
A closer look at the value anticipations in dyadic business relationships within a servitization context

Evidence from the construction sector in the Netherlands

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More than half a year ago, I started with my master's thesis. It was a special time, in which the entire investigation took place at home, with sometimes confusing and frustrating moments. But it was also a process in which I learned a lot from a very interesting subject that was still unknown to me at the time. That is why I am now both proud and relieved to present my graduation thesis. This thesis was part of completing my master's degree in Business Administration at the University of Twente, in which I followed the master's track Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Strategy.

Although I put a lot of time and effort into this project, I could not achieve this result without the help of several people. That is why I would first like to thank my supervisors Dr. A.M. von Raesfeld Meijer and X. Stegehuis for addressing this research and giving me the opportunity to dive into the related topics. I also want to thank both supervisors for all the extra moral and content-wise support during this research. Next, I would like to thank M. Veerman and all other respondents who participated in the interviews for sharing all their relevant knowledge and experiences that enabled me to write this thesis. Moreover, I would like to thank my family and specifically Bo Schlepper for the help and mental support during this eventful process of conducting and writing this master thesis.

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ABSTRACT

Literature shows that servitization is becoming globally recognized as an important enabler to increase value creation, product differentiation, financial performance and to contribute to a circular economy. However, companies still find it extremely difficult to undertake servitization into their businesses. One of the main reasons is that multiple actors in the network become mutually engaged, where changes to a business model of a particular firm often require changes in the business models of multiple actors in the network they are embedded. In this, actors may have different and conflicting interests and different perceptions of value which may eventually lead to relationship tensions. To challenge these relationship tensions, mutual alignment between the actors' value anticipations needs to take place when actors decide to collaborate.

This study aims to fill the research gap about what value anticipations need to be aligned in advance to improve the chance of successfully collaborating in a servitization context. To address this literature gap, a qualitative single case study has been conducted, where four related dyadic business relationships have been interviewed and analyzed. Results indicate that there is not a "one fits all" approach that can be applied in business relationships since the need for alignment turned out to be context-dependent. Nevertheless, this research has put forward key propositions in various business relationships settings, which also opens new opportunities in the context of value alignment research. The findings of this research can be used by managers to become aware of what expectations should be explicitly aligned and put emphasis on when starting to collaborate with a business partner in a servitization context to improve the success of their collaboration.

To embroider the topic of value alignment within a servitization context, it would be interesting for future research to investigate the need for value alignment in different episodes since it was found that the anticipations of relationship value in a business relationship emerge and change over time. To increase the generalizability, it would be interesting for future research to include different levels of business relationships (e.g., portfolio, connected relations, and/or network relationships) and different contexts (e.g., different sectors, network settings, sample scale) in the research of relation alignment.

Keywords: *Servitization, network perspective, dyadic business relationships, relationship value, value anticipations, mutual value alignment*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
<i>BM</i>	Business Model
<i>BMI</i>	Business Model Innovation
<i>CE</i>	Circular Economy

GLOSSARY

<i>Word</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Reference</i>
<i>Servitization</i>	A transformation process in which manufacturing firms are offering customer-centric services and solutions, often associated with their products, to increase their core contributions.	(T. S. Baines, Lightfoot, Benedettini, & Kay, 2009; Brax & Visintin, 2017; Neely, 2008)
<i>Circular economy</i>	<i>“CE aims to keep products, components, and materials at their highest utility and value at all times in both biological and technical cycles.”</i>	(Farooque, Zhang, Thürer, Qu, & Huisinsh, 2019, p. 883)
<i>Business model</i>	<i>“The design or architecture of the value creation, delivery and capture mechanisms employed by a firm”</i>	(Teece, 2010, p. 191)
<i>Business model innovation</i>	<i>“Designed, novel, nontrivial changes to the key elements of a firm’s business model and/or the architecture linking these elements.”</i>	(Foss & Saebi, 2016, p.201)
<i>Relationship value</i>	The difference or ratio between costs/sacrifices and benefits/rewards, in the supplier's core offering, in the sourcing process, and at the level of a customer's operations.	(Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Ravald & Grönroos, 1996; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006).

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Situation and complication

In response to the shift of customer needs towards sustainable solutions, the increase of intense and aggressive competition, and the urge of contributing to the circular economy (Brax & Visintin, 2017; Gebauer, Fleisch, & Friedli, 2005; Spring & Araujo, 2017), companies are enriching core products with services to stay competitive. As a result, manufacturing firms in almost all industries are extending their businesses and pursuing ways to increase value creation, product differentiation, and financial performance through ‘servitization’ (Brax & Visintin, 2017; Neely, 2008; Vandermerwe & Rada, 1988). Servitization is a transformation process in which manufacturing firms are offering customer-centric services and solutions, often through product-service combinations, to increase their core contributions (Brax & Visintin, 2017; Neely, 2008). Servitization was initially introduced by Vandermerwe and Rada in 1988 but received little attention at that time (T. S. Baines et al., 2007; Neely, 2008). Most attention was given to possible environmental benefits but not to potential commercial advantages. However, in the last decades, servitization is becoming recognized globally. Due to the increasing technological developments, especially regarding information and communication technologies (Neely, 2008), undertaking servitization enables manufacturing firms to increase their profitability, employment, and their total sales performance (Crozet & Milet, 2017). Moreover, servitization is one of the most effective instruments to the society shift from a linear economic model towards a resource-efficient, sustainable, and circular economy (Plepys, Heiskanen, & Mont, 2015; Tukker, 2015).

However, despite the wide importance and the expected benefits of servitization, literature shows that many firms still find it extremely difficult to undertake servitization into their businesses and accomplish the expected benefits, leading to the so-called “servitization failure” (Gebauer et al., 2005; Valtakoski, 2017). Servitization is not just adding a simple service element. It is a complex system that requires a transformation process of the entire business model (BM) of a company (Brax & Visintin, 2017). The complexity of servitization appears since servitization is a system that offers “*fuller market packages or “bundles” of customer-focused combinations of goods, services, support, self-service, and knowledge.*” (Vandermerwe & Rada, 1988, p. 314). Besides, researchers are now starting to recognize a BM as a network phenomenon where actors become mutually engaged. This implies that changes to a BM of a particular firm often require changes in the BM’s of multiple actors in the network they are embedded in. (Bankvall, Dubois, & Lind, 2017; Freytag & Clarke, 2012; Velter, Bitzer, Bocken, & Kemp, 2020). It makes it even more complicated since a BM transformation process requires the development of, among other things, new skills, competencies, and mindsets and simultaneously a rejection of thinking that has been so far successful with the current BM (Freytag & Clarke, 2012). However, engaging with other actors in a relationship requires extra effort. Actors may have different and conflicting interests and different perceptions of value (Velter et al., 2020).

In the strategy and marketing literature, the term ‘value’ is mainly defined by the view of customers and their “willingness to pay” (Chesbrough, Lettl, & Ritter, 2018; Eggert, Ulaga, Frow, & Payne, 2018). However, literature studies begin to highlight that actors perceive value beyond pure monetary returns, where they are experiencing benefits in terms of co-created ‘relationship value’ (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012;

Eggert et al., 2018). ‘Relationship value’ can be considered as the difference or ratio between costs/sacrifices and benefits/rewards, in the supplier's core offering, in the sourcing process, and at the level of a customer's operations (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Raval & Grönroos, 1996; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). The discovery of potential relationship value is also referred to as the so-called ‘value anticipation’ (Nailer & Buttriss, 2020). It arises from an actor's prior judgment which will determine what potential value can be created by collaborating (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Eggert et al., 2018; Ulaga, 2003). However, what makes it so complex is that these prior judgments are mental processes, with ‘real but unobservable objects’, formed both explicitly and implicitly (Nailer & Buttriss, 2020). Besides, the interpretation of perceived value is situational and context-dependent and influenced by the actors' past experiences, present situation, and its expectations of the future (Valtakoski, 2017). Therefore, it is likely that the actors will experience different perspectives of anticipated relationship value when deciding to collaborate (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Sánchez-Fernández & Ángeles Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Velter et al., 2020). These different perceptions of anticipated value may eventually lead to relationship tensions between the actors' mutual goals and capturing value during the collaboration (Chesbrough et al., 2018; Velter et al., 2020).

1.2 Research gap

To challenge these relationship tensions, mutual alignment between the actors' value anticipations needs to take place (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017; Nailer & Buttriss, 2020; Valtakoski, 2017). This allows the actors to establish a mutual agreement that will motivate the actions and interdependencies of the actors during the collaboration to improve the chance of successful collaboration (Y. Lee & Cavusgil, 2006; Nailer & Buttriss, 2020). This involves an exchange process in which the two actors actively exchange their activities and resources that will create potential value for the other actor (Chesbrough et al., 2018; Håkansson & Snehota, 1995).

However, Nailer and Buttriss (2020) argued that limited research is conducted on how to create mutual relation alignment within a network context. Parallel to this, Raddats, Kowalkowski, Benedettini, Burton, and Gebauer (2019) argued that future research within the servitization literature is needed to investigate how servitization affects the co-creation of value within a network of actors. Besides, it has shown that many companies still struggle to achieve the suggested relational benefits when servitizing (Gebauer et al., 2005; Valtakoski, 2017). Therefore, it is stated that there is a literature gap in the need for value alignment in business relationships to improve the chance of successful collaboration.

1.3 Research goal

Thus, this research aims to investigate what value anticipations in a dyadic business relationship need to be aligned in advance to improve the chance of successful collaboration in a servitization context. Nailer and Buttriss (2020) only focused on the value anticipations generally. However, literature shows that the judgment of value anticipations contains multiple dimensions, referred to as ‘relationship value’ (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Ulaga, 2003; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994). Therefore, in addition, and in-depth to the research of Nailer and Buttriss (2020), the extra focus of this research is on the specific value dimensions of relationship value. Given that the development of relationship value is a process that emerges and changes over time (Grönroos, 2004; Nailer & Buttriss, 2020), it is important to emphasize that this

research only focuses on the actors' mutual expectations when both actors decided to collaborate in a servitization context. Overall, this leads to the following central research question:

“What value anticipations need to be aligned in advance to improve the chance of successfully collaborating in a servitization context?”

1.4 Research relevance

From a practical point of view, there is a need for a grip on the long-term retention of business partners by knowing what expectations need to be managed in advance and/or should be made explicit during a business relationship to ensure a successful collaboration. The practical and current relevance is confirmed by the fact that this research is conducted for a case study in the construction sector that runs into this problem. In this case study, it is argued that it is still unclear what expectations need to be managed in advance to avoid project progress being delayed due to a misaligned business relationship. Because of the context of this research, the outcomes will especially be feasible for companies and managers active in the construction sector that are jointly undertaking servitization into their business models. The findings of this research can be used by managers to create a list of mutual expectations that should be aligned when starting to collaborate with a new business partner. By aligning the mutual value anticipations, managers can set up a mutual agreement that will motivate the actions and interdependencies of the actors during the collaboration to improve the chance of successful collaboration.

As mentioned before, from a theoretical perspective, Nailer and Buttriss (2020) argued that limited research is conducted on how to create mutual relation alignment within a network context. Parallel to this, future research within the servitization literature is needed to investigate how servitization affects the co-creation of value within a network of actors (Raddats et al., 2019). Many companies are namely still struggling to achieve the suggested relational benefits when servitizing (Valtakoski, 2017). Therefore, this study makes a theoretical contribution in the topic of relation alignment by addressing what value anticipations need to be aligned with a network of actors that are jointly undertaking servitization. Since the results of this study are demarcated to the construction sector and context-dependent, future research can use this research design to investigate how a network organization can be organized in other industries to embroider the topic of interest alignment in a servitization context.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The outline of this thesis is as follows: first, a literature study will be provided to get familiar with the concerning concepts and terminologies that will be used during this research and to provide a theoretical framework for the research. After this literature study, the research method section will be explained in which a single processual case study will be introduced that has served to collect the data. Subsequently, the results of the research will be given. Then, a discussion will be provided to discuss the meaning, importance, and relevance of the results. Besides, the practical implications, limitations, and potential future research possibilities of this research will be presented. At last, a conclusion will be provided to give a clear and concise answer to the central research question.

2 THEORY

In this section, the theoretical background of this research will be discussed to understand and get familiar with the concerning concepts and terminologies that will be used during this research. Also, a theoretical framework for the research will be provided. To ensure the quality of the theories that will be used, several requirements are set for selecting appropriate articles. First, as a rule of thumb, all the relevant studies will be selected from the last two decades (the year 2000 and above), since in this period the context of servitization has become a worldwide phenomenon. Also, the background and acknowledgment of the authors and the frequency of citations of the articles will be assessed. At last, to ensure quality, the articles will be mostly retrieved from the Scopus and Web-Of-Science databases. However, since the requirements are set as a rule of thumb, it might be (e.g., for origin, definitions, relevance) that some articles will be retrieved with other criteria.

2.1 Theoretical background

2.1.1 Servitization

As mentioned before, manufacturing firms in almost all industries are extending their businesses and pursuing ways to increase value creation, product differentiation, and financial performance through ‘servitization’ (Brax & Visintin, 2017; Neely, 2008; Vandermerwe & Rada, 1988). Servitization is a transformation process in which manufacturing firms are offering customer-centric services and solutions, often through product-service combinations, to increase their core contributions (Brax & Visintin, 2017; Neely, 2008), i.e. a Product-Service System (PSS) (J. Lee, Kao, & Yang, 2014). Within servitization, two terms are intrinsically linked to discuss servitization, namely ‘product’ and ‘service’. The term ‘product’ can be assumed as a material artifact, which can be well understood. However, the term ‘service’ is more controversial. According to Baines, Lightfoot, Benedettini, and Kay (2009), the term ‘service’ can be described as an “*economic activity that does not result in ownership of a tangible asset*” (p.544). For example, a customer will use a certain product of which the manufacturer remains the owner. But in return, the manufacturer will mainly offer maintenance, repair, and insurance to unburdening the customer.

Firms are not only implementing servitization to respond to the shift of customer needs and the increase of intense and aggressive competition, but it is also a method to contribute to the circular economy (Spring & Araujo, 2017). The worldwide awareness and the urgency of producing more economical and smarter with raw materials are growing considerably (Lewandowski, 2016). The circular economy (CE) is becoming highly recognized as an alternative to the still-dominant linear business model, in which we produce our goods and dispose of them in landfills after their life cycle (take, make, and dispose) (Farooque et al., 2019; Linder & Williander, 2017). “*CE aims to keep products, components, and materials at their highest utility and value at all times in both biological and technical cycles.*” (Farooque et al., 2019, p. 883) Undertaking servitization entails several advantages to a CE. It has been proven that servitization provides sustainable benefits since the same service level can be achieved with the use of fewer artifacts (Tukker, 2015). Besides, servitization enables manufacturers to plan better maintenance of their products to extend the product’s life cycle (Han, Heshmati, & Rashidghalam, 2020). At last, undertaking servitization is accompanied by offering services that contain reusing and recycling materials and components after their product life cycle (Han et al., 2020).

Despite the wide importance and the expected benefits of servitization, research shows that companies find it extremely difficult to implement servitization into their businesses (Gebauer et al., 2005). Companies that are trying to implement servitization, run into the so-called ‘service paradox’. Within this paradox, companies experience difficulties in recouping the expected level of the return from their services. (Gebauer et al., 2005; Neely, 2008). Besides, servitization is not just adding a simple service element. It is a complex system that requires a transformation process of the entire business model (BM) of a company (Brax & Visintin, 2017). This research uses the terminology of Teece (2010), which describes a business model (BM) as “*the design or architecture of the value creation, delivery and capture mechanisms employed by a firm*” (Teece, 2010, p. 191). This definition highlights architecture as an important element of a business model which is a set of relations between individual business model elements (Foss & Saebi, 2018). Since implementing servitization requires a transformation process of the entire BM, servitization can be considered as a form of business model innovation (BMI). Based on the knowledge that a BM is about the architecture and interrelations between various elements of the firm, BMI can be considered as “*designed, novel, nontrivial changes to the key elements of a firm’s business model and/or the architecture linking these elements.*” (Foss & Saebi, 2016, p.201). In other words, BMI refers to the changes to the BM a company makes in how it creates, delivers, and/or captures value for customers.

