JURNAL ILMIAH MANAJEMEN DAN BISNIS

Journal Ilmiah Manajemen dan Bisnis Volume 10, No. 2, July 2024, 276-290 ISSN 2460-8424 E-ISSN 2655-7274

Optimizing Business Performance Through Relationship Quality and Value Co-Creation

Prita Prasetya

Universitas Prasetiya Mulya, Indonesia Email: prita.prasetya@pmbs.ac.id

Abstract

The relationship between the concept of relationship marketing and performance is a major focus in the management and marketing literature. This research aims to explore and analyze how value co-creation and relationship quality contribute to improving performance in the context of the B2B industry. Using quantitative methods with partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), this study tests the hypotheses linking relationship quality, value creation, and performance. The data was obtained from a survey of 105 retailers (SEM PLS 4) to analyze the data collected from 105 retailers. Respondents consisted of managers and owners who have direct experience in customer relationship management. The analysis results show that relationship quality has a direct and positive influence on value co-creation and performance. In addition, value co-creation was also found to have a direct and positive influence on performance. Most importantly, this study reveals that value co-creation mediates the effect of relationship quality on performance. That relationship quality is an important foundation that is beneficial to the performance achieved through value co-creation between manufacturers and retailers. The theoretical contribution of this study is that it strengthens the understanding in the literature of how relationship quality and value co-creation are interrelated and jointly influence performance in a B2B context. Practically, the findings underscore the importance for firms to not only focus on building strong relationships but also actively engage in value co-creation activities to optimize business performance.

Article info Article history: Received : 10 June 2024 Received in revised form : 2 July 2024 Accepted : 31 July 2024 Available online ; 31 July 2024 **Keywords:** Relationship quality; Value co-creation; Performance; B2B Business; Manufacturing-Retailer Relationship

How to Cite: Prasetya, Prita (2024). Optimizing Business Performance Through Relationship Quality and Value Co-Creation. *Journal Ilmiah Manajemen dan Bisnis, 10* (2), 276-290

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between manufacturers and retailers plays an important role in ensuring a smooth and successful supply chain. It is an important aspect that determines how products are made and distributed. In the manufacturing and retail industries, the relationship quality between these two parties often determines operational effectiveness, product innovation, and end customer satisfaction. (Ahn et al., 2022; Dieteren, 2023). A harmonious relationship between manufacturers and retailers not only impacts the efficiency of business processes but also on their ability to compete in an increasingly competitive market. There are many benefits to be gained from a strong relationship between manufacturers and retailers, but there are still challenges to overcome. Differences in goals, conflicts of

interest, and communication issues are often obstacles in building a mutually beneficial relationship. Therefore, it is important for both parties to have effective relationship mechanisms in place to manage and maintain their relationship quality.

Building successful relationships between manufacturers and retailers involves many interconnected elements such as trust, commitment, communication, collaboration, satisfaction, value co-creation, conflict management, performance, and relationship sustainability (Arena, 2023; Asghar, 2018). Previous research shows that factors such as dynamic capabilities, information symmetry, and trust significantly impact value co-creation in these relationships, leading to improved performance and competitiveness for both parties (Chaurasia et al., 2022). Effective communication, transparency, and commitment from top management are essential to foster harmonious and productive collaboration. In addition, research emphasizes the importance of fewer suppliers with collaborative relationships to improve organizational performance in the retail industry, highlighting the importance of information sharing, trust, loyalty, and satisfaction in buyer-supplier relationships (Huo, 2021; Witek-Hajduk & Napiórkowska, 2017).

In the Indonesian context, the manufacturing and retail industries are rapidly growing and competing for market share. Factors such as changing consumer preferences, cost pressures, and intense competition require manufacturers and retailers to be more innovative and efficient in their operations. The relationship between manufacturers and retailers is complex and dynamic, involving various interrelated elements such as trust, commitment, communication, collaboration, satisfaction, value co-creation, conflict management, performance, and relationship sustainability. Managing these elements well is essential to achieving a harmonious and productive relationship, which in turn can improve the performance and competitiveness of both parties in the market. In this context, research on relationship quality is highly relevant.

