

B2B Value Co-Creation and Customer Satisfaction in the Digital Geospatial Market: A Conceptual Review

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Abstract	Article Info
Digital business-to-business (B2B) markets can also be competitive, and when it comes time to discuss technical services, value can be created through cooperation. In this conceptual paper, the authors explore the impact of the concept of B2B value co-creation on customer satisfaction in the digital geospatial information systems (GIS) market, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia. It relies on books and articles concerning B2B relationships, value co-creation, customer satisfaction, GIS adoption, and digital marketing. The review indicates that GIS users might consider using the vendor's ability not just to deliver hardware and software, but also to engage them in the process of finding out what is needed, providing information to them, resolving issues, and enhancing solutions over time. Digital marketing and collaborative platforms can be used to keep clients engaged and enhance this process. Two propositions are developed. First, the relationship between B2B value co-creation and customer satisfaction is positive in the GIS markets. Second, this relationship is deepened when vendors are equipped with digital tools that enable continued collaboration. The paper presents a specific relationship marketing model suitable for the Saudi GIS market based on the nature of the market and provides a foundation for future empirical testing.	Keywords: B2B Cooperation, B2B Value Co-Creation, Customer Satisfaction, Digital Marketing, Geospatial Information Systems (GIS).

INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have transformed the way business-to-business (B2B) companies discover new customers, reach them, and build business relationships. Digital platforms are now influencing many of our everyday activities, including locating relevant suppliers, negotiating contracts, and assessing the quality of the service (Han et al., 2021; Cortez & Johnston, 2017). The more digital these markets have become, the more pressure companies have been faced with to stand out from the competition. In reality, this can be an incentive for strategies that rely on lower prices, speed of features, exclusivity, and intensive market share acquisition efforts (Asipi & Duraković, 2020).

Competition can create useful pressure to improve, but it does not always produce better outcomes. In technology markets, competition can drive companies to make short-term positioning decisions instead of investing in service excellence and innovation. For instance, in Deller et al. (2021), digital competition can generate lower effects if the benefits of competition are reduced as a result of market concentration, information asymmetry, or defense. In B2B scenarios, the outcome might be a more extensive list of providers for the customer to consider, but in reality, less tangible gains in the quality of the service provided, its continuity, or its usefulness.

Value co-creation offers a different way of thinking about the provider-customer relationship. Co-creation is co-production with the customer, in which the customer and the supplier together produce value. In contrast to the supplier creating a product or service and then giving it to a passive customer, both parties are involved in the process that creates the final product or service (Chowdhury, 2015; Laud & Karpen, 2017). For a B2B business, that could be a collaborative problem-solving process, frequent feedback, information sharing, and tweaking the service as the provider learns more about what is required. The relationship is not just a transactional one. Value is developed as the provider constantly interacts with the client.

In particular, this is crucial in geospatial information systems (GIS). GIS providers are more than software sellers. They are frequently capable of offering a range of mapping, spatial analysis, data management, and location-intelligence solutions that are adapted to the needs of government agencies, engineering companies, utilities, and other organizational users (Ali, 2020; Chang, 2016). These solutions can be technically advanced and highly tailored, and clients may rely on the provider for their implementation, interpretation, training, system integration, and support. These collaborations are gaining significance in Saudi Arabia, where public and private entities are increasingly leveraging digital and geospatial tools in implementation as part of the broader transformation programme (Alzahrani et al., 2021; Alrwais, 2023).

In this context, the paper looks at the possibility of exploring customer satisfaction in the digital GIS market through the lens of B2B value co-creation. It has three major objectives. First, it summarizes the literature on value co-creation and customer satisfaction that has been published to date on B2B relationships. Second, it explores the implications of these concepts when applied to the nature of GIS markets, in the context of Saudi Arabia. Third, it constructs a straightforward conceptual model which can be examined in subsequent empirical studies. The paper does not suggest that competition is unimportant. Rather, it explores the potential for satisfaction in a market characterized by complex solutions, relationship-tethered solutions, and non-price evaluation of satisfaction, through cooperation and structured customer engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital B2B Markets and the Competition–Cooperation Debate

As researchers have investigated interorganizational relationships more thoroughly, the notion that more competition will lead to better B2B performance has become less reassuring. However, more detailed studies of interorganizational relationships have made the notion of better B2B performance with greater competition less convincing. B2B and B2C markets have significant differences, according to Asipi and Duraković (2020). Business customers tend to stay with the same supplier, require constant technical support, and may be liable for a big price tag if they move to a different supplier. Hence, it is vital that trust, continuity, and the nature of

the relationship are emphasized. In a consumer market where the customer can easily switch brands, this approach can be fairly successful, but it may be less effective in a B2B market where systems, people, data and processes are tightly bound to a specific vendor.

The broader literature on digital markets supports this view. Deller et al. (2021) suggest that innovation is less likely to be maintained where firms react to competitive pressures by prioritizing short-term survival over longer-term capability development. In the same vein, Cortez and Johnston (2017) demonstrate a trend in B2B marketing theory towards a more relationship- and network-based approach, rather than a single transactional approach. It is a reality of practice, as many B2B markets involve both the provider and the customer adding value. The effectiveness of a solution may rely on the synergy of the parties over time in terms of their knowledge, resources, and expectations. There is competition in the marketplace, but the quality of co-operation between business partners may also be decisive.