Although the transformation process of servitization is neither logical nor structured and differs from journey to journey in chronological steps, literature is trying to visualize the stages a company will face during the transformation process (T. Baines, Ziaee Bigdeli, Sousa, & Schroeder, 2020; Martinez, Neely, Velu, Leinster-Evans, & Bisessar, 2017). The study of Martinez et al. (2017) identifies seven stages a company will experience during a servitization journey, which are illustrated in *Figure 2.1*.

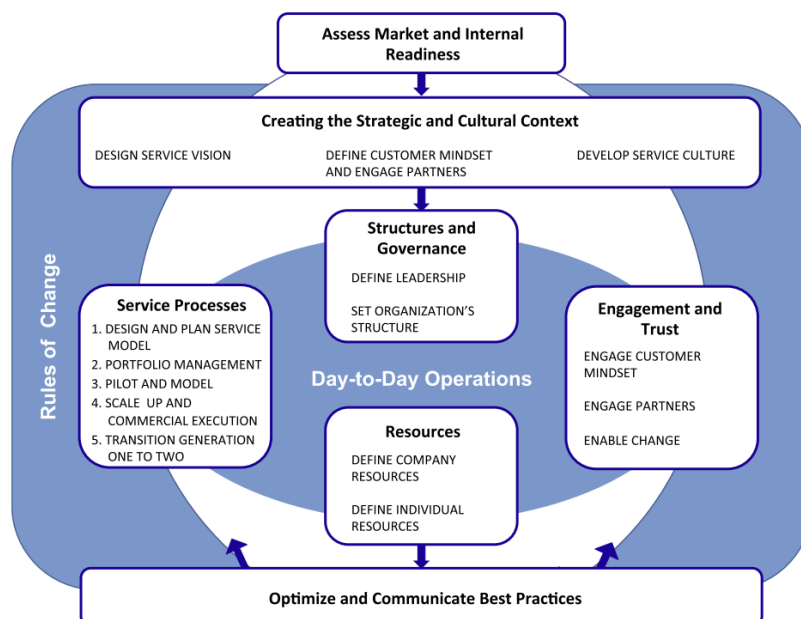


Figure 2.1. Seven stages of undertaking servitization. Retrieved from Martinez et al. (2017)

The process begins by assessing the market and internal readiness to undertake servitization. Then, a strategic and cultural context will be created by designing a service vision, defining customer mindset,

engaging partners, and developing a service culture. Thereafter, day-to-day operations will enable the implementation of the concepts of servitization into the organization. These operations are divided into four stages, namely performing service processes, defining the company and individual resources, creating structures and governance, and enabling trust and engagement among customers and partners. Compared to this study, T. Baines et al. (2020) describe the transformation process by a higher level of aggregation for rationalizing the process as a manageable concept. They identified that a company experiences four main stages during the process, namely exploration, engagement, expansion, and exploitation (see *Figure 2.2*).

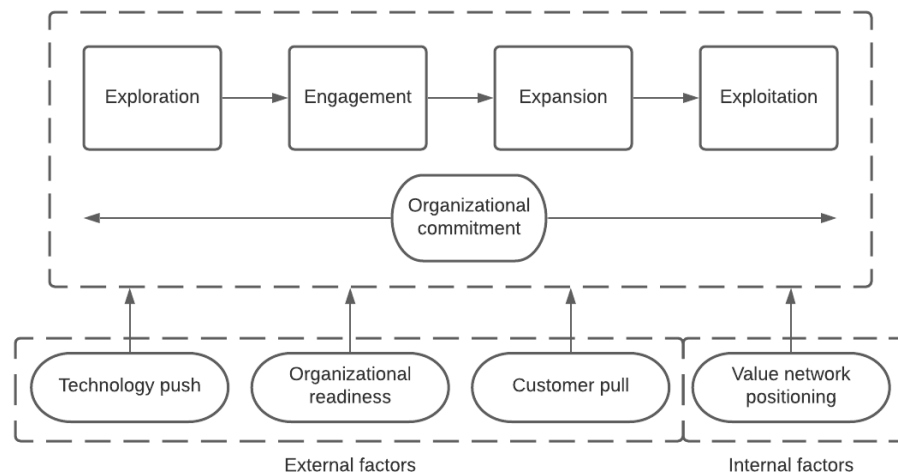


Figure 2.2. Servitization process as a manageable concept. Adapted from T. Baines et al. (2020)

First, a company will explore the potential opportunities of undertaking servitization by searching and finding out the concept and its implications. Then, the concept will be evaluated and demonstrated to find engagement within the organization. Thereafter, the organization will scale and speed up implementing the concepts of servitization, which is the so-called ‘expansion’ stage. At last, the organization will focus on exploitation, in which the organization will optimize innovation and deliver product-service solutions to their customers. During these stages, pressures of five factors (*external factors*: customer pull, technology push, value network positioning; *internal factors*: organizational readiness, and organizational commitment) will affect the progression of the transformation process. However, it appears that manufacturers’ internal resources are often insufficient to successfully servitize (Paola, Saccani, Perona, & Gebauer, 2013). Therefore, compared to less complex types of services, when an organization wants to undertake servitization, it is needed to require an interconnected network of actors to work with rather than just the organization itself (Lightfoot, Baines, & Smart, 2013; Storbacka, 2011; Story, Raddats, Burton, Zolkiewski, & Baines, 2016).

2.1.2 Network perspective

Most traditional BM conceptualizations assume that firms can individually change their business models (Bankvall et al., 2017; Freytag & Clarke, 2012). However, such an assumption is incomplete. Researchers are now starting to recognize a BM as a network phenomenon. According to Zott and Amit (2010), a business model can be conceptualized as a system of interdependent activities that go beyond the focal firm and extends its boundaries. In the context of this research, a focal firm can be described as “the actor from whose perspective the analysis is conducted. It is through the focal actor’s interactions with the other actors

on whom the materialization of the value proposition depends.” (Adner, 2017, p. 56) To be mentioned, in this definition, the term ‘focal’ is the choice of perspective, instead of network centrality. These interdependent activities (i.e., an activity system) enable a firm, in agreement with its partners, to create value and also to appropriate a part of that value (Zott & Amit, 2010). Therefore, it can be stated that a BM acts as an artefact to understand the function of a business concerning other BM participants in the networks in which it is embedded (Amit & Zott, 2009; Bankvall et al., 2017). This implies that changes to a BM of a particular firm often require changes in the BM’s of multiple actors in a network and become mutually connected (Bankvall et al., 2017; Freytag & Clarke, 2012; Nailer & Buttriss, 2020). Given that BMI extent a single firm’s boundaries and is network embedded (Bankvall et al., 2017; Zott & Amit, 2010), a single firm perspective is thus not sufficient to fully understand the phenomena of servitization (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017; Freytag & Clarke, 2012). For example, when a firm implements new resources (i.e., new technologies) to be able to offer services (Ulaga & Reinartz, 2011), other actors in the network in which the firm is embedded also need to adapt their resources (i.e., adapting their program codes, gathering new knowledge) to be able to stay interacting with that certain firm.

According to Håkansson and Snehota (1995), actors become mutually connected in terms of activity links, resource ties, and actors bonds (i.e. ARA) that form a relationship. Here, *activity links* refer to technical, administrative, commercial, and other activities of a company that connects to the activities of another company as their relationship develops. *Resource ties* regard resource elements (technological, material, knowledge resources, and other intangibles) that connect two companies. In principle, these resource ties are the outcomes of how the relationship developed over time which represents itself as the resources of a company. Initially, *actor bonds* become established in an interaction process during the relationship, which “connect actors and influence how the two actors perceive each other and form their identities in relation to each other.” (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995, p. 26) According to Y. Lee and Cavusgil (2006), a relationship can be structured by contractual-based and/or relational-based governance. Contractual-based governance is characterized by formalized, legally binding agreements that form the basis of a relationship. These agreements guarantee that the actors perform accordingly in the future that both actors agreed on. Relational-based governance is a structure in which mutual trust and commitment (i.e., relational capital) are the main important aspects. These aspects will function as crucial coordination mechanisms during the collaboration. As can be seen from *Figure 2.3*, contractual-based governance generally has a positive impact on knowledge acquisition within a relationship. Meanwhile, relational-based governance has a positive effect on knowledge acquisition, like contractual-based governance, but has also a positive impact on relationship stability and strength.

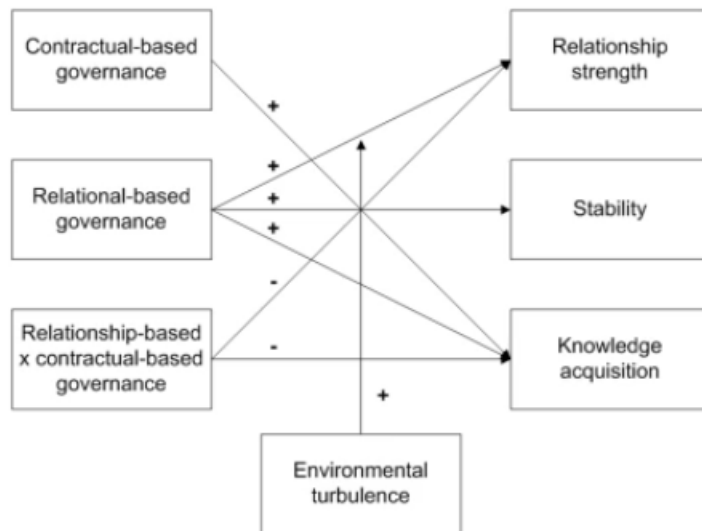


Figure 2.3. Contractual- / relational-based governance. Retrieved from (Y. Lee & Cavusgil, 2006)

Engaging with other actors in a relationship requires extra effort. Namely, actors may have different perceptions of value, different and conflicting interests, and they may be afraid that internal resources may reveal to competitors which eventually might damage their competitive advantage (Dahlander & Gann, 2010; Velter et al., 2020).

2.1.3 Relationship Value

In the strategy and marketing literature, the term ‘value’ is mainly defined by the view of customers and their “willingness to pay” (Chesbrough et al., 2018). Accordingly, Anderson, Jain, and Chintagunta (1993) defines value within business markets as the “worth in monetary units of the set of economic, technical, service and social benefits received by a customer firm in exchange for the price paid for a product offering, taking into consideration the available alternative suppliers’ offerings and prices.” (Anderson et al., 1993, p. 5) However, not only customers are experiencing value. Literature studies highlight the value that actors perceive beyond pure monetary returns, where they are experiencing benefits in terms of co-created ‘relationship value’ (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Eggert et al., 2018; Ulaga, 2003). ‘Relationship value’ can be considered as the difference or ratio between costs/sacrifices and benefits/rewards, in the supplier's core offering, in the sourcing process, and at the level of a customer's operations (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Ravald & Grönroos, 1996; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). Thus, as can be seen in *Figure 2.4*, researchers recognize that value is not only embedded in a supplier’s product (i.e., value-in-exchange), but value is also perceived in the relational ties between customers and their suppliers that support exchanges of goods and services by resource integration through activities and interactions in a broader network (i.e., value-in-use) (Chesbrough et al., 2018; Eggert et al., 2018).

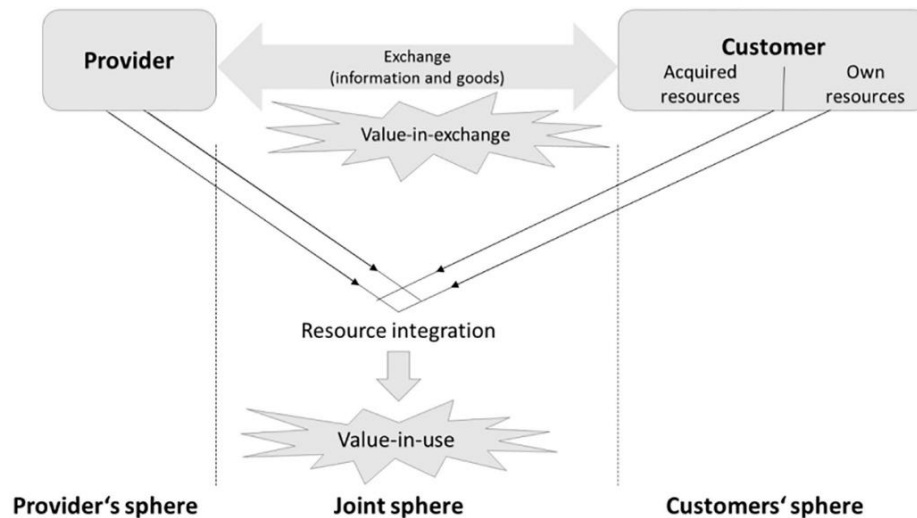


Figure 2.4. Value-in-use/value-in-exchange. Retrieved from Eggert et al. (2018)

According to Aastrup, Grant, and Bjerre (2007), a “successful” relationship overcomes and delivers positive net value, even though relationships increase costs by reducing negotiation power and inducing loss of full control of their businesses. Eventually, entering a relationship will give a firm a better competitive advantage, stronger core competencies, and a better market position (Wilson & Jantrania, 1994). Although ‘relationship value’ is a common theme in managers' conversations, what counts as ‘relationship value’ is often unclear (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012). As can be seen in *Table 2.1*, literature conceptualizes ‘relationship value’ within a business-to-business environment in six main value dimensions: product, service, economic, knowledge, social, and strategic value.

Since research shows that it is nowadays difficult to differentiate from competitors purely on product quality, *product value* has become a quality standard for companies (Ulaga, 2003). However, to maintain relationships, suppliers need to meet the anticipated product quality standards (Anderson & Narus, 1995; Homburg & Rudolph, 2001; Ulaga, 2003). Therefore, the products need to be *reliable*, must deliver *consistent* quality, and should provide high *performance* over time (Ulaga, 2003). For example, to prevent inconsistent quality, manufacturers can provide a set of (customers’) specifications that a supplier needs to meet. When a supplier does not meet the required customers’ specifications, a manufacturer might set up development programs to help the supplier to improve to reach their targets (Ulaga, 2003).

Secondly, to create relationship value, the *service value* dimension plays an important role. Suppliers often provide a range of additional service elements that are crucial in the differentiation of a supplier’s offering. (Anderson & Narus, 1995). These service offerings ultimately have an enormous impact on the accomplishment of a manufacturer’s goal (Woodruff, 1997). The first component of service value is *product-related services*, which contain for example product warranty and the availability of spare replacements (Ulaga, 2003). Secondly, suppliers must provide the right *customer information* at the right time. For example, to respond to environmental changes, suppliers’ information can be vital for manufacturers to implement changes in time (Ulaga, 2003). At last, manufacturers often use *outsourcing* services, in which the supplier undertakes subassembly operations for the manufacturer (Ulaga, 2003).