Relationship quality plays an important role in determining success, loyalty and performance in B2B (Mostert, 2023). In addition, research highlights the mediating role of trust and commitment between economic and non-economic satisfaction in B2B relationships to foster long-term mutually beneficial exchange relationships (Ferro-Soto et al., 2020). Relationship quality can influence various aspects of ongoing business interactions, including value co-creation and overall performance. Research shows that in B2B transactions, factors such as trust, relationship satisfaction, and commitment significantly influence relationship retention intentions through customer satisfaction (Høgevold et al., 2020; Mbango, 2017; Sales-Vivó, Gil-Saura, & Gallarza, 2020). Trust, relationship satisfaction and commitment are important factors that influence the intention to maintain the relationship through customer satisfaction. Research emphasizes the importance of trust as a key driver of loyalty in B2B relationships (Gil-Saura et al., 2009; Mostert, 2023; Sharifi and Esfidani, 2014).

Strong inter-organizational relationships between manufacturers and retailers typically display elevated levels of trust and loyalty (Samarathunga & Newton, 2018). An effective partnership is known

to enhance operational effectiveness. Collaboration between manufacturers and retailers facilitates cost reduction by enhancing operational efficiency. Furthermore, improved coordination can mitigate the likelihood of failing to meet customer expectations. Despite the growing literature on relationship quality and value co-creation, there are still significant gaps in the understanding of how these two factors interact and influence performance in B2B relationships, particularly between manufacturers and retailers. This study aims to explore the relationship between relationship quality, value co-creation, and performance. When both parties trust each other, they are more likely to share strategic information, reduce uncertainty, and avoid opportunistic behavior. This creates an environment conducive to longterm collaboration.

Previous studies by Sales-Vivó et al. (2021) showed that there is a positive correlation between relationship quality and performance. However, not many have examined the mediating role of value co-creation in the context of relationships between manufacturers and retailers. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating how value co-creation mediates the relationship between relationship quality and performance. Using the Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM PLS) approach, this study will test the hypothesis that relationship quality and value co-creation have a positive and significant influence on organizational performance. The main objective of this research is to provide a framework that can assist companies in improving their performance through relationship quality and value co-creation. The justification for this research lies in its potential to make significant contributions to academic literature and business practice, especially in understanding and applying the concepts of relationship quality and value co-creation to improve organizational performance. The research questions in this study are:

RQ1: How does relationship quality between manufacturers and retailers affect value co-creation? RQ2: Does relationship quality have a direct effect on firm performance, or must it be mediated by value co-creation?

Relationship Quality Concept

Relationship quality in manufacture-retailer relationships in a business-to-business (B2B) context is an important concept that affects various aspects of the interaction. This concept includes dimensions such as trust, commitment, satisfaction, and value co-creation. (Parsons, 2002). Other definitions of relationship quality dimensions include buyer-seller network structure, functional ties, and cross-functional ties within the network (Gupta et al., 2002). (Gupta et al., 2018).. Measuring these structural and functional dimensions plays an important role in driving seller account profitability and overall relationship quality. With the development of digital technology, factors that influence the speed of B2B buyer-supplier relationship development have an impact on relationship quality.Flexibility and speed in the decision-making process increase organizational commitment, trust, and value co-creation, thus contributing to stronger inter-firm relationships (Kauffman & Pointer, 2021). Other studies have

also addressed affective trust, which has been identified as an important component of relationships in the B2B context (Akrout et al., 2016).

The key dimensions of relationship quality are trust and commitment, which are essential for building and maintaining strong partnerships between buyers and sellers (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). Trust in the seller and satisfaction with the seller are identified as fundamental components of relationship quality. Understand the antecedents and consequences of relational variables such as satisfaction that act as a link between positive factors such as trust and commitment, and negative aspects such as opportunism and conflict, which impact overall relationship quality (Høgevold et al., 2020). B2B literature addresses the multidimensionality of relational constructs, especially trust, commitment, and satisfaction (Rauyruen & Miller, 2007; Verma et al., 2016). Relationship quality in B2B buyer-seller relationships is a multifaceted concept influenced by various factors such as trust, commitment and satisfaction that lead to improved performance and sustainable partnerships.

