

Value-in-use Management – Measures and Effects in Solution Business

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Purpose – While there is already extant knowledge on buying decisions and buying processes in business-to-business settings, the subsequent usage processes and their impact on rebuy decisions are less explored. Especially in solution business, where value is co-created in interactive after-sales processes between the customer and the supplier, the customer's quality assessment of the experience needs to be better understood in order to increase customer value and thus to foster customer loyalty. Value-in-use management measures, as part of the customer experience, have been highlighted as critical for the quality assessment in this regard, but have not been further investigated in detail yet. The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate the status quo of value-in-use management processes in practice from a supplier's perspective. Value-in-use management consists of value-in-use monitoring and enhancement measures.

Design/Methodology/approach – This study uses a qualitative inductive approach since value-in-use management is a phenomenon that appeared in literature only recently and that is largely unexplored so far. Therefore, to investigate the concept of value-in-use management, we conducted 21 semi-structured in-depth interviews with employees representing supplier companies from different industries.

Findings – The overall results reveal a number of different value-in-use management measures implemented by the supplier companies. The results further indicate that all suppliers somehow monitor and/or enhance the value in use for their customers during the usage phase. However, their efforts regarding value monitoring and enhancement vary a lot. Furthermore, they often lack a concrete value-in-use management process that comprises all identified sub-processes and is linked directly to the promises made during the sales process. The data thus reveals a gap between ex-ante value quantification and ex-post value-in-use management.

Research limitations/implications – The study considers only the suppliers' perspectives on value-in-use management. Consequently, a further step will be to investigate the customers' view on value-in-use management.

Practical implications – This study enhances our understanding of customer-supplier interactions during the customer's usage phase and builds the basis for further studies, which aim at investigating the customer's perspective on value-in-use management. From a managerial perspective, this is particularly interesting with respect to its impact on the customer's experienced value in use and consequently on the customer's rebuy decision. The results might be of high relevance for suppliers in order to sustain long-term relationships with their customers, especially in a solution context.

Originality/value – Although recent research highlights the importance of suppliers' continuous value-in-use management efforts, their implementation often remains imprecise. Concrete value-in-use management measures across industries have not been identified based on previous studies.

Key words – value-in-use management, value-in-use monitoring, value-in-use enhancement

Paper type – Research paper

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