Table 2.1. Categorization matrix: dimensions of 'relationship value'

Illustrative references	Sub-dimensions	Main dimensions	Relationship Value
(Anderson et al., 1993; Homburg & Rudolph, 2001; Ulaga, 2003; Woodruff, 1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product performance • Product reliability • Product consistency 	Product value	
(Anderson et al., 1993; Ulaga, 2003; Woodruff, 1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product-related services • Customer information • Outsourcing 	Service value	
(Anderson et al., 1993; Ballantyne, 2004; Baxter, 2008; Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Reinartz & Kumar, 2003; Ulaga, 2003; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer retention • Referral • Personal interaction • Culture • Social bonding • Commitment • Trust 	Behavior value	
(Anderson et al., 1993; Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Reinartz & Kumar, 2003; Ulaga, 2003; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency • Share of Business • Share of Market • Pay more • Direct product costs • Acquisition costs • Operation costs • Engineering costs • Investment's quality 	Economic value	
(Ballantyne, 2004; Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008; Ulaga, 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know-how • Sharing skills and knowledge • Market intelligence • Idea-generation • Innovation 	Knowledge value	
(Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Möller, 2006; Möller & Törrönen, 2003; Ulaga, 2003; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term planning • Extended network • Delivery performance • Time-to-market • Sourcing benefits • Core competencies • Mutual goals 	Strategic value	

Behavior value ensures the long-term growth of a relationship (Anderson et al., 1993; Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994). Basically, behavior value is the “likes and dislikes” about the other actor as a form of intangible and non-economic value (Baxter, 2008; Biggemann & Buttle, 2012). Actors in a relationship can connect intrinsic value to a relationship with no need to make functional considerations. In this way, actors act because they want to, instead of acting by financial pressures by the organization (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012). Since people make a relationship succeed or fail, *social bonding* is one of the important components of creating behavior value. Social bonding is about the personal investments that the contact persons undertake during their business relationship (Ulaga, 2003; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994). Literature has shown that social bonding leads to more *commitment* and *trust* that enhances future business relationship *retention* (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994). Besides, sharing each actors’

culture is an essential component of behavior value. By sharing each culture, a so-called ‘relationship culture’ will be developed that will enhance and protect their business relationship (Wilson & Jantrania, 1994). However, it must be stated that when two dissimilar organizational cultures are present, it is more difficult to find their common values that create a relationship culture. Eventually, a higher level of behavior value ensures that a manufacturer is more willing to help a customer or to stand an underperforming supplier because of a problem or a difficult/unusual situation (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Ulaga, 2003). This will lead to an increase in *referrals*, which in turn lead to an increase in economic value (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Reinartz & Kumar, 2003).

The fourth dimension of relationship value is *economic value*. According to Biggemann and Buttle (2012), entering a relationship results in an increase in *efficiency*, more *share of business*, more *share of market*, and the willingness of the customer to *pay more*. Ulaga (2003) adds that entering a relationship will have an impact on both *direct product costs* and the manufacturer’s *process costs*. The direct product costs, which is the price that the supplier pays, can be considered as the core relationship cost driver (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). Although suppliers need to decrease costs and pass savings on to the customers, manufacturers agree to an average, fair, and reasonable price. Besides, suppliers benefit from increased order volumes that compensate for the lower prices (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). The other type of cost, the process costs, refers to both the firm’s *acquisition costs* and *operation costs* (Ulaga, 2003). These costs can be outsourced to the suppliers to accomplish improvements in the overall firm’s process costs. Acquisition costs are costs in acquiring and storing products (e.g., transportation, inventory management, order handling, and inspections costs) and the operation costs are costs related to the manufacturer’s primary business (e.g., downtime costs, costs for tooling, and warranty costs) (Ulaga, 2003). Moreover, entering a business relationship with a concurrent manufacturer, i.e., horizontal coopetition (Lacoste, 2014), enables both actors to create economic value by increased *investment quality* and *engineering cost* reductions in the design process, the assembling process, and the delivered field services (Wilson & Jantrania, 1994).

The fifth dimension of relationship value, *knowledge value*, refers to *sharing skills, experiences, and knowledge* among each actor in the business relationship (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Ulaga, 2003; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). An actor may hold specific (technical) *know-how*, which the other actor may not have in-house or may not want to acquire (Ulaga, 2003). Sharing their know-how enables both actors to *co-create new ideas* that will lead to new *innovative solutions* (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Payne et al., 2008). Besides, by sharing knowledge, in-depth information of the supply market and its evolution (i.e., *market intelligence*), both actors can improve and align their products more to the customers’ specifications in terms of functionality and costs (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Ulaga, 2003). Research shows that knowledge management of customers’ specifications is particularly important in complex businesses, such as undertaking servitization collaboratively (Brax & Visintin, 2017; Payne et al., 2008). Besides, knowledge value improves mutual understanding and promotes trust between the companies that enhance their business relationship (Ballantyne, 2004).

The last dimension of relationship value is the so-called *strategic value*. Wilson and Jantrania (1994) concisely define strategic value as the “*synergistic combination of individual and mutual goals encourages the partners to invest time, effort and resources to create a long-term collaborative effort that achieves individual and partnership strategic advantage.*” (Wilson & Jantrania, 1994, p. 56) Thus, strategic value

can be seen as the “glue” that holds the relationship together and strengthen the *core competencies* of the actors. Therefore, having *mutual goals* is an important factor for creating long-lasting relationship (Ulaga, 2003; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994). By entering a business relationship, both actors get access to a broad range of *network connections* that come from third actors. This network decrease uncertainty and increase stability which supports secure grounds of the company’s *long-term planning* (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Möller & Törrönen, 2003). Besides, actors in a relationship can assist each other by providing access to resources (e.g., modern technologies) that potentially increase their market scope (Möller, 2006). By sharing resources, manufacturers become more flexible to develop products faster. This results in a reduction in their *time-to-market* ratio, which has nowadays become strategic standards in designing and managing supply chains (Ulaga, 2003; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994). Furthermore, *delivery performance* derived from the supplier is an important driver to enter a business relationship (Ulaga, 2003; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). Accordingly, suppliers create value for the manufacturer by “*consistently meeting delivery schedules (on-time delivery), their capability to adjust to changes in delivery schedules (flexibility), and their capacity to consistently deliver the right parts (accuracy).*” (Ulaga, 2003, p. 684)

2.1.4 Value alignment

The discovery of potential relationship value is also referred to as the so-called ‘value anticipation’ phase (Nailer & Buttriss, 2020). It arises from an actor’s prior judgment on the six dimensions which will determine what potential value can be created by collaborating (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Eggert et al., 2018; Ulaga, 2003). However, what makes it so complex is that these prior judgments are mental processes, with ‘real but unobservable objects’, formed both explicitly and implicitly (Nailer & Buttriss, 2020). Besides, the interpretation of perceived value is situational and context-dependent and influenced by the actors’ past experiences, present situations, and the expectations of the future (Valtakoski, 2017). Therefore, it is likely that the actors will experience different perspectives of anticipated relationship value when deciding to collaborate (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Sánchez-Fernández & Ángeles Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Velter et al., 2020). These different perceptions may eventually lead to relationship tensions between their mutual goals and capturing value during the collaboration (Chesbrough et al., 2018; Velter et al., 2020). To challenge these relationship tensions, mutual alignment between the actors’ value anticipations needs to take place (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017; Nailer & Buttriss, 2020; Valtakoski, 2017). This allows the actors to establish a mutual agreement that will motivate the actions and interdependencies of the actors during the collaboration to improve the chance of successful collaboration (Y. Lee & Cavusgil, 2006; Nailer & Buttriss, 2020). However, since it has shown that many companies still struggle to achieve the suggested relational benefits when servitizing (Gebauer et al., 2005; Valtakoski, 2017), it is stated that it is still unclear what value anticipations need to be explicitly aligned in advance to improve the chance of successful collaboration.

2.2 Theoretical framework

After discussing the relevant theoretical concepts, this section represents the theoretical framework. This theoretical framework illustrates how the relevant variables of this research are related to each other. As can be seen in *Figure 2.5*, in a dyadic business relationship, both actors form prior judgments on potential relationship value that can be created by collaborating. These prior judgments are context-dependent and influenced by the actors' past experiences, present situations, and expectations of the future. Therefore, it is likely that the actors will experience different perspectives of anticipated relationship value when deciding to collaborate, which may eventually lead to relationship tensions. To challenge these relationship tensions, mutual alignment between the actors' value anticipations needs to take place when actors decide to collaborate. This research investigates the underlying different perspectives on the anticipated relationship value between both actors and identifies what value anticipations need to be aligned in advance to improve the chance of successful collaboration.

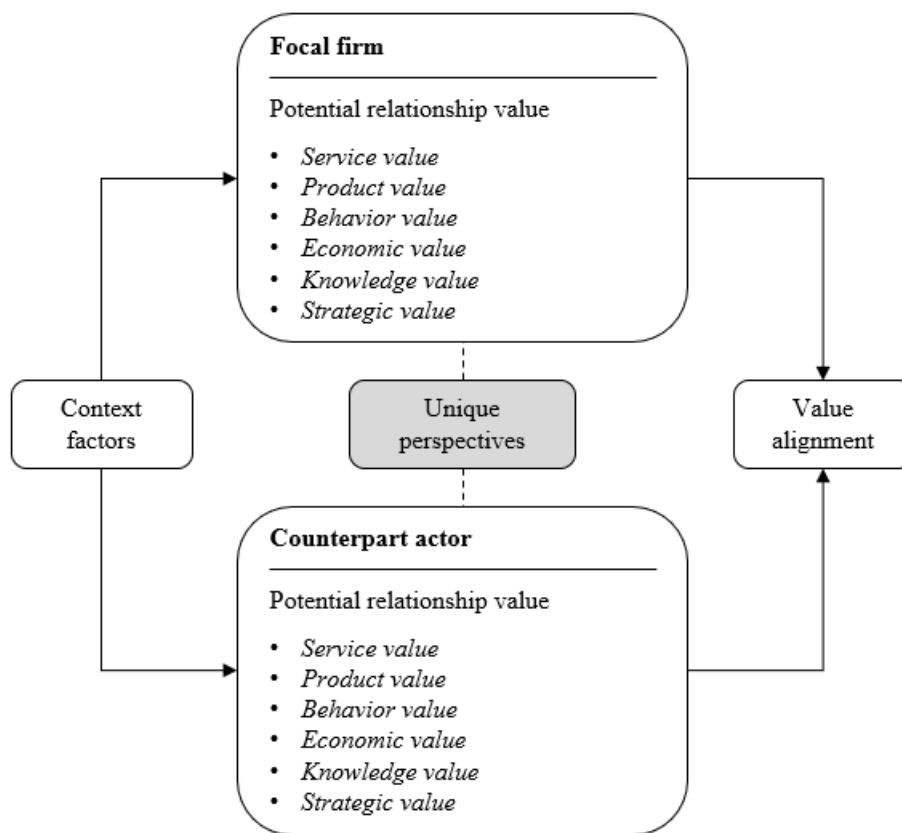


Figure 2.5. Theoretical framework

3 DATA METHODOLOGY

In this section, the methods and techniques will be described that have been used in this research. First, the design of the research will be defined. Then, the sampling strategy and the case description of the selected company will be given. In the data collection section will be explained in what way this primary data will be collected. Next, the data analysis method will be provided which will clarify what method will be used to analyze the data. In the end, the trustworthiness will be discussed to ensure the research's quality.

3.1 Research design

For this research, a qualitative single case study approach is adopted. The research context can be characterized by holistic business network complexity, in which the interpretations of the actors' value anticipations are situational and context-dependent and influenced by the actors' past experiences, present situations. Therefore, a qualitative method was most suited, since this method aims to *"understand and represent the experiences and actions of people as they encounter, engage, and live through situations."* (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999, p. 299). Also, given that each network organization is somewhat unique and context-specific, in which in-depth and descriptive understandings are needed, a case study was useful to gain insight into the underlying unique perceptions of anticipated relationship value (Creswell, Hanson, Clark, & Morales, 2007; Halinen & Törnroos, 2005). At last, single case studies are performed in close interactions with practitioners with existing management situations (Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008). In this way, the practitioners' prior judgments on potential relationship value could be examined in detail.

3.2 Sampling strategy

Since theory shows that servitization is actively used in the manufacturing industry (Brax & Visintin, 2017), in this study an SME construction company is selected that is currently undertaking servitization in a network context. Also, to improve the robustness of the data, a criterion has been used that the selected company already has undergone several collaborations with other actors within a network organization, with both successful and unsuccessful collaborations. At last, the theory showed that servitization is an important catalyst for a CE (Spring & Araujo, 2017). As the study of Yu, Yazan, Bhochhibhoya, and Volker (2021) stated, the Dutch construction sector is responsible for approximately 25 million tons of waste per year which comes down to about 46% of the total amount of waste in the whole country. Therefore, it is self-evident that there is a great interest in making the transition from a linear economy to a circular economy within the construction sector. Since the selected company started undertaking servitization with the motive of contributing to a CE, made this case an appropriate source for the data collection. To select the suitable partner companies and respondents, use was made of the expertise of an employee of the selected company. This specific employee did have a boundary-spanning role in the organization and had therefore an overview of the important relationships regarding the FaaS concept.

3.3 Case description

The concerning case company, 'Window Company' (*further: WinCo*), is a manufacturing SME situated in the Netherlands, which has grown into a leading façade specialist with an annual turnover of approximately 25 million euros. Its factory and offices are around 8000 m² with about 95 staff members. The operational

phases of WinCo undertake four phases, namely (1) engineering, (2) manufacturing, (3) assembling, and (4) management & maintenance.

The Dutch government has set the goal of making the Netherlands entirely circular by 2050¹. Also, customers are demanding more sustainable housing and working spaces². To anticipate this changing governmental legislation and to the changing demand of customers, WinCo jointly developed a new business proposition, named the so-called ‘Façade-as-a-Service’ (FaaS) proposition³. In this proposition, the producers remain the owner of the façade and become responsible for the maintenance, upgrading, and disassembly of the façade. But in return, they provide the user with extra living comfort: heating, cooling, ventilation, sunlight regulation, energy generation, and the entire digital control. Besides, in this way, the producers become responsible for utilizing the economic value retained in the façade after use in the production of new offerings. Hence, they will contribute to the detachability, reusability, and lifespan quality by exploiting its façades, which enables the companies to make an important contribution to the circular economy. WinCo’s service and maintenance operations are divided into four types, namely corrective, preventive, replacement, and predictive maintenance. In WinCo’s new product-service solution, where digital technology and data are the two most important enablers, providing predictive maintenance will be the most important distinctive character compared to product selling manufacturers. Although WinCo can be seen as a precursor in terms of developing a new product-as-a-service solution in the façade industry, they are still exploring possibilities to provide their services that meet Service Level Agreements in a cost-efficient way to become commercially successful. To achieve this, they rely on several business partners, such as suppliers, system integrators, and colleague façade builders with whom they might organize.

Due to time limits, a scope of four dyadic relationships has been investigated. These four relationships are (with WinCo as the focal firm): a concurrent manufacturer (*further: HorCo*), a glass supplier (*further: GlassCo*), a system house supplier (*further: SysCo*), and a project developer (*further: ProDev*). *Table 3.1* provides a concise overview of each company, including a description of the respondent, the company’s activity, and the company’s size.

As shown in *Table 3.1*, GlassCo is worldwide one of the larger players in the field of glass producers. GlassCo produces glass for among others automotive and solar panels and is a major player in building products. GlassCo has been an existing supplier of WinCo for a long time. Since both actors considered themselves with the same vision in the field of market approach and in creating sustainable construction productions for the future, they decided to become project-based partners in the realization of upcoming business innovative projects, including FaaS.

¹ Rijksoverheid. (2016). Nederland circulair in 2050. Retrieved from <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/circulaire-economie/nederland-circulair-in-2050>

² WinCo. (2020). Graduation assignment proposal, Retrieved from University of Twente

³ WinCo. (2020). DE CIRCULAIR GEVEL.