Value Co-creation in B2B relationship concept

The concept of value has an important meaning in scientific research and development, which includes the benefits or usefulness obtained from a product, service, or action in relation to the costs or sacrifices required to obtain it. The concept of value in buyer-seller relationships is also conceptualized as perceived value which includes the functional, emotional, and social aspects of perceived value. Value is relative and varies between individuals or groups. In business to business relationships, it is necessary to understand intangible value from the perspective of both buyers and sellers which will determine purchasing behavior (Baxter, 2012).

Value co-creation is a process where manufacturers and retailers work together to generate additional value that neither party can achieve individually. Study Walter et al. (2001) focused on value co-creation in buyer-seller relationships from the supplier's perspective. In the context of manufacturer-retailer relationships, value co-creation can occur through collaboration in new product development, more effective inventory management and joint marketing initiatives. Value co-creation not only improves financial performance through increased sales and reduced costs, but also strengthens the competitive position in the market. Other studies emphasize the importance of equality, shared responsibility, and relationship dependency in enhancing value co-creation (Minerbo & Brito, 2022). The complexity of value co-creation in buyer-seller relationships emphasizes the need for a comprehensive understanding of relationship dynamics and strategic investments to enhance value co-creation.

Relationship Quality and Value Co-creation Model

Value co-creation is a process where manufacturers and retailers work together to generate additional value that cannot be achieved by each party individually. One of them is collaboration, which

is active cooperation between the two in various aspects of business such as product development, sales planning, and marketing strategies (Sheu et al., 2006). Effective collaboration enables both parties to leverage each other's expertise and resources to generate added value that is impossible to achieve individually. Relationship quality and value co-creation together in a B2B context are essential for improving customer satisfaction and competitive advantage (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). Moreover, the integration of value co-creation into B2B relationships acts as a mediating factor between relationship quality and economic satisfaction, especially in producer-supplier relationships (Sales-Vivó, et al., 2020).

The importance of fostering strong relationships, encouraging value co-creation, and managing knowledge effectively to drive success in B2B interactions. Value co-creation can be created through collaboration in new product development, more effective inventory management, and joint marketing initiatives. This joint value co-creation not only improves financial performance through increased sales and reduced costs, but also strengthens the competitive position in the market (Walter et al., 2001). Relationship quality plays an important role in the value co-creation model, as evidenced by research he results of their study discuss the role of value co-creation in improving relationship quality by mediating the effect of relationship quality on economic satisfaction. Value co-creation positively correlates with relationship quality, which encompasses dimensions like trust, commitment, and social satisfaction, suggesting that robust relationship quality enhances value co-creation outcomes. These findings suggest that integrating relationship quality into the relationship quality and economic satisfaction chain can have a positive impact on performance in B2B relationships. This ultimately demonstrates the significance of value co-creation in attaining business success. Performance as a variable is often measured through various indicators such as profitability, sales growth, customer satisfaction, and operational excellence. How relationship quality and value co-creation together affect firm performance is an important question that requires further research (Figure 1). Consequently, this approach leads to the study's hypothesis:

H1: Relationship quality has a direct and positive effect on value co-creation in relationships between manufacturers and retailers.

H2: Relationship quality has a direct and positive effect on performance in relationships between manufacturers and retailers.

H3: Value co-creation has a direct and positive effect on performance in the relationship between manufacturers and retailers.

H4: Value co-creation mediates the effect of relationship quality on performance

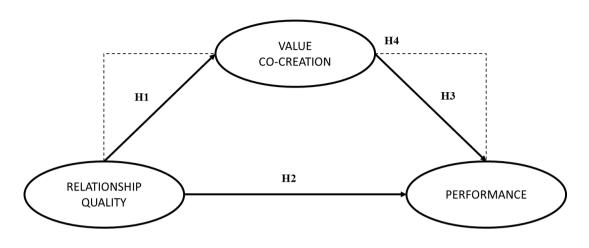


Figure 1. Research Framework

METHOD

Research Design

This research utilizes a quantitative design and a quantitative approach to test the relationship between variables. The rationale behind selecting this methodology was to collect data from a large sample and conduct in-depth statistical analysis to identify and measure the relationship between the hypothesized variables. Data collection was executed by distributing surveys or questionnaires to managers and company owners in the building materials industry. We used a sample size of 105 retailers to ensure sufficient data for a robust and representative statistical analysis. The purposive sampling technique was utilized to ensure sector representation and the relevance of respondents' experiences.

