmark. Kirsten's PhD is in cooperation with Hydac A/S which supplies both Danish and international markets with innovative hydraulics and electronics products.

PhD Dissertation of

Kirsten Frandsen

at the Department of Entrepreneurship
and Relationship Management,
University of Southern Denmark

Business Relationships
and Relationship value:

A casestudy of value perceptions in a
customer-supplier relationship

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PhD

Business Relationships and Relationship value

A case study of value perceptions in a customer-supplier relationship

The notion of business-to-business relationships and networks attracts increasing attention among marketing researchers. Various aspects of networks and relationships have been studied, including the challenges and possibilities arising when firms engage in collaborative relationships. One of the main challenges concerns the issue of creating, delivering and capturing value. The concept of value is not new, and value discussions within academia can be traced back years within various research fields, such as organization, finance, economic and management. However, in recent times the concept of relationship value that has attracted most research attention concerns how value is created in and of business relationships. This is due to a realization that value is not only related to the transaction of products for price, but is being created through interaction between firms that work together. Realizing that value creation is far more complex and challenging than 'just' products for price, has made the concept of relationship value a popular and important topic. It is against this background that this thesis takes its point of departure. Despite the increasing attention given to relationship value, there are still areas that need to be explored further.

The first problem addressed in this thesis is the need for development that firms face as a result of collaboration in relationships. As collaboration

between firms intensifies, many firms experience a need to constantly develop and adjust the value proposition in order to cope with demands, expectations and changes from within their surrounding network. One of the theoretical concepts concerned with development is the business model concept. The central purpose of the business model is to explain how firms create, deliver and capture value. However, research on business models has a primarily inward looking perspective of the firm, and business model development is seen as an internal task. Reviewing the relationship value literature shows that the dominant focus is on the form and content of value. The matter of how different perceptions of value influence business development, and the role of value in development are left out.

The second problem that this thesis addresses is value understanding in a network context. When firms engage in business relationships many experience a need to increase knowledge and understanding of the network. Many firms find it difficult to identify and act upon expectations and demands from the network, including how value is perceived by partners in their closer relationships. The relationship value literature provides insights into what firms embrace as value, as well as the nature of value perceptions. However, only limited attention is paid to how value perceptions are being formed between firms in a network context.

The third problem addressed in this thesis refers to value perceptions and activities within relationships. As a consequence of closer collaboration, many firms find that the boundaries between them and their counterpart are being erased, and activities are increasingly being shared in the relationship. This means that firms face the challenge of transforming value perceptions into concrete activities that are actually valuable to their counterpart, as well as themselves. The concept of relationship value offers no answers to this problem, since there is only limited attention paid to the link between perceptions of value and how that impacts firms' behavior when working together in relationships.

With these problems forming the background, the following research question has been guiding the PhD project.

How are value perceptions formed in dyadic customer-supplier relationships and how do value perceptions influence relationship activities?

Kirsten Frandsen

Department of Entrepreneurship and Relationship Management

The Department of Entrepreneurship and Relationship Management is located at the University of Southern Denmark, campus Kolding, and employs approximately 85 people. This location is central to the growth centres within the Triangle Region and offers a unique opportunity to close cooperation with the companies and public authorities in the region in respect to research and educational projects.

For several years the research of the department has been based on learning networks with companies and trade promotion institutions. In addition to this, the department has a long tradition of problem-based cooperation across traditional business research areas and very often by means of external funding. The research of the department concentrates on two key areas: entrepreneurship and relationship management and originates from traditional research areas such as marketing, applied economics, accounting, operation management and organization.

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