Table 3.1. Study Sample

<i>Company</i>	<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Company activity</i>	<i>Company size</i>
WinCo	Specialist circular product, boundary spanning role.	Building company in façades <i>Joint venture with HorCo and SysCo</i>	Employees: 95
GlassCo	Value-added manager	Glass supplier	Employees: 2.072
SysCo	Country manager Benelux	System house supplier <i>Joint venture with WinCo and HorCo</i>	Employees: 36.000 (international) 189 (national)
HorCo	Director of technology	Building company in façades <i>Joint venture with WinCo and SysCo</i>	Employees: 130
ProDev	Project developer and lead link responsible for the innovation department	Real estate project developer	Employees: 19

SysCo is a supplier that supplies aluminium system houses to WinCo. Together with WinCo and HorCo, they form a joint venture in which they are jointly developing and marketing their FaaS concept. Before SysCo participated in the joint venture, WinCo, HorCo and another façade producer formed the joint venture. However, due to continuous misalignments, the relationship ended with this façade producer. At a certain point, it emerged that SysCo had the same ambitions as WinCo when it came to sustainability and its innovation strategies. Since SysCo made the promise to contribute to marketing activities, financial support, capacity supply, employee availability in realizing circular façades, all three actors agreed that SysCo would participate in the joint venture.

HorCo is a similar company to WinCo (i.e., coopetitor), which also produces aluminum façades and employs about 130 employees. Together with WinCo and SysCo, they form a joint venture in which they are jointly developing and marketing their FaaS proposition. Originally, WinCo started the FaaS propositions with another façade producer. Meanwhile, HorCo already developed and introduced two circular façades into the market. Then, a real estate project developer approached HorCo to contribute to the development of a building with a circular facade, and if possible, in the form of a lease concept. In this collaboration, WinCo mainly focused on the business side of the concept, while HorCo mainly brought in its technological expertise.

ProDev is a real estate project developer that develops their own real estate and tries to keep that in the investment as much as possible. They aim to do this with an innovative foundation with the idea of being able to change the construction sector, striving for the highest degree of adaptability, circularity, modularity, and delivering a positive social impact. ProDev has a department of developing real estate projects as well as a research and development department to innovate its ways of thinking for future possibilities. The CEO of ProDev and the circular product specialist of WinCo knew each other in the business world for a while and have always kept in touch and remained involved with the same goals as far as circularity is concerned. ProDev more on the development field, WinCo from a product perspective. At some point, they contacted each other and got acquainted with a new project, and started developing it together. Now they are project-based business partners in the FaaS concept.

3.4 Data collection

To collect the primary data, ‘semi-structured’ interviews have been used, which is a data collection method that is the “empirical backbone” of much qualitative research in ‘social science’ (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The study of Louise, Barriball, and While (1994) namely argues that semi-structured interviews are well suited to explore perceptions and opinions of the respondents regarding complex issues. As mentioned, this research is characterized by a holistic network complexity in which the interpretations of the actors’ value anticipations are situational and context-dependent and influenced by the actors’ past experiences, present situation, and future expectations. Therefore, semi-structured interviews have been a useful method to gather their perceptions. Since use has been made of semi-structured interviews, it was able to ask for follow-up questions when in-depth information was needed to better understand the underlying judgments of the actors’ value anticipations. This also enabled the research to adjust and add questions during the research when needed to become more valid. To correctly measure the theoretical concepts, the interview questions were structured and substantiated by the prior theoretical data collection. This means that the questions have been structured in terms of the main dimensions of relationship value (product, service, behavior, economic, knowledge, and strategic value) that in turn played an important role in the prior judgments of potential relationship value between WinCo and its counterpart actor.

3.5 Data analysis

To analyze the collected data from the interviews, the so-called ‘content analysis’ method has been used. Content analysis is a widely used method for subjective interpretation in qualitative data that enables the researcher to find patterns through a systematic process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this, use has been made of deductive content analysis, which is a systematic process to test prior operationalized knowledge that was first derived from theory (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In terms of this research, predefined and conceptualized knowledge about the relationship value dimensions has been tested to analyze the underlying unique perspectives of the actors’ value anticipations. In this analysis process, five phases were completed that have been supported by the studies of Elo and Kyngäs (2008) and Braun and Clarke (2006), see *Figure 3.1*.

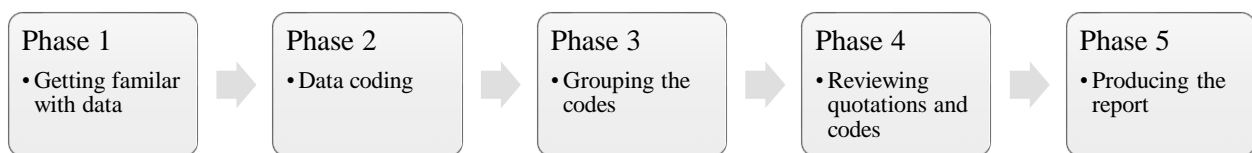


Figure 3.1. Phases of the content analysis

In the first phase, the recorded interviews were verbatim (i.e., word for word) transcribed and re-read to get familiar with the depth and breadth of the content, searching for meanings, patterns, and so on.

In the second phase, relevant words, phrases, sentences, or sections (i.e., quotations) were directly labeled with key concepts that have been retrieved from the existing theory. In terms of this research, the quotations were labeled with (one of) the sub-dimensions of the relationship value dimensions. This process, in which the transcription will be sorted into labels, is also known as ‘coding’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Elo & Kyngäs,

2008). This coding process was supported by the program called ‘ATLAS.ti’, which is a support tool for analyzing qualitative data.

In the third phase, the obtained codes were grouped into the main dimensions of relationship value. Besides, the degree of importance of both the sub-dimensions and main dimensions has been analyzed through the so-called ‘code document table’ (Cross Tabulation) in ATLAS.ti. This made it possible to measure the importance of each (sub) dimension.

In the fourth phase, in terms of internal validity, all the established patterns have been reviewed and refined. This phase involved two levels of reviewing. First, the entire data set was reviewed to consider whether additional data had to be coded that has been missed. It was also examined whether quotations could be removed from the analysis. In the second level of review, the validity of the individual codes to the quotations was considered. Therefore, all quotations were re-read to consider whether the codes match the quotation and if necessary to change the code to another code that would fit better.

Lastly, the fifth phase involves reporting the analyzing process and the results of the research. This task was “to tell the complicated story of your data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis.” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 25) In other words, it was important not to just provide data, but to extract the data in a narrative style that illustrated a story about the data itself. Therefore, the essence of each main dimension was identified and determined what aspect of the quotations it captures. Also, to give clear argumentations to the research question, in the discussion the collected data were compared with the literature, asking what is similar, what is in contradiction, and why (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Lichtenstein et al., 2006).

3.6 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the research is assessed using the criteria from Storbacka (2011). The assessment results are detailed in *Table 3.2*.

Table 3.2. The trustworthiness of the research process

<i>Criteria (Storbacka, 2011)</i>	<i>Method of addressing</i>
Pre-understanding The extent to which the researcher was familiar with the empirical context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher has pre-discussed the conceptual background of the research before conducting the research, see <i>2.1 Theoretical background</i>. • The researcher was simultaneously following the Master of Business Administration, in which the concerning concepts were being discussed.
Credibility (internal validity, authenticity) The extent to which the results will be an acceptable representation of the data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interview questionnaire has been assessed in the interim by the supervisors to improve the quality and internal validity before it was administered to the involved respondents. • A continuous, iterative process to combine literature findings with interview findings. • A structured approach called ‘content analysis’ has been used to analyze the empirical data set. See <i>3.5 Data analysis</i>. • The research has been five months of continuous interactions between researcher and supervisors to guarantee and improve quality.

Transferability (external validity, fittingness)

The extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts.

- Clear arguments are provided why the selected case is appropriate given the research question, supported by details of the case study itself. See 3.2 *Sampling strategy* and 3.3 *Case description*.
- To select suitable respondents for the interviews, use was made of the expertise of an employee of the case firm, who had a boundary spanning role with an overview of important relationships regarding FaaS.

Dependability (reliability, auditability)

The extent to which there is a consistency of explanations.

- Procedures that have been used during this research were carefully documented and clarified in the method section.
- Throughout the research process, several feedback sessions were conducted with the supervisors of this research.

Conformability (objectivity)

The extent to which interpretations are the result of the participants and the phenomenon as opposed to researcher biases.

- The transcripts have been re-read to ensure correct interpretations of the conducted interviews.
- During the research, the findings were discussed with the case firm to find out whether the results could be used in practice.

Integrity

The extent to which interpretations are influenced by misinformation from participants.

- The data collection via interviews has been conducted professionally and friendly, where anonymity was ensured.
- The interview questions were formulated as concrete as possible to prevent aiming for a certain answer (suggestive questions with words like “right” or “wrong”) and to avoid socially desirable responses.

Utilization (applicability, action orientation)

Extent to which the findings are relevant and can be used to benefit the participants.

- At the end of the research, a colloquium was conducted to discuss and defend the research findings with the internal supervisors
- At the end of the research, a presentation was given to the external supervisor of WinCo.

4 RESULTS

In this section, the results of this research are provided. Therefore, this section will be divided into four subsections, which represent the four dyadic relationships that are mentioned before. These results are based on the empirical data retrieved from the semi-structured interviews. Per relationship, both perspectives of each partner will be analyzed.

4.1 Relationship #1: Focal firm (WinCo) & Glass supplier (GlassCo)

The first subsection is about the dyadic relationship between the focal firm WinCo and GlassCo. *Figure 4.1* shows the underlying different perspectives in the anticipated value alignment between both actors. The way to interpret this graph is, for example, if an actor puts relatively speaking more emphasis on the expected product value anticipations compared to its counterpart actor, then the data bar will deflect in the direction of the actor with the highest expectations. These data bars are the result of the sub-dimension codes that were retrieved from empirical data. This sub-dimension analysis can be found in *Figure A2.1* in *APPENDIX II*.

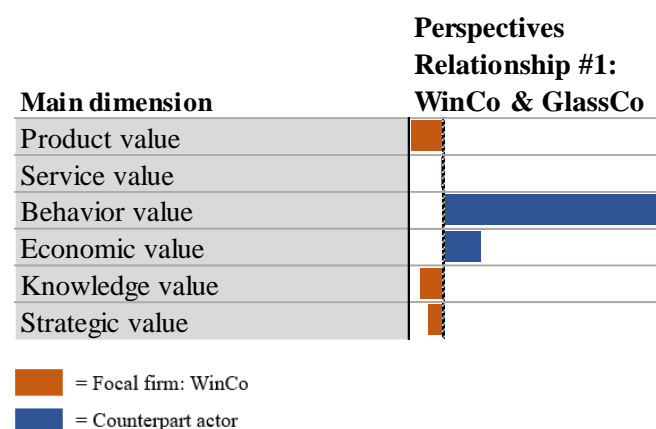


Figure 4.1. Analysis main dimensions 'relationship value' WinCo & GlassCo

Product value

As can be seen in *Figure 4.1*, there was a slight difference in the anticipated product value between both actors. The main reason GlassCo mentioned is that GlassCo is the supplier for WinCo, where there are no recurring flows of goods. Therefore, GlassCo had no clear expectations in product value from WinCo. WinCo, on the other hand, argued that they ultimately have a good relationship with GlassCo since their product reliability and quality are good. However, WinCo underlined that within traditional projects, a higher degree of anticipated product value is present in traditional projects compared to business innovation projects, like FaaS: *"Traditional projects are completely different processes with very different interests in the collaboration."*

Service value

Regarding the degree of service value, there were no clear differences in both actors' expectations. Both actors had relatively spoken equal expectations on the product-related services from each other. From WinCo's perspective, it was argued that they expected the process of requesting offers as a part of a service

from GlassCo. WinCo argued that GlassCo had more in-depth knowledge of their products, thus expected GlassCo to help to set a marketable price towards their own customers:

“I always see the process of requesting offers as part of a service they provide. With this, they help to make the pricing towards our customer and that also takes time. I include that in our concept and then market it again.”

But in return, GlassCo mentioned that they expected WinCo to keep up with their digital services to facilitate the digital ordering more easily between each other. In this sense, both actors expected the same level of service value from each other:

“What we want is as little handling and extra costs as possible, so that it all fits together as easily as possible in the operational chain. We are working on a digital ordering system in which we consult with our customers to coordinate this as well as possible. In this way, the order entry can work more efficiently, and errors can be reduced. We look for customers who are open to this.”

Behavior value

As can be clearly seen, the biggest difference in the anticipated value dimensions of both actors was the expected degree of ‘behavior value’. As can be seen in *Figure A2.1*, both actors mentioned that showing commitment and undertaking personal investments to increase social bonding were most important. As WinCo stated:

“If GlassCo sticks their neck out and delivers the glass to a pilot for nothing or want to help finance the pilot, then you have a serious relationship partner. Then in return, GlassCo will be included in all advertising and media attention.”

However, the interviews showed that GlassCo put relatively speaking more emphasis on the expected degree of trust, commitment, personal interaction, and customer retention compared to WinCo. GlassCo stated that glass is a very delicate product, so it is likely that there will be times when shipping damage will occur, delaying the overarching project. Therefore, GlassCo expected WinCo to understand the complexity of glass and not to get held back by negative emotions but give trust and show commitment to making it together right again. As GlassCo stated:

“Ultimately, the project must be delivered, and the problem must be solved with no-nonsense for both actors, good structural cooperation, and open communication, where there is no beating around the bush. Then we can solve any problem.”

Besides, it appeared that GlassCo was generally not actively involved in the acquisition of new projects. Therefore, GlassCo expected that, based on their historical collaboration, a certain favorable factor was present in the submission of new projects by its partner. GlassCo wanted to provide additional services for this, for example by providing free advice on certain product solutions. But again, GlassCo stressed that in this it is important that they can rely on WinCo not to misuse the information given:

“We have provided free advice in the past. That customer then had information about the product that we supply. We should not get the impression that this is being abused, with WinCo then going to a cheaper competitor who does not have or cannot do all that research. If so, then there is a disappointment.”

Moreover, according to GlassCo, social bonding is not only important to get favors from each other. GlassCo argued that during the implementation of a project, the workers in the workplace must ultimately perform to guarantee quality. Therefore, GlassCo expected WinCo to actively involve the workers during the implementation processes to let them know what they are doing and the reason behind it: *“then you will see that there is more commitment and that fewer mistakes are made.”*

Economic value

Furthermore, the data showed that there was a difference in anticipated economic value, with higher expectations from GlassCo’s perspective. GlassCo put relatively speaking more emphasis on obtaining a higher degree of economic value in the form of receiving a higher price from WinCo. GlassCo mentioned that the construction market is still a very competitive market, with margins still going to contractors and building companies where suppliers are forced to deliver their products with minimal margins. Besides, any additional costs (e.g., transport damage) puts even more pressure on its margins. Therefore, GlassCo expected a certain favor from their partner in acquiring a higher price, where the prices are more based on the supplier’s cost price rather than based on the cheapest supplier. In this way, the supplier can free up more budget for innovation developments, enabling it to compete more on its innovation strategy:

“If a truck driver suddenly has to brake and the product is damaged, your margin is already gone. We are more in favor of working towards an open budget in certain projects and that everyone states: This is my cost price, I need this margin for the continuity of my company and some innovation investments for the future.”

However, there was a difference in economic interests. As mentioned, GlassCo expected a higher price during their relationship. However, WinCo expected lower direct product costs from GlassCo to keep the end-product pricewise interesting for their customers. But therefore, WinCo expected GlassCo not to influence their price by taking higher risks in product innovations:

“GlassCo is struggling to get their innovations to market. Why? Their glass is simply becoming more expensive (...) GlassCo covers their rising risks with a higher price, however, then it will become expensive and less interesting for our customers.”