Measurement with SEM-PLS

Model analysis was carried out with structural equation Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) to test the relationship between hypothesized variables. Steps in measurement using SEM-PLS:

1. Conceptual Model Development

Determine latent variables (relationship quality, value co-creation, company performance) and their indicators.

2. Latent Variable Measurement

Using a 5-point Likert scale to measure indicators of each latent variable.

3. Instrument Validation and Reliability

Using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to ensure construct validity and composite reliability of indicators

4. Structural Model Testing

Using PLS-SEM to test the relationship between latent variables and estimate the value of path coefficients.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Model Development

The conceptual model includes three main latent variables: relationship quality, value cocreation, and performance. Table 1 shows the definitions and indicators for each variable. Each indicator is measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 =Strongly Disagree, 5 =Strongly Agree).

Variable	Indicator	Description	Authors
Relationship	RQU1	We can rely on suppliers to keep promises made	Ferro et al.,
quality	RQU2	We do not hesitate to do business with suppliers	2023; Gil-
	RQU3	We intend to do business with suppliers far into the future	Saura, et al.,
	RQU4	We are dedicated to continuing to do business with suppliers	2020
Value co- creation	VCC1	Together with suppliers, our company always creates opportunities to enhance cooperation.	Claro & Claro, 2010
	VCC2	Our company shares long-term plans long term of our products with suppliers	
	VCC3	Suppliers always create efforts to increase mutual benefits	
	VCC4	Together with the supplier, we jointly handle issues that arise in the relationship.	
Performance	PFM1	My relationships with suppliers have given me a dominant market position	Mpinganjira et al., 2017;
	PFM2	My relationships with suppliers have given me a sales advantage	Ulaga & Eggert, 2006
	PFM3	My relationships with suppliers have kept our customers coming back for more	
	PFM4	My relationship with suppliers has made us more recognizable	

Table 1. Variable and Indicator Development

Descriptive Analysis

Data was collected through questionnaires distributed to managers and owners of companies in the building materials industry. The number of samples collected was 105 retailers. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which allows the selection of respondents based on certain criteria to ensure that the data collected is representative and relevant to the research objectives. To provide a clear picture of the respondents' characteristics, the data was categorized based on several demographic variables and company characteristics (Table 2).

Table 2. Respondent's Profile

Sample profiles		%
Annual turnover	<1 billion	51.5
	2 - 5 billion	31.4
	>5 billion	17.1
Company Size	<10 employees	45.7
	10 - 30 employees	37.1
	> 30 employees	17.1
Respondents position	Manager / Purchasing	27.6
	Owner	72.4

Descriptive analysis based on annual turnover provides important insights into the economic characteristics of the respondents in this study. The collected data led to the grouping of retailers into categories based on their annual revenue. These categories help understand economies of scale and capacity in the context of the building materials industry. The results show that most retailers are under 1 billion with less than 10 employees, indicating the industry's small and medium enterprises category. Analysis of the respondents' positions shows that most respondents are owners, who are expected to have a holistic view of business operations and performance.