Knowledge value

Subsequently, there was a difference in both actors’ anticipated knowledge value. The main difference between both actors is that GlassCo mainly expected WinCo to have certain know-how of their products, while WinCo expected GlassCo to actively generate new ideas during their relationship. According to GlassCo, it is quite complicated what is involved in the field of glass production. Therefore, they expected WinCo to be a professional partner that has the know-how about the ins and outs of glass. So, if there is a delay, they understand how it works. To provide the relevant knowledge, GlassCo facilitates their customers in so-called e-learnings where their customers can complete free training courses.

In contrast to GlassCo, WinCo mainly emphasized that they expected GlassCo to be innovative and will actively generate new ideas during their relationship. According to WinCo, this is especially important in business innovation projects like FaaS: *“We thought GlassCo had an excellent basis in terms of product innovations. So, we partnered with them for their innovative projects. Traditionally, it might as well be three*

other suppliers.” As a result, there was a slight difference in anticipated knowledge value, with overall higher expectations from WinCo’s perspective.

Strategic value

At last, there was a slight difference in the anticipated strategic value, with overall a higher anticipated value from WinCo’s perspective. However, when looking deeper into the sub-dimensions, it turned out that there were no big differences between both actors’ perspectives. But it became clear that in this, having mutual goals, fulfilling each other's long-term planning, and aligning each other’s core competencies were of main interest. WinCo for example mentioned that they expected GlassCo to remain flexible in offering varying product combinations, enabling them to adapt to new business models and to take long-term risks. This enables WinCo to offer a wide range of product possibilities to their clients. Besides, both actors are firmly convinced that the future is to reduce CO₂ where possible by creating circular products. Therefore, both actors stated that having mutual goals that complement the company’s long-term plans is essential. For example, as GlassCo mentioned:

“We have the ambition to become a sustainable glass partner since we really see an opportunity in sustainable construction products for the future. However, in the end, you cannot do it yourself, you want to do it with sustainable partners in the chain who have the same philosophy about it.”

But in this, both actors argued that it is important that the delivery conditions must be aligned, like delivery times and how to deal with delays. Furthermore, one of the small differences between both actors’ perspectives was that since GlassCo is a supplier, WinCo expected additional sourcing benefits with interesting delivery conditions, like extra services, discounts, or a contribution. Besides, since GlassCo is generally not actively acquiring new customers, they expected to obtain an extended network by engaging in a business relationship with WinCo.

4.2 Relationship #2: Focal firm (WinCo) & System house supplier (SysCo)

The second subsection is about the dyadic relationship between the focal firm WinCo and SysCo. *Figure 4.2* shows the underlying different perspectives in the anticipated value alignment between both actors. These data bars are the result of the sub-dimension codes that were retrieved from empirical data. This sub-dimension analysis can be found in *Figure A2.2* in *APPENDIX II*.

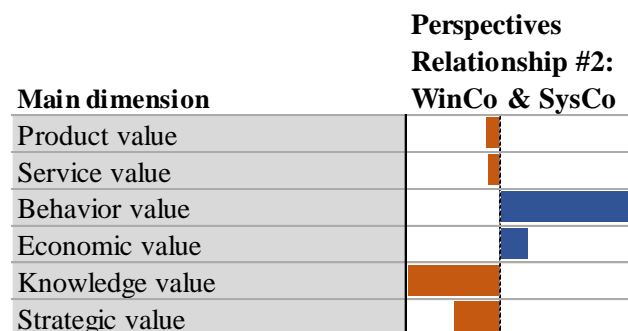


Figure 4.2. Analysis main dimensions ‘relationship value’ WinCo & SysCo

Product value

As can be seen in *Figure 4.2*, there was only a slight difference in the anticipated product value between both actors. Again, the emphasis is mainly on WinCo's perspective, because SysCo is the supplier for WinCo, without recurring flows of goods from SysCo. As WinCo mentioned, they expected SysCo to deliver high-quality façade systems that meet certain performance requirements, like insulation, noise, and statics, as well as physical aspects, such as strength calculations according to the European rules. As SysCo acknowledged, they must deliver good performance to WinCo. However, in return they expected WinCo to make a good end-product that will assure high customer satisfaction for both actors.

Service value

The same as for product value applied for the product value that there was only a small difference in both actors' expectations. WinCo mentioned that traditionally they certainly expected SysCo to deliver additional services to WinCo, like providing customer information. Nonetheless, when looking to business innovations and cooperatively developing circular solutions, they pointed out that providing services is a normal thing to do. *"Otherwise, you'll go out of business anyway."*

Behavior value

As can be clearly seen in *Figure 4.2*, the biggest difference in the anticipated value dimensions of both actors was the expected degree of 'behavior value'. In this, as can be seen in *Figure A2.2*, WinCo emphasized the importance of showing more commitment compared to SysCo:

"When it's quiet for a while, I expected to get a call: shouldn't we meet again? That is very important. If the other actor is not proactive in the development, it is better to say goodbye. Otherwise, it will only take a very long time and it will not progress."

However, there was a big difference in anticipated behavior value, since SysCo put relatively speaking more emphasis on the expected level of personal interaction, undertaking personal investments, and showing trust. SysCo argued that they firmly expected WinCo to undertake personal investments with always the right intentions. From the respondent's point of view, being flexible and meeting each other's expectations in their mutual behavior is very important for achieving long-term business relationships:

"When it comes to money, there are always moments of tension and there are always challenging conversations. But that is just how the relationship is formed: if you keep your back straight, then that is a short-term relationship. If you bend along and others do the same, it will be a long-term relationship."

Besides, the interviews showed that there was a difference in the anticipation of customer retention. SysCo namely put more emphasis on the expectation of obtaining new projects for in the future compared to WinCo. Moreover, both actors had relatively spoken the same level of expectations in each other's culture. WinCo namely mentioned that it is not always just the contact person. Organization-wide support must also be obtained from the organization to be able to accelerate. SysCo also indicated that cultures might differ between companies, regions, and countries, and therefore important to align each other's cultures. However, since both actors had the same expectations about each other's culture, it is not expected that their culture would obstruct the success of their relationship.

Economic value

Furthermore, the data showed that there was a slight difference in anticipated economic value, with higher expectations from SysCo's perspective of the relationship. However, when looking deeper into the sub-dimensions, it turned out that there were no big differences between both actors' perspectives. But it became clear that in this, both actors emphasized the expectations of increasing their market share and expecting high-quality investments by engaging in a relationship with each other. However, while WinCo expected SysCo to find ways to participate in the financing of for example the as-a-service model to reduce its operational costs and direct product costs, SysCo expected that they would acquire a higher price by engaging in a relationship with WinCo. They argued that when a project is technically quite complex, but they can offer WinCo a suitable technical solution for it, they expected to be rewarded with a higher price:

“When you sell the first project, you must make some concessions towards the customer, so the price is important in this. But then we just go back to our original prices. Of course, we must always be keen on the price and remain competitive, let put that first. You cannot ask for gold for these kinds of things since you will also be tested for that. But they also need to see the benefits in the big picture.”

Thus, there was a difference in interests between the expectations of acquiring a higher price from SysCo's perspective and reducing the direct product costs and operation costs from WinCo's perspective of the relationship.

Knowledge value

Moreover, as it turned out, there was a difference in both actors' anticipated knowledge value. Both actors expected their partners to develop know-how and share their skills and knowledge to foster their mutual innovation developments. In this, SysCo put relatively speaking more emphasis on the expectations that WinCo would actively share their knowledge and skills. SysCo namely argued that you must get along with the people who ultimately make the product and get to work with it. And the only way to convince them is by letting them experiment with it by trial and error and sharing their experiences:

“You can only convince the production people with one thing: let them feel, experiment, taste, sniff, and find something about it. We actually spent two weeks there in production with our production people from our company to have them make those products.”

In contrast, WinCo put more emphasis on the expectations that SysCo must develop new know-how and come up with innovative solutions. Besides, a big difference was that WinCo expected SysCo to actively generate new ideas during their business relationship that will lead to innovation opportunities. But therefore, WinCo stated that it is first important to determine the partner's scope in innovation. According to the respondent, there is a difference in innovation developments between technical and business innovations. Technical innovation is mainly improving the product's performance a little more each time. Business innovations (like FaaS) on the other hand have a much wider scope. In the case of business innovation, WinCo expected its partner to actively generate and share new ideas and develop know-how that eventually will foster their mutual innovative capacity. As a result, there was a difference in the anticipation of knowledge value between both actors, with overall higher expectations from WinCo's perspective of their business relationship.

Strategic value

At last, the data showed that there was a difference in the anticipated strategic value, with overall a higher anticipated value from WinCo's perspective. However, when looking deeper into the sub-dimensions, it turned out that there were no big differences between both actors' perspectives. But it has become clear that from both perspectives, having mutual goals, aligning each other's core competencies, and fulfilling each other's long-term planning were of main interest. In this it was stated that it is important to think and talk about durability, with the mindset: I am going to change, and the world is going to look different in the future. Besides, both actors pointed out that they expected to extend their network by engaging in a business relationship with each other. For example, SysCo mentioned:

"We can constantly suggest projects, but at some point, when the mood is so good and you have a good relationship with each other, you naturally expected something in return. Because they have their own network, they also make acquisitions themselves."

But the main difference between both actor's perspectives was that WinCo put relatively speaking more emphasis on the anticipation of matching each other's core competencies. The respondent argued that ultimately, any system house can supply façade profiles. Therefore, WinCo stated that the focus is on the business scope of its partner supplier rather than looking for traditional suppliers that might want to adapt their product to a more sustainable solution. In this case, WinCo expected SysCo to distinguish themselves from their competitors by implementing aspects of circular economy in their core business processes (e.g., detachability, adaptability, and flexibility). As WinCo talked about SysCo's predecessor:

"If you are talking about business innovation, they were not working on that at all. (...) Their business scope is different. You must go for the user, for reuse, for end-of-life scenarios. And what kind of products go in there, that is step two. But that is very difficult for a company that does nothing else than developing and selling systems. (...) They have different goals, see the future a little differently, and have different priorities. All of that does not really work out together."

Thus, both actors need to align their core competencies in such a way that it complements each other's long-term planning.

4.3 Relationship #3: Focal firm (WinCo) & Coopetitor (HorCo)

The first subsection is about the dyadic relationship between the focal firm WinCo and its partner HorCo. *Figure 4.3* shows the underlying different perspectives in the anticipated value alignment between both actors. These data bars are the result of the sub-dimension codes that were retrieved from empirical data. This sub-dimension analysis can be found in *Figure A2.3* in *APPENDIX II*.

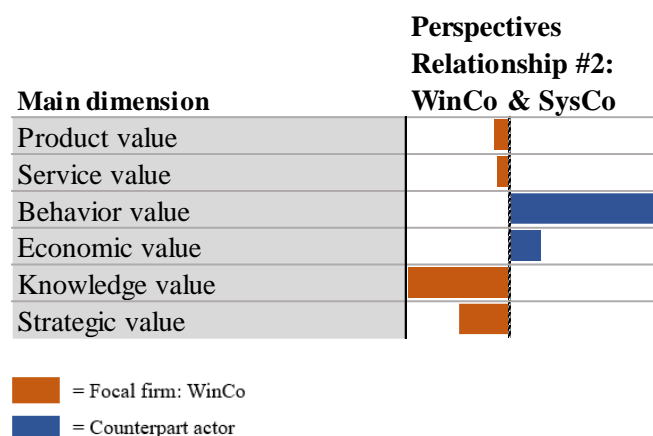


Figure 4.3. Analysis main dimensions 'relationship value' WinCo & HorCo

Product value

As can be clearly seen in Figure 4.3, it was found that there were different perspectives on the anticipated product value between both actors. During the interview, it became clear that HorCo had no clear expectations regarding the anticipated product value in their business relationship. However, since WinCo argued that they are working together on a new façade concept, WinCo especially mentioned that they expected HorCo to deliver a reliable product during their relationship. Thus, there was a difference in the anticipation of product value between both actors, with higher expectations from WinCo's perspective of their business relationship.

Service value

The opposite was true for the anticipated service value, where there were different perspectives between both actors with no clear expectations from WinCo's perspective. HorCo, however, mentioned that during the production, they expected WinCo to share their production capacity with HorCo so that they will have enough resources to realize the production. Besides, they expected WinCo to share important customer information during their business relationship. For example, when a certain project is presented to WinCo that is about a circular project, HorCo expected WinCo to share that information. As HorCo stated:

"We are still formalizing the concrete agreements in the context of circular facades. But, if we have a request for a circular facade, we always share it with each other. And when the application comes to us, we take charge of the project unless we think we need to hand it over to WinCo. Or if we do not have the time, we can ask WinCo to take it over, that's possible."

Behavior value

When it comes to the anticipated behavior value, both actors expected that their counterpart actors will actively show commitment and that they hold each other accountable for the actions to be taken. In this, in contrast to WinCo, HorCo emphasized the importance of undertaking personal investments to increase social bonding. They namely argue that when there is a delay or certain actions were not performed correctly, it is expected both actors to address each other about it. This should be done by expressing their accountabilities to each other in a good atmosphere to avoid unnecessary relationship tensions.

“But it is also actively taking action, where everyone takes the planning seriously (...) We noticed, for example, that the design was not yet ready, that it was not yet suitable for production. And yes, then you notice that tensions arise.”

However, the main difference between both actors' expectations was the expected degree of trust. Since both actors are originally each other's competitors, WinCo emphasized that trust is a very important aspect of their business relationship: *“In the relationship with HorCo, trust is the most important because we are essentially direct competitors of each other. Then you must trust very hard that both actors have the same goal in mind.”* Thus, there were different perspectives where WinCo put relatively speaking more emphasis on the anticipated behavior value.

Economic value

Furthermore, it turned out that there was a difference in anticipated economic value, with relatively speaking higher expectations from HorCo's perspective. When looking deeper into the sub-dimensions, both actors emphasized the expectations of an increase of their share of market and their investment's quality by engaging in a business relationship with each other. For example, WinCo mentioned, to develop and market their circular façade, they need more resources to excite the market of their new product: *“By working together, we expected more capacity and more scale in the market so that we can really make a mark on the market and thus achieve more financial returns in our companies.”* The main difference between both actors is that HorCo argued that it is important that every development must be supported with arguments to keep the engineering costs to a minimum. In this way, the product will be price-wise suitable for the market:

“We have to develop something suitable for the market. The market does want a circular façade but does not want to pay too much for it. So, the cost aspect is also an important item. (...) In a new project that we are doing together, we should be constantly alert to this. A continuous financial assessment would be an aspect that I would like to consider in the future”

Knowledge value

Moreover, there was a difference in both actors' anticipated knowledge value. Both actors expected their counterpart actors to actively develop know-how and share their skills and knowledge to foster their mutual innovation developments. HorCo for example argued that at some point, it might be necessary to deploy extra staff to increase the appropriate knowledge:

“We knew that there was still a lot to develop on a detailed level. At some point, I brought in an extra engineer to develop that level of detail. At WinCo that happened a little later. So, from that point of view, you could say: well, maybe they should have put in a more experienced person sooner.”

Besides, both actors emphasized the importance of sharing their skills and knowledge to foster their mutual innovation developments since they are originally each other's competitors: *“Openness, transparency, sharing knowledge: do we really share everything with each other? That's very important in this relationship.”* However, relatively speaking, HorCo put more emphasis on the expectations of developing the right know-how and sharing these skills and knowledge, resulting in a difference in anticipated knowledge value with higher expectations from HorCo's perspective.

Strategic value

At last, the biggest difference in the anticipated value dimensions of both actors is the expected degree of ‘strategic value’. In this, in contrast to WinCo, HorCo mentioned that they expected to obtain an extended network by engaging in a business relationship with WinCo. Besides, since they expected WinCo to share their resources, they expected that their delivery performance will increase. Also, they expected that WinCo’s core competencies match with their own competencies: *“We are in the same kind of projects, and we always say: the DNA of a company has to be almost the same to guarantee a good collaboration.”*

Both actors stated that having mutual goals is important. However, the main difference in both actors’ perspectives is that WinCo put relatively speaking more emphasis on the expectations that both actors have the same mutual goals. Besides, in contrast to HorCo, WinCo mentioned that they expected that both actors complement each other’s long-term planning:

“I only have a façade, so I can never offer the maximum comfort. That is why we should enter a joint venture with HorCo and an installation party, and that proposition should be: we offer comfort to living or working functions. That is the ultimate dream where I would like to be in 10 years.”

As a result, there was a difference in both actors’ anticipated strategic value, with higher expectations from WinCo’s perspective.

4.4 Relationship #4: Focal firm (WinCo) & Project developer (ProDev)

The fourth subsection is about the dyadic relationship between the focal firm WinCo and ProDev. *Figure 4.4* shows the underlying different perspectives in the anticipated value alignment between both actors. These data bars are the result of the sub-dimension codes that were retrieved from empirical data. This sub-dimension analysis can be found in *Figure A2.4* in *APPENDIX II*.

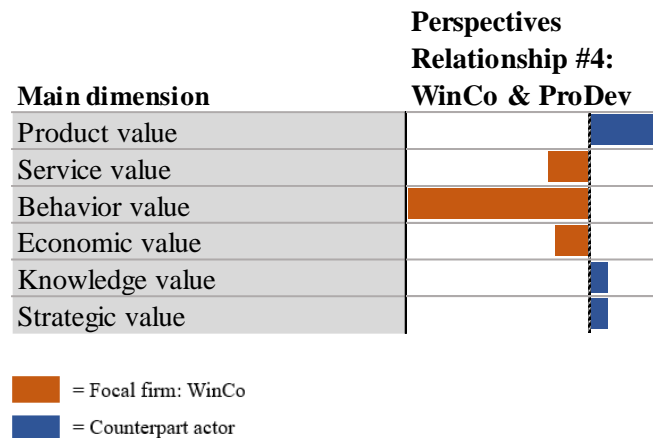


Figure 4.4. Analysis main dimensions ‘relationship value’ WinCo & ProDev

Product value

As can be clearly seen in *Figure 4.4*, there was a difference in the anticipated product value between both actors, where ProDev had relatively speaking higher expectations compared to WinCo. The main reason for this difference is that WinCo mentioned that, since ProDev is initially their customer, there are no recurring flows of goods from ProDev to WinCo. Therefore, there were fewer product value expectations from

WinCo's perspective. ProDev, however, is WinCo's customer and is aimed for a long-term relationship. Therefore, they expected a decent product and expected that WinCo continuously improves the product performance during their business relationship:

“What you expected from a facade manufacturer is that they just make a decent façade and attach performance to it and just make it better and better over time.”

Service value

Regarding the degree of service value, there is a slight difference in both actors' expectations, with higher expectations from WinCo's perspective. The only thing that WinCo mentioned about the anticipated service value from ProDev is sharing and acquiring important customer information: *“Because ProDev is also a customer of ours, you expect them to share important knowledge. I certainly expected that.”*

Behavior value

As it turned out, there was relatively speaking a clear difference in the anticipated behavior value between both actors. In this, both actors emphasized their expectations of showing commitment, undertaking personal investments to increase social bonding, showing trust, and having the right intentions during their business relationship: *“That WinCo comes up with proposals, that they simply understand what we are doing. If there are obstacles that make you think: how can I deal with them? Or how can we take a step there? That builds trust.”* Besides, both actors mentioned that they expected an increase in customer retention by engaging in a relationship with each other. ProDev further adds that it is important that WinCo's culture match their own culture to innovate quickly:

“When you work with big companies you often get bureaucracy (...) And I have the feeling that WinCo is willing to say: this is our system, these are the main principles why it works but we are also open to acquiring people with a different view.”

However, overall, the data showed that WinCo had higher expectations about the anticipated behavior value compared to ProDev. The main difference was that WinCo put relatively speaking more emphasis on the expected degree of trust and its expectations on undertaking personal investments compared to ProDev. For example, WinCo adds that they expected that they will get the favor from ProDev in the form of exclusivity when collaborating with a project, without bringing in all kinds of competitors. Besides, when ProDev asks for certain favors, WinCo then expects a return from them in the future: *“As they continuously ask for input to share knowledge and think along, to work out projects without getting paid for it, or whatever, then you also expect something in return from them.”*

Economic value

Furthermore, it appeared that there was relatively a slight difference in anticipated economic value. When looking closer into the sub-dimensions in *Figure A2.4*, only two of all economic aspects were pointed out during the interviews, namely the investment's quality and the share of market. In this, ProDev put relatively speaking more emphasis on the investment's quality expectations compared to WinCo. As ProDev mentioned, the building sector is very complex with big financial risks. Therefore, it was expected to have a professional company with which certain extensive innovations can be realized:

“The building sector is extremely complex. You have a lot of partners, big financial risks, and a lot of transparency. And then you have the municipality, government, policy et cetera. So, a lot must change, and you cannot do that alone.”

However, unlike ProDev, WinCo expected a larger market share by entering a relationship with ProDev: *“Ultimately, we expected that we would do projects together with ProDev so that we would generate revenue. The expectations were there, and they now seem to fulfill that expectation.”* In total, there is a slight difference in anticipated economic value with higher expectations from WinCo’s perspective.

Knowledge value

Subsequently, there was a slight difference in both actors’ anticipated knowledge value, with relatively speaking higher expectations from ProDev’s perspective. The main difference was that, unlike WinCo, ProDev expected WinCo to generate new ideas throughout their relationship that will foster their innovation capabilities:

“I initially expected that WinCo was just a facade supplier and that they want to sell their thing, which has been the same for 100 years. I think I am surprised by WinCo that they really look for innovation possibilities. (...) But therefore, it is important that WinCo has the know-how and that they can deliver a combination of innovation and customization so that they can respond to those changes.”

Strategic value

At last, there was a slight difference in the anticipated strategic value. In this, both actors argued that having mutual goals and aligning each other’s core competencies that fulfill their long-term planning were of main interest. ProDev is a developing investor, so they argued that they are in it for the long run. For the future, they believe that the construction sector must change to a built environment that strives for the highest degree of adaptability, circularity, and modularity to make a positive social impact. They try to do this with an innovative foundation, based on the idea of being able to change the construction sector. But to realize this ambition, they need partners that have the same vision:

“I think for WinCo we are a developer who quickly dares to take on that risk where something new is done. We just really believe that change in the construction sector must happen. I do think that the potential is that we can grow together towards a sector or a chain that does that.”

Unlike ProDev, WinCo expected their time-to-market to decrease when engaging in a relationship with ProDev.

“We are doing a project, actually a boundless development, and we already have customers who say that they want these developments, which results in an acceleration process. But then you must go a bit faster and ProDev is an important factor in that.”

However, since ProDev put relatively speaking more emphasis on having mutual goals and aligning each other’s core competencies, there was overall a slight difference with higher expectations from ProDev’s perspective of their relationship.

5 DISCUSSION

In this section, the meaning, importance, and relevance of the results will be presented and discussed. To this end, the key findings will be explained and discussed. Subsequently, the practical implications of these results will be highlighted, followed by the research limitations and possible future research recommendations.

“What value anticipations need to be aligned in advance to improve the chance of successfully collaborating in a servitization context?”

5.1 Key findings

In this section, the key findings of this research will be provided by addressing each of the main dimensions of relationship value one by one. To provide a clear and concise overview of all four dyadic relationships, *Figure 5.1* shows all four figures from the previous chapter combined. In this, a distinction is made in the partners' role (supplier, coopetitor, and customer) in perspective from the focal firm.

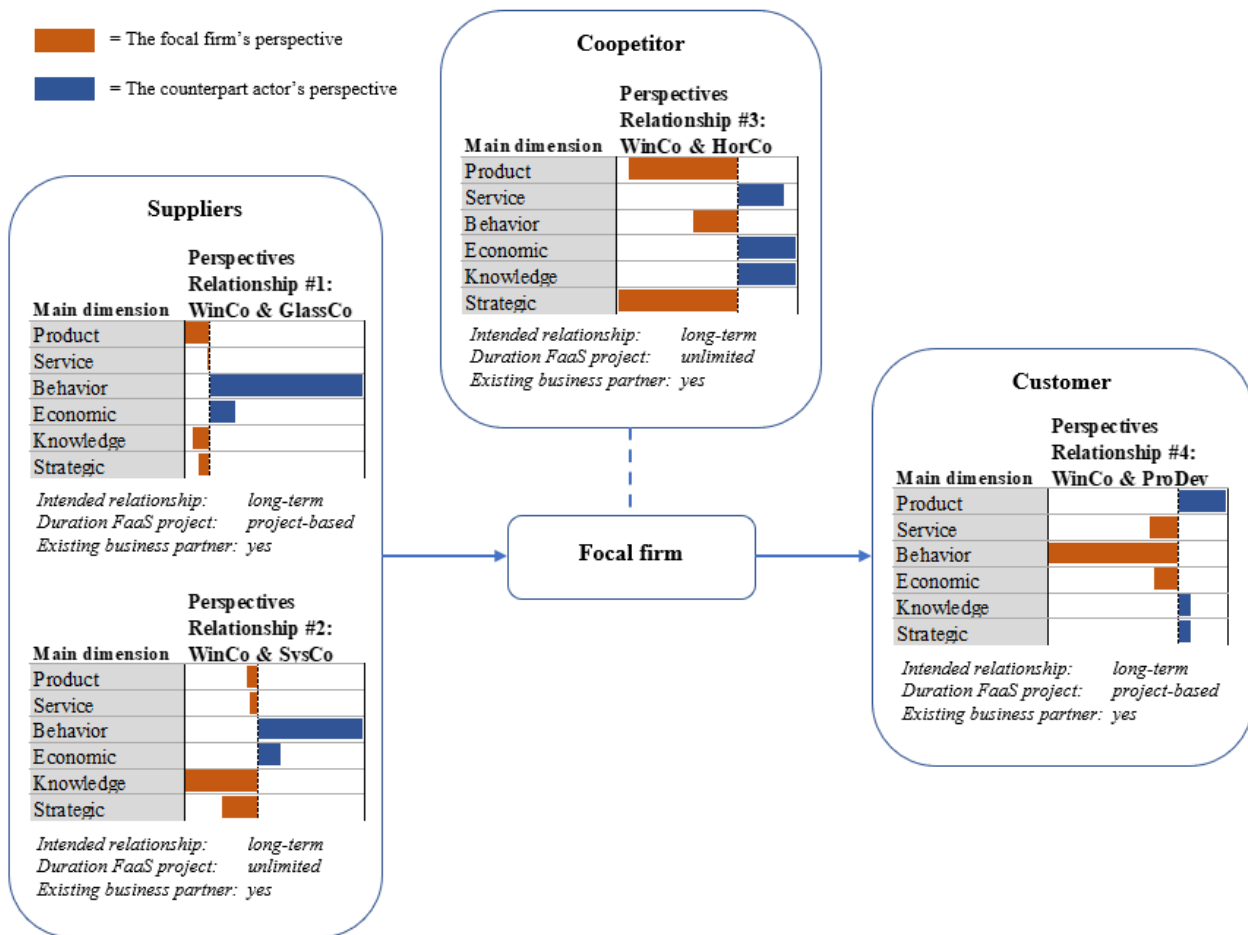


Figure 5.1. Cross-relationship analysis

Product value

First, where there were relatively speaking higher expectations from the focal firm's perspective in relationships #1, #2, and #3, the opposite is true in relationship #4. In this, the direction of the flow of goods is a determining factor. Namely, in the relationships with the suppliers where products flow from the supplier to the focal firm, it became clear that the focal firm had higher expectations in the anticipated product value compared to the supplier's perspective. Since products flow from both suppliers to the focal firm without recurring flow of goods, there were no clear expectations from the supplier's perspective of the anticipated product value in their relationship. The focal firm, on the other hand, argued that they ultimately have good relationships with their suppliers since they deliver high-quality and reliable products that meet certain performance requirements. This resulted in a difference in anticipated product value, with relatively speaking higher expectations from the focal firm's perspective. In relationship #4, it is the focal firm that supplies its products to its customer without recurring goods flows. This in turn resulted in a difference in anticipated product value with higher expectations from the customer's perspective. This is in line with the existing literature, in which it is argued that customer-supplier relationships only uphold when the supplier meets the anticipated product quality standards (Anderson & Narus, 1995; Homburg & Rudolph, 2001; Ulaga, 2003). What makes it interesting is that in relationship #3, both actors are concurrent manufacturers producing and exchanging products for the same FaaS concept. However, as can be seen in the figure, both actors did not have equal product value anticipations. A possible explanation is that in this relationship, the focal firm is mainly responsible for the business side of the concept, while the coopetitor mainly focuses on technical expertise. Therefore, it is reasonable that the focal firm initially did have higher expectations on the product value compared to its coopetitor.

Proposition 1: In a customer-supplier relationship, it is important to align the expected product quality based on the direction of the flow of goods, while in a horizontal coopetition relationship it is based on the counterpart actor's expertise. A business relationship will only uphold when the supplier meets the anticipated product quality standards.

Service value

When looking at the anticipated service value, in both relationships #1 and #2 there were again no considerable differences and thus no need for further alignment. However, there were notable differences in relationships #3 and #4. In relationship #3, there were higher expectations from the counterpart actor's perspective, while in relationship #4 there were higher expectations from the focal firm's perspective. Interestingly, in both relationships, the expected service was about sharing and acquiring important customer information. In relationship #3 the coopetitor mentioned that they expected the focal firm to share relevant customer information when it is about circular façades. Then they can work on the project together, as they would also do vice versa. This is in line with Woodruff (1997), who stated that providing these service offerings ultimately has a high impact on the accomplishment of the manufacturers' goals. In relationship #4, the focal firm expected its project developer to share relevant information since they are initially their customer. When the market is changing, the focal firm can serve the customer more precisely when accurate customer information is provided, which in turn increases customer satisfaction. This can be supported by Ulaga (2003), who argues that customer information can be vital for manufacturers enabling to respond to market changes in time.

Proposition 2a: In both horizontal coopetition and customer relationships, it is particularly important to align the expectations in sharing and acquiring customer information since it affects the accomplishment of the manufacturers' goals and becoming flexible to respond to market changes.

Proposition 2b: In a supplier relationship, there is no need to align the service value anticipations.