Construct	Item Code	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation	Excess kurtosis	Skewness
Relationship quality	RQU1	3	5	4.019	0.601	-0.189	-0.008
	RQU2	3	5	3.914	0.678	-0.812	0.108
	RQU3	3	5	4.057	0.566	0.149	0.011
	RQU4	3	5	3.962	0.631	-0.461	0.030
Value co creation	VCC1	3	5	3.943	0.513	0.826	-0.089
	VCC2	3	5	3.905	0.610	-0.318	0.053
	VCC3	3	5	3.952	0.592	-0.109	0.012
	VCC4	3	5	3.962	0.661	-0.688	0.042
Performance	PFM1	3	5	4.010	0.525	0.710	0.011
	PFM2	3	5	3.800	0.576	-0.263	0.036
	PFM3	3	5	3.943	0.659	-0.682	0.062
	PFM4	3	5	3.952	0.653	-0.633	0.049

 Table 3. Descriptive and Normality Statistics

Table 3 displays the results of descriptive and normality statistics. These aid in comprehending the distribution of the data and verifying its compliance with the normality assumptions required for PLS-SEM analysis. Next, assess the convergence validity and internal consistency reliability, the effectiveness of each variable in measuring the constructs, and the consistency of the measurements.

Table 4. Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency Reliability

Construct	Item Code	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)
PFM	PFM1	0.809	0.838	0.674	0.842	0.892
	PFM2	0.769				
	PFM3	0.854				
	PFM4	0.848				
RQU	RQU1	0.737	0.845	0.682	0.863	0.895
	RQU2	0.834				
	RQU3	0.857				
	RQU4	0.869				
VCC	VCC1	0.860	0.860	0.705	0.864	0.905
	VCC2	0.811				
	VCC3	0.849				
	VCC4	0.837				

The results in Table 4 show that the construct variables in the model have good validity and reliability. The discriminant validity results using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT), shows the HTMT value <0.85, meaning that the discriminant validity between the construct variables is met (Table 5). Path analysis results are shown in Figure 2, the path coefficient between relationship quality and value co-creation is positive and significant, as well as relationship quality and performance are also positive and significant. Value co-creation has a direct and positive influence on performance. The mediation test shows that value co-creation serves as a mediator between relationship quality and performance. The indirect effect of relationship quality on performance through value co-creation is significant. Table 6 shows the results of the hypothesis testing.

	PFM	RQU	VCC
PFM			
RQU	0.83		
VCC	0.789	0.833	

 Table 5. Discriminant Validity Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT)

Discussions

This study aims to investigate the relationship between relationship quality, value co-creation, and performance in the context of the relationship between manufacturers and retailers. The first hypothesis about the direct and positive effect of relationship quality on value co-creation is shared. The findings of this study support the hypothesis, there is a significant positive relationship between relationship quality and value co-creation. This suggests that when manufacturers prioritize building strong and collaborative relationships with their retailers, this increases the potential for value co-creation. This finding is in line with previous research that emphasizes the importance of relationship quality in driving collaboration and value co-creation in supply chain partnerships (Riana et al., 2022; Sales-Vivó et al., 2021).

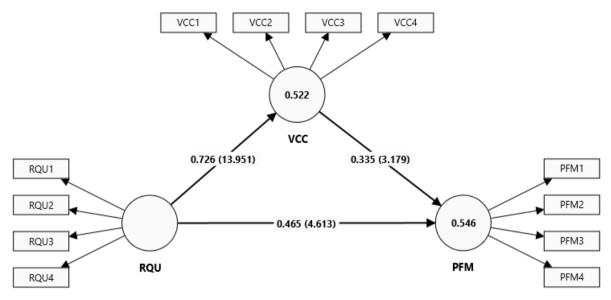


Figure 2. PLS-Path Model

Trust and commitment encourage both parties to work more closely together and share critical information, which is essential for effective collaboration. For example, in the context of the building materials industry, manufacturers and retailers who trust each other may be more open to sharing sales and inventory data, allowing them to better coordinate production and distribution. This not only improves efficiency but also allows them to respond more quickly to changes in market demand. Furthermore, a clear understanding of each party's goals and expectations through effective communication minimizes potential conflicts and misunderstandings.

The second hypothesis, the results of the study analysis showed a significant positive relationship between relationship quality and performance. This finding is consistent with previous literature that highlights the role of relationship quality in improving business performance and competitiveness. (Nabass & Abdallah, 2018; Scheer et al., 2014). Investing in relationship building efforts, such as trust, commitment, and satisfaction can contribute to improved performance outcomes for manufacturers and retailers. Performance includes aspects such as operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and profitability. A high-quality relationship enables better coordination in the supply chain, reducing operational costs, and improving on-time delivery. It also facilitates quick adaptation to market changes or operational issues, which is especially important in highly competitive industries such as building materials. For example, retailers who have strong relationships with manufacturers can quickly obtain the necessary products or get technical support when facing problems, which increases end-customer satisfaction and improves market competitiveness.