Behavior value

Furthermore, it turned out that in both relationships #1 and #2 there were clear differences in the anticipated behavior value, within both relationships much higher expectations from the suppliers' perspectives. In relationship #1, the supplier put notable emphasis on the expected level of personal interaction, showing commitment, undertaking personal investments, and showing trust compared to the focal firm's perspective. Interestingly, in relationship #2, it is the focal firm that had relatively speaking higher expectations in showing commitment compared to its supplier. This can be explained by the fact that relationship #2 is part of a joint venture, where there is an agreement that the supplier is unlimitedly involved in the FaaS project. Therefore, the focal firm mentioned that it is very important to be proactive in the joint development, otherwise it will slow down the progress. This can be supported by Madhok (1995), who found that joint ventures could not survive without actively showing commitment and flexibility. Strikingly, in both relationships #3 and #4 the opposite is true, where there were higher expectations in behavior value anticipations from the focal firm's perspective. In this, a notable difference was that the degree of trust. For both supplier relationships, it only applied that both actors can trust that each actor will adhere to the agreements made and that each actor will take an active stance in this. However, in relationship #3 the focal firm mentioned that it is particularly important that they can trust its coopetitor since they are originally each other's competitors. This is in line with the literature, where it is argued that a high level of trust in a business relationship is a critical success factor in managing coopetitive service development (Chin, Chan, & Lam, 2008; Luo, 2007; Ritala, Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, & Blomqvist, 2009). Eventually, it is argued that a relationship with a high level of trust between both coopetitors will lead to stronger interrelated ties and mutual goals (Luo, 2007; Obul, Yang, & Hiyit, 2021). Moreover, as the focal firm in relationship #4 mentioned, a certain degree of exclusivity was expected, where the counterpart actor would not engage all kinds of competitors. This connection is supported by the literature, in which it is argued that trust is an antecedent of exclusivity, which will in turn lead – through commitment – to longer relationship durations (Aurier & N'Goala, 2010; Obul et al., 2021). Moreover, theory shows that culture is considered an essential component of behavior value that influences interfirm trust (Lascaux, 2020; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994). Strikingly, except for relationship #2, none of the relationships mentioned culture as an important aspect. Only relationship #2 occasionally mentioned culture as an important aspect, since the preceding business relationship was ended, among other things, because there was no support from the organization. A possible explanation is that in relationships #1, #3, and #4 there are already similar organizational cultures present. Literature namely shows that when two similar organizational cultures are present, it is easier to find and develop interfirm trust that creates a relationship culture (Lascaux, 2020; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994).

Proposition 3a: In a supplier relationship, it is important to align the expected level of personal interaction, commitment, personal investments, and trust where there are higher expectations from the supplier's perspective.

- Proposition 3b:* When a supplier relationship becomes part of a joint venture, it becomes more important to align the expected amount of commitment where the higher expectations of the supplier shift to the perspective of the focal firm. A joint venture could not survive without actively showing commitment and flexibility.
- Proposition 3c:* In a horizontal coopetition relationship, it is important to give mutual trust since it affects the success of cooperative service development
- Proposition 3d:* In a customer relationship, it is important to give mutual trust since trust is an antecedent of exclusivity, which will in turn lead – through commitment – to longer relationship durations

Economic value

Moreover, an interesting finding is the differences in anticipated economic value in relationships #1 and #2, within both relationships higher expectations from the suppliers' perspectives. While both actors acknowledged that freeing up the budget for innovation strategies is important, they mainly emphasized that the price they charge is ultimately still one of the most important factors for the focal firm in selecting the preferred suppliers. This is in line with Ulaga & Eggert (2006), who argue that the supplier's price can be considered as the core relationship cost driver. But this leads to an economic tension between the focal firm and its supplier. Namely, where the focal firm expected its supplier to free up a budget to develop innovation strategies, at the same time they expect its supplier to be competitive through their price/quality ratio. In the literature, this tension is also referred to as the so-called 'relation spectrum paradox' (Day, 2000; Lacoste, 2014): *"on one side of the spectrum lies competition (call for tenders), necessary for securing optimum economic benefits and getting the best price/quality ratio; on the other side, the customer-supplier relationship must be nurtured in order to enjoy relational benefits."* (Lacoste, 2014, p. 43) As the study of Lacoste (2014) claims, the use of a framework contract (i.e., umbrella agreement) might be a possible solution for this paradox, which is increasingly playing a strategic role in the management of the relationships between industrial customers and their suppliers. In these framework contracts, with *"both the relationship and long-term expectations, on one hand, and detailed rules for price competition (Request for Quotation) on the other, buyers become less schizophrenic since they are aware in detail of how coopetition strategies will be applied."* (Lacoste, 2012, p. 656) An overview of the framework contract clauses and dimensions can be seen in *Table 5.1*. However, there is still little academic interest in the use of these framework contracts (Lacoste, 2014; Mouzas & Furmston, 2008).

Table 5.1. Framework contract: clauses and dimensions. Retrieved from Lacoste (2014)

Case-study framework contract clauses	Conceptual dimensions
Object and duration of the contract	Relationship consensus
Definitions	
Specifications	
Acceptance conditions	Economic benefits
RFQ procedure	
Financial provisions (payment conditions, bonus for quantity, etc.)	
Standard purchase terms	Relational benefits
Contractor's services (spare parts, refurbishment, etc.)	
Time frame and schedule (project management)	
Commitment to secrecy	

Interestingly, when looking between the different partner roles, only in relationship #4 there were higher expectations from the focal firm's perspectives. In this relationship, unlike its counterpart, the focal company expected to increase its market share. This is somehow logical since, in this relationship, the counterpart actor is a project developer that is initially the focal firm's customer. Since the revenue of the focal firm depends on the projects proposed by the project developer, the focal firm put more emphasis on the anticipated economic value. In relationship #3, the only notable difference between both actors was the expectations in engineering costs. Unlike the focal firm, the coopetitor expected to keep the engineering costs at a minimum by engaging in a relationship with the focal firm. In this way, it is argued that the end-product will stay price-wise suitable for the market.

Proposition 4a: In a supplier relationship it is important to align the supplier's expectations of obtaining a higher price versus decreasing the focal firm's direct product costs since it otherwise leads to economic tensions, known as a 'relation spectrum paradox'.

Proposition 4b: In a customer relationship, it is particularly important to align the expected level of market share since it affects the main source of income.

Proposition 4c: In a horizontal coopetition relationship, it is particularly important to align the expected level of engineering costs per project since it affects the market acceptance of their products.

Knowledge value

When looking at the anticipated knowledge value between both supplier relationships, it became clear that in relationship #2 there was a bigger difference in anticipated knowledge value compared to relationship #1. When looking deeper into the sub-dimensions of knowledge value, the notable difference between both relationships was the expected degree of know-how. Namely, in relationship #1, there were higher expectations in the degree of know-how from the supplier's perspective, while in relationship #2 the opposite is true. As the focal firm mentioned, this can be explained by the fact that relationship #2 is part of the joint venture, where having and sharing the right know-how is essential. This can be supported by theory as it has been proven that sharing specific (technical) know-how that one may not have in-house or may not want to acquire, enables both actors to co-create new ideas that will lead to innovative solutions (Biggemann & Buttle, 2012; Payne et al., 2008; Ulaga, 2003). When looking between the different partner roles, it is interesting to see that in relationships #1 and #2 the emphasis was on the expectations of the focal firm's

perspective, while in relationships #3 and #4 the emphasis was on the counterparts' perspectives. In relationship #3, the coopetitor mentioned that they are in nature very supportive of sharing certain knowledge, as they believe that it is necessary to grow together. However, as mentioned before, the focal firm emphasized the expected degree of trust in their relationship before sharing sensitive information, as they are originally each other's competitors. Therefore, in this relationship, which is in line with the claim of Obul et al. (2021), it is important to create mutual trust between coopetitors that leads to the willingness of sharing relevant specialist knowledge and capabilities. This enables them to learn jointly, which eventually has a significant positive effect on product innovativeness (Obul et al., 2021). As the study of McAdam (2004) confirms, in relationship #4 the project developer particularly emphasized their expectations of the focal firm in developing innovative solutions since it enables the relationship to respond to rapid market changes by delivering a combination of innovative ideas and customized products.

Proposition 5a: When a supplier relationship becomes part of a joint venture, it becomes more important than usual to align the expected amount of know-how since it affects the ability to co-creating new ideas and innovative solutions.

Proposition 5b: Particularly in a horizontal collaborative relationship it is important to align the expectations of sharing skills and knowledge and giving mutual trust since both aspects reinforce each other in the ability of joint learning.

Proposition 5c: In a customer relationship, it is particularly important to align the expectations of developing innovative solutions since it affects the ability to respond to rapid market changes.

Strategic value

Lastly, by examining the strategic value anticipations, a notable result was that in both relationships #2 and #3, the focal firm put relatively speaking clearly more emphasis on the anticipated strategic value compared to relationships #1 and #4. This can be clarified by the fact that both relationships #2 and #3 are part of the joint venture, and thus are unlimitedly involved in the FaaS concept. Therefore, the focal firm argued that it is important that both actors have equal mutual goals and share their core competencies to increase the success of their collaboration. This can be substantiated by theory as it has been proven that having mutual goals is an important factor for creating a long-lasting relationship (Ulaga, 2003; Wilson & Jantrania, 1994). Furthermore, theory shows that time to market is considered an important value driver in customer-supplier relationships that form the strategic standards in designing and managing supply chains (Ulaga, 2003; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). However, results showed that, except from the focal firm's perspective in relationship #4, none of the business relationships expected their time-to-market to decrease by engaging in a business relationship. As mentioned before, undertaking servitization is a system that contributes to the circular economy that is designed to have a lower environmental impact compared to traditional business models (Mont, 2002; Spring & Araujo, 2016; Tukker, 2015). But literature also shows that adding environmental considerations in product-service systems is often seen as a time-consuming process that delays the time to market (Guldmann & Dorothea Huulgaard, 2019; Martinez et al., 2017; Mont, 2002). The interviews showed that in the context of this case study, adding environmental considerations is seen as a guiding principle. Thus, a possible solution is that the actors at the current stage do already acknowledge that the

time-to-market is not expected to decrease. The fact that only the focal firm in relationship #4 pointed out that they expected the time-to-market to decrease can thus be explained by the fact that the concerning project did not relate to adding environmental considerations.

Proposition 6a: In a joint venture business relationship it becomes more important than usual to align both actor's mutual goals and core competencies to improve the chance of creating successful long-lasting relationships.

Proposition 6b: When undertaking servitization with environmental considerations, it becomes more important to align the mutual time-to-market expectations compared to traditional collaborations since pressure on time-to-market affects the success of adding environmental considerations into their businesses.

5.2 Theoretical contributions

From a theoretical perspective, Raddats et al. (2019) argued that future research within the servitization literature is needed to investigate how servitization affects the co-creation of value within a network of actors. Parallel to this, Nailer and Buttriss (2020) argued that limited research is conducted on how to create mutual relation alignment within a network context. Many companies are namely still struggling to achieve the suggested relational benefits when servitizing (Valtakoski, 2017). In this, it is stated that it was still unclear what value anticipations need to be explicitly aligned in advance to improve the chance of successful collaboration. Therefore, this study made a theoretical contribution to the topic of relation alignment by addressing what value anticipations need to be aligned in a network of actors that are jointly undertaking servitization. Nailer and Buttriss (2020) only focused on the value anticipations generally. However, after conducting a literature study, it showed that the judgment of value anticipations contains six main dimensions, namely product, service, behavior, economic, knowledge, and strategic value. Therefore, in addition, and in-depth to the research of Nailer and Buttriss (2020), the extra focus of this research was on the specific value dimensions of the so-called 'relationship value'. This research showed that the need for alignment on the different dimensions differs per business relationship context. Therefore, after discussing each dimension, (a) proposition(s) was/were made where a relevant connection was made between the context of a certain business relationship and the need for mutual value alignment. These propositions can then be used and/or tested in further research. Since the results of this study are demarcated to the construction sector and context-specific, future research can use this research design to investigate how a network organization can be organized in other industries to embroider the topic of interest alignment in a servitization context.

5.3 Practical implications

This research provided several practical contributions that help managers to be aware of what value anticipations need to be aligned in advance and/or should be made explicit during a business relationship to ensure a successful collaboration. Overall, managers should know that nowadays, organizations become increasingly interdependent where the need for mutual value alignment is important to stay engaged with its partner. Without aligning their value anticipations, both actors will likely experience different perceptions of potential relationship value which might result in relationship tensions. However, it turned out that there is not a "one fits all" approach that can be applied in all types of business relationships. This

is because each person's value anticipation is unique and formed by its experiences, present situation, and expectations of the future. Also, the need for value alignment differs per partner role (e.g., supplier, horizontal coopetitor, customer) and whether the partner is part of a joint venture or not. Nevertheless, this research tried to give managerial relevant knowledge in which the most important needs for value alignment were highlighted. The findings of this research can be used by managers to create a list of expectations that should be aligned in advance when starting to collaborate with a new business partner. By aligning the mutual value anticipations, managers can set up a mutual agreement that will motivate the actions and interdependencies of the actors during the collaboration to improve the chance of successful collaboration. Three different checklists have been drawn up to support the managers in setting up these mutual agreements, see *Table 5.2*, *Table 5.3*, and *Table 5.4*. In these checklists, managers can see per partner role what expectations should be aligned in advance and put emphasis on when starting to collaborate in a servitization context.

Table 5.2. Checklist for supplier relationships

Supplier relationships
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are there desired product quality requirements?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A supplier relationship will only uphold when the supplier meets the anticipated product quality standards.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is acquiring lower direct product costs an important relationship driver with the supplier?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then it is important to align these expectations since it otherwise leads to economic tensions (i.e., 'relationship spectrum paradox') • A useful method to align these expectations could be the use of 'framework contracts'.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Does a supplier relationship become part of a joint venture?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then it becomes more important to align: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the expected amount of commitment since a joint venture could not survive without actively showing commitment and flexibility. 2) the expected know-how since it affects the ability to co-creating new ideas and innovative solutions. 3) both actor's mutual goals and core competencies since it affects the chance of creating successful long-lasting relationships.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are adding environmental considerations important relationship drivers?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then it becomes important to align the mutual time-to-market expectations since adding environmental considerations puts pressure on decreasing the time-to-market.

Table 5.3. Checklist for customer relationships

Customer relationships
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are there desired product quality requirements from the customer?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A customer relationship will only uphold when the supplier meets the anticipated product quality standards.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are there specific customer information requirements?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing and acquiring customer information affects the accomplishment of the manufacturers' goals and flexibility to respond to market changes.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is it important to receive the feeling of exclusivity?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then it is important to give mutual trust since trust is an antecedent of exclusivity, which will in turn lead – through commitment – to longer relationship durations.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is increasing revenue an important relationship driver?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then it is important to align the expectations in market share since it affects the main source of income
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is responding to market changes is an important aspect of the customer relationship?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning the expectations of developing innovative solutions affects the ability to respond to rapid market changes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are adding environmental considerations important relationship drivers?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then it becomes important to align the mutual time-to-market expectations since adding environmental considerations puts pressure on decreasing the time-to-market.

Table 5.4. Checklist for horizontal coopetition relationships

Horizontal coopetition relationships
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are there desired product quality requirements?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is then important to align the expected product quality based on the counterpart actor's expertise. • A business relationship will only uphold when the partner meets the anticipated product quality standards.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are there specific customer information requirements?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing and acquiring customer information affects: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the accomplishment of the manufacturers' goals and flexibility to respond to market changes. 2) the level of trust. A high level of trust will in turn lead to stronger interrelated ties.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are the initial costs directly related to the price of the end-product?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then it is particularly important to align the expected level of engineering costs per project since it affects the market acceptance of the end-product.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is joint learning an important relationship driver?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then it is important to align the expectations of sharing skills and knowledge and giving mutual trust since both aspects reinforce each other in the ability of joint learning.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are adding environmental considerations important relationship drivers?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then it becomes important to align the mutual time-to-market expectations since adding environmental considerations puts pressure on decreasing the time-to-market.

5.4 Limitations and future research

This research intended to take a first step towards the understanding of value anticipation alignment when actors start to collaborate within a servitization context. Although this study has provided several theoretical contributions and practical implications, the following limitations should be considered and could be addressed in future work.

First, this study limited the research sample to four dyadic business relationships in the construction sector with three different types (concurrent manufacturer, project developer, and two suppliers). However, since each network organization is somewhat unique and context-specific (Halinen & Törnroos, 2005), caution should be exercised in generalizing these research results. To increase generalizability, more research is needed in different contexts (e.g., different sectors, network settings, sample scale) and/or in different countries. Also, it would be interesting for follow-up research to include different levels of relationships, e.g., portfolio, connected relations, and/or network relationships (Ritter, Wilkinson, & Johnston, 2004).

Subsequently, literature shows that as business practices change, the anticipations of relationship value in a business relationship also emerge and change over time (Grönroos, 2004; Nailer & Buttriss, 2020). This research mainly focused on the actors' mutual expectations when both actors decided to collaborate in a servitization context. Therefore, to embroider the topic of value alignment within a servitization context, it would be interesting for future research to investigate the need for value alignment in different episodes of a business relationship.

At last, in the discussion, it came forward that the use of 'framework contracts' (i.e., 'umbrella agreements'), might be a useful method to challenge the so-called 'relation spectrum paradox' where the focal firm expected its supplier to free up budget to develop innovation strategies, but at the same time to be competitive through their price/quality ratio. However, as Lacoste (2014) claims, this method is still underexposed in the literature. Therefore, follow-up literature is needed to investigate the effect of the use of framework contracts on relational outcomes within a servitization context.

6 CONCLUSION

In this section, a clear and concise overview of the conclusions of this research will be presented. In this, the following research question was aimed to answer:

“What value anticipations need to be aligned in advance to improve the chance of successfully collaborating in a servitization context?”

In this, the value anticipations refer to the actors’ prior judgments that determine what potential relationship value can be created by collaborating. A literature study showed that these prior judgments are based on six main dimensions, namely product, service, behavior, economic, knowledge, and strategy value. These prior judgments are mental processes, with ‘real but unobservable objects’, formed both explicitly and implicitly. Besides, the interpretation of perceived value is context-dependent and influenced by the actors’ past experiences, present situations, and the expectations of the future. Therefore, it is very likely that the actors will experience different perspectives of anticipated relationship value when deciding to collaborate which may eventually lead to relationship tensions. To challenge these relationship tensions, mutual alignment between the actors’ value anticipations needs to take place. However, it was still unclear what value anticipations need to be explicitly aligned in advance to improve the chance of successful collaboration.

As it turned out, there is no clear “one fits all” approach that can be used within a servitization context. It appeared that the need for alignment is namely determined by the context of the business relationships. Nevertheless, this study highlighted the most important effects in different business relationship settings and could be used by managers to become aware of what expectations should be explicitly aligned in advance and put emphasis on when starting to collaborate within a servitization context. For example, in a supplier relationship, it is important to align the supplier’s expectations of obtaining a higher price versus decreasing the focal firm’s direct product costs since it otherwise leads to relationship tensions, known as a ‘relation spectrum paradox’. In a customer relationship, it is important to give mutual trust since trust is an antecedent of exclusivity, which will in turn lead – through commitment – to longer relationship durations. Besides, in both horizontal coopetition and customer relationships, it is important to align the expectations in sharing and acquiring customer information since it affects the accomplishment of the manufacturers’ goals and becoming flexible to respond to market changes. Moreover, when business relationships are jointly undertaking servitization with environmental considerations, it becomes more important to align the mutual time-to-market expectations compared to traditional collaborations, since pressure on the time-to-market affects the success of adding environmental considerations into their businesses.

This research mainly focused on the actors’ mutual anticipations when both actors decided to collaborate in a servitization context. But literature showed that as business practices change, the anticipations of relationship value in a business relationship also emerge and change over time. Therefore, this research took a step into discovering the need for value alignment when actors start to collaborate in a servitization context and opens up new opportunities in the relation alignment research. Besides, the findings of this research can be used by managers to create a list of expectations that should be aligned in advance and put emphasis on when starting to collaborate with a new business partner in a servitization context, which will improve the chance of a successful long-term collaboration.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX I Format semi-structured interview

In this appendix, the format is provided that has been used during the semi-structured interviews.

Introductie

Allereerst bedankt voor de tijd en moeite om deel te nemen aan mijn onderzoek. Voordat ik verder ga, wil ik graag even kort iets vertellen over mijn onderzoek, zodat u ook een beeld krijgt wat ik momenteel aan het onderzoeken ben.

Het doel is om de ontwikkeling van zakelijke relaties tussen twee bedrijven te onderzoeken. Gedurende een relatie zijn er bepaalde verwachtingen van een partner die zowel expliciet als impliciet zijn gevormd. Een relatie zal vervolgens alleen standhouden zolang beide bedrijven gedurende de relatie de wederzijdse verwachtingen waarmaken. Zo niet, dan kunnen bedrijven hierop acteren om vervolgens verder te gaan met elkaar of om de relatie uiteindelijk toch te beëindigen.

Om informatie over deze ontwikkelingen in de praktijk te verzamelen ben ik interviews aan het houden, waaronder dus een interview met u.

Belangrijk is nog om te melden dat het gesprek zal worden opgenomen om de inhoud naderhand te kunnen bestuderen. U kunt er in ieder geval op vertrouwen dat ik alle informatie vertrouwelijk en anoniem zal verwerken. Wanneer u tijdens het interview op welke vorm dan ook ongemak ervaart, hoor ik dat graag, zodat we hierop kunnen handelen.

Heeft u vooraf nog vragen over het onderzoek waaraan u gaat deelnemen?

(Indien nodig kunt nog altijd vragen stellen gedurende het interview)

Algemeen

- Kunt u allereerst kort iets vertellen over uw organisatie en over uw functie binnen deze organisatie?
- Wat is de strategie van jullie organisatie?
- Om welke reden zijn jullie in samenwerking gekomen met [*het partner bedrijf*]?
- Wat is het doel van deze samenwerking?
- Kunt u een algemene beschrijving geven van de relatie met [*het partner bedrijf*]?
- Wat is de huidige staat van de relatie met [*het partner bedrijf*]?
- Welke onderlinge afspraken zijn er gemaakt tijdens de relatie?

Onderlinge verwachtingen

Als u terugkijkt op de relatie met [*het partner bedrijf*], welke verwachtingen had u van [*het partner bedrijf*] in jullie onderlinge zakelijke relatie? Daarvoor vraag ik u slechts te beperken tot het benoemen van factoren, waarna ik vervolgens per factor door ga vragen.

Indien ontbrekende factoren van relatiewaarde (zie Table A1.1).

In hoeverre hebben ...

- a. Product kwaliteitsnormen*
- b. Aanvullende services*
- c. Persoonlijke voorkeuren/afkeuringen*
- d. Directe product kosten, acquisitie en/of operatiekosten*
- e. Vaardigheden, ervaringen en bepaalde kennis*
- f. Strategische bepalingen*

... een rol gespeeld tijdens dit moment?

Per benoemde factor:

Wat waren uw verwachtingen van [*het partner bedrijf*] in de [*factor*] tijdens dit moment?

Kunt u beschrijven in hoeverre [*het partner bedrijf*] uw verwachtingen daarin heeft gerealiseerd?

Kunt u beschrijven hoe *dit verschil/deze overeenstemming* invloed heeft gehad op jullie relatie?

Hoe zijn deze verwachtingen tot stand gekomen?

Afsluiting

- Heeft u nog vragen aan mij?
- Heeft u nog belang bij de opname, transcriptie en/of de resultaten van mijn onderzoek?

Table A1.1. Checklist relationship value dimensions

Main dimensions	Check?	Sub-dimensions
Product		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productprestaties • Productbetrouwbaarheid • Productconsistentie
Service		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product gerelateerde diensten • Klant informatie • Uitbesteding
Gedrag		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Klantbehoud • Referenties • Persoonlijke interactie • Cultuur • Sociale binding • Inzet • Vertrouwen
Economisch		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisitiekosten • Bedrijfsaandeel • De kwaliteit van de investering • Directe productkosten • Efficiëntie • Engineeringkosten • Hogere prijs • Marktaandeel • Operationele kosten
Kennis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marktinformatie • Idee generatie • Innovatie • Vakkennis • Kennis en vaardigheden delen
Strategisch		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lange termijn planning • Uitgebreid netwerk • Leveringsprestaties • Time-to-market • Inkoop voordelen • Kerncompetenties • Wederzijdse doelen

APPENDIX II Analysis sub-dimensions ‘relationship value’

























































Main dimension	Sub-Dimensions	WinCo_GlassCo	GlassCo_WinCo	Perspectives Relationship #1: WinCo & GlassCo
Product value	○ Product reliability			
	○ Product consistency			
	○ Product performance			
Service value	○ Customer information			
	○ Product-related services			
	○ Outsourcing			
Behavior value	○ Culture			
	○ Commitment			
	○ Customer retention			
	○ Personal interaction			
	○ Referral			
	○ Social bonding			
	○ Trust			
Economic value	○ Acquisition costs			
	○ Share of Business			
	○ Investment's quality			
	○ Direct product costs			
	○ Efficiency			
	○ Engineering costs			
	○ Pay more			
	○ Share of Market			
	○ Operation costs			
Knowledge value	○ Idea-generation			
	○ Innovation			
	○ Sharing skills and knowledge			
	○ Market intelligence			
	○ Know-how			
Strategic value	○ Sourcing benefits			
	○ Core competencies			
	○ Long-term planning			
	○ Delivery performance			
	○ Time-to-market			
	○ Extended network			
	○ Mutual goals			

Figure A2.1. Analysis sub-dimensions ‘relationship value’ WinCo & GlassCo

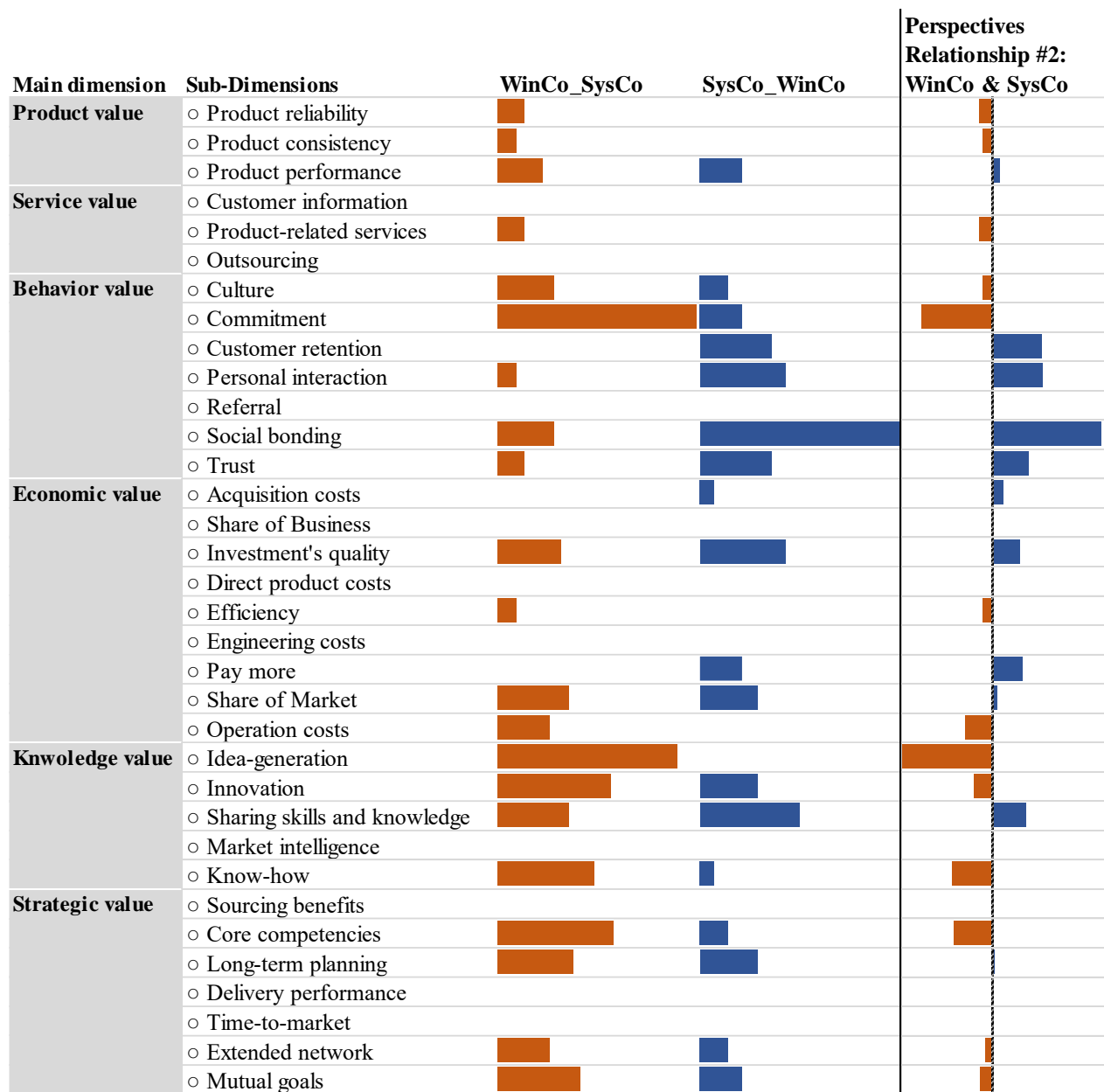


Figure A2.2. Analysis sub-dimensions 'relationship value' WinCo & SysCo

Main dimension	Sub-Dimensions	WinCo_HorCo	HorCo_WinCo	Perspectives Relationship #3: WinCo & HorCo
Product value	○ Product reliability			
	○ Product consistency			
	○ Product performance			
Service value	○ Customer information			
	○ Product-related services			
	○ Outsourcing			
Behavior value	○ Culture			
	○ Commitment			
	○ Customer retention			
	○ Personal interaction			
	○ Referral			
	○ Social bonding			
	○ Trust			
Economic value	○ Acquisition costs			
	○ Share of Business			
	○ Investment's quality			
	○ Direct product costs			
	○ Efficiency			
	○ Engineering costs			
	○ Pay more			
	○ Share of Market			
	○ Operation costs			
Knowledge value	○ Idea-generation			
	○ Innovation			
	○ Sharing skills and knowledge			
	○ Market intelligence			
	○ Know-how			
Strategic value	○ Sourcing benefits			
	○ Core competencies			
	○ Long-term planning			
	○ Delivery performance			
	○ Time-to-market			
	○ Extended network			
	○ Mutual goals			

Figure A2.3. Analysis sub-dimensions 'relationship value' WinCo & HorCo

Main dimension	Sub-Dimensions	WinCo_ProDev	ProDev_WinCo	Perspectives Relationship #4: WinCo & ProDev	
Product value	○ Product reliability				
	○ Product consistency				
	○ Product performance				
Service value	○ Customer information				
	○ Product-related services				
	○ Outsourcing				
Behavior value	○ Culture				
	○ Commitment				
	○ Customer retention				
	○ Personal interaction				
	○ Referral				
	○ Social bonding				
	○ Trust				
Economic value	○ Acquisition costs				
	○ Share of Business				
	○ Investment's quality				
	○ Direct product costs				
	○ Efficiency				
	○ Engineering costs				
	○ Pay more				
	○ Share of Market				
Knowledge value	○ Operation costs				
	○ Idea-generation				
	○ Innovation				
	○ Sharing skills and knowledge				
	○ Market intelligence				
Strategic value	○ Know-how				
	○ Sourcing benefits				
	○ Core competencies				
	○ Long-term planning				
	○ Delivery performance				
	○ Time-to-market				
	○ Extended network				
	○ Mutual goals				

Figure A2.4. Analysis sub-dimensions 'relationship value' WinCo & ProDev