The direct and positive relationship between value co-creation and performance in the relationship between manufacturers and retailers also shows significant results. Previous study literature also supports this finding (Borota et al., 2023; Ferro-Soto et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2023). That value co-creation activities between manufacturers and retailers drive better performance outcomes. By working

together, problem-solving, and delivering value to end consumers, manufacturers and retailers can achieve greater competitive advantage and sustainable business success. Value co-creation between manufacturers and retailers allows them to combine their resources and capabilities to come up with better and more innovative solutions. This can include the development of new products that better suit customer needs or the development of more efficient logistics processes. For example, a manufacturer might work with a retailer to design products that better suit the latest market trends or to develop distribution methods that minimize delivery time and costs. This kind of collaboration not only improves operational efficiency but also strengthens their competitive position in the market, which overall improves business performance.

Table 6. Results								
Path	Std. Beta	Std. Erorr	t- value	p-value	Bias	5.00%	95.00%	Decision
$RQU \rightarrow PFM$	0.465	0.101	4.613	0.000	0.001	0.292	0.625	Supported
$RQU \rightarrow VCC$	0.726	0.052	13.951	0.000	0.003	0.627	0.800	Supported
$VCC \rightarrow PFM$	0.335	0.105	3.179	0.001	0.000	0.151	0.497	Supported
RQU→VCC→PFM	0.243	0.079	3.072	0.001	0.001	0.114	0.371	Supported

Effect of value co-creation which mediates the relationship between relationship quality and performance, shows significant positive results. Studies that support this finding are Sales-Vivó et al. (2021). While relationship quality serves as the foundation for effective collaboration, it is through value co-creation efforts that tangible performance outcomes can be realized. Thus, fostering an environment conducive to value co-creation is important to maximize the performance benefits derived from strong relationship quality. Good relationship quality not only affects performance directly but also through value co-creation. In other words, when manufacturers and retailers have a strong relationship, they are more likely to engage in joint value creation, which then significantly improves their performance. This emphasizes the importance of collaborative activities as the critical path through which the benefits of relationship quality translate into tangible performance outcomes. For example, in situations where manufacturers and retailers collaborate on new product development projects, strong relationships help build the necessary foundation for effective value creation. These collaborative activities, in turn, enable them to produce more innovative products and respond more quickly to market demand, which in turn improves their overall performance. This research not only confirms the importance of value co-creation, but also provides insights into specific collaborative practices that can improve performance. By identifying concrete practices, it provides a richer view of how manufacturers and retailers can work together to achieve common goals.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the correlation between relationship quality, value co-creation, and performance within the realm of interactions between manufacturers and retailers in the building materials sector. The findings from the analysis represent a significant advancement in B2B business relationship management theory and practice. According to the analysis results, relationship quality plays a direct and positive role in facilitating value co-creation in manufacturer-retailer relationships. Furthermore, relationship quality has a direct and positive impact on performance outcomes. The analysis indicates that value co-creation has a direct and positive effect on performance. An additional important finding is that value co-creation acts as a mediator in the relationship between relationship quality and performance.

Contribution of this study to the current body of literature on relationship marketing and value co-creation by elucidating the connections between quality, value co-creation, and performance in a business-to-business (B2B) context. The results of this study provide valuable insights for business professionals on the importance of cultivating strong relationships with their partners to foster value co-creation and improve performance. Organizations must prioritize elements of relationship quality, such as trust and communication, and promote collaborative endeavors that result in mutual value addition.

While this study makes a meaningful contribution, there are some limitations that need to be noted. First, this study is limited to the building materials industry, so the results may not be fully generalizable to other industries. Future research could explore this relationship in various industry contexts to further validate these findings. Additionally, future research could extend this model by exploring additional moderating or contextual factors that may influence the relationship between relationship quality, value co-creation, and performance.

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