B2B Value Co-Creation: Concept and Dimensions

Value co-creation refers to the joint contribution of providers and customers to the design, delivery, use, or improvement of an offering (Chowdhury, 2015). Co-creation can be seen in a B2B transaction when a client goes beyond just approving a completed product. The customer can assist in the specification, operational data, early testing, problem identification, modification suggestions, or decision-making for implementation. Delpechitre et al. (2018) consider participation and citizenship of customers as integral components of this process, as they enable providers to access knowledge that exists outside the selling organization but with the customer.

Co-creation, however, is not simply a collection of collaborative activities. If those activities are to occur in a good relationship, the effectiveness of the tasks depends on it. Laud and Karpen (2017) argue that relational embeddedness is more likely to be conducive to joint value creation when the parties have developed trust, understanding, and confidence in each other. In co-creation of product design through IT, Dehkordi et al. (2017) highlight the importance of the continuous exchange of information and the capacity of the IT to link provider and customer teams. Access to a platform or feedback from time to time isn't sufficient if communication is lacking or the customer does not have a meaningful voice in decision-making.

This relational view also connects co-creation to broader B2B exchange processes. Cui and Chou (2017) put co-creation together with trust, commitment, and communication, suggesting that co-creation is not just a technique, but part of a larger relationship-management system. In addition, Makkonen and Johnston (2014) demonstrate that collaborative innovation practices are not evenly distributed in the market of B2B, where firms vary in their digital readiness, experience, and resources. Similarly, Heinemann (2023) emphasizes that digital business models influence the relationship between organizations and customers. The discussion has continued with the phenomenon of digital transformation and open innovation, in which value co-creation is being viewed more and more as a way for firms to access and integrate external knowledge with internal knowledge (Colabi et al., 2022). These observations have special significance for GIS, as the technology can facilitate or hinder collaboration between vendors and users.

Customer Satisfaction in B2B and Digital Markets

Customer satisfaction is considered to be the judgment about the extent of the satisfaction of an offering by a customer after the experience (Aimee, 2019). In the B2B market, that's not the case. The purchaser can also assess the speed at which a supplier will respond, whether there is an evenhanded response to issues, whether communication is dependable, and whether a supplier grasps the operating environment of the purchaser. Relational elements are important in internet-based service markets, as identified by Akroush and Mahadin (2019), and meeting the minimal level of functional requirements is not sufficient to ensure satisfaction, as stated by Shaharudin and Nayan (2020). Users are increasingly demanding that deliverers listen to them, respond to them, and adapt rather than just provide something that's fixed.

There are multiple sectors providing evidence for a connection between co-creation and customer outcomes. In the furniture industry, Sales-Vivó et al. (2021) observed that value co-creation significantly correlated with satisfaction at both levels of the B2B relationship. The relationship between co-creation, innovation, and satisfaction was also identified in banking by Malik and Ahsan (2019). The research in other types of service settings is congruent. Arica and Çorbacı (2020) correlated value co-creation with satisfaction in the tourism sector, while Lee et al. (2019) explored co-creation and how it relates to loyalty and sustainability in the fitness sector. In addition, Chen et al. (2022) demonstrate that involvement in value creation can have an impact on customers' value perceptions in brand contexts. These studies are from varying sectors, but taken together, they indicate that when customers are involved in creating value, they are more responsive. This pattern has not been as clearly articulated in the literature when discussing specialized B2B GIS services.

The Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) Sector as a B2B Digital Market

Geographic information systems (GIS) integrate location-based information, maps, analytical tools, and software to inform decision-making that requires location and place (Ali, 2020; Chang, 2016). GIS finds applications in a wide range of fields including urban planning, infrastructure management, environmental monitoring, logistics, emergency management, and business analysis. Because GIS has such a wide range of uses, it is often built into a client's daily operations rather than used as a separate system. Therefore, it is crucial for a provider to know the client's data, methods of operation, legal and regulatory needs, technical capability, and decision-making needs before the provider recommends a solution.

Saudi Arabia offers a fascinating backdrop to discuss these questions. Research has indicated that there is a growing institutional interest in GIS and the nature of the factors affecting public sector GIS adoption. Alzahrani et al. (2021) emphasize the significance of technical readiness and institutional support, whereas Alzighaibi et al. (2016) associate GIS adoption with organizational performance. Another difficulty in the Saudi GIS industry is the occurrence of gaps in skills, as identified by Alrwais (2023). If clients lack the in-house expertise, they might rely heavily on vendors for guidance, implementation, training, and problem resolution. The use of GIS for search-and-rescue operations (Almujalli & Altuwaijri 2023) and urban planning (Aldegheishem & Alqarni 2012) also demonstrates the close relationship between the geospatial outputs and the organization's decision-making process.

The two streams of literature are not very interlinked, and these conditions make the possibility of value co-creation in the GIS market. The research in GIS in Saudi Arabia is mainly focused on: Adoption, Technical readiness, Professional skills, and practical applications. However, B2B research has grown to a wider range of concepts regarding digital exchange, e-commerce diffusion, and relationship management. However, Alsaad et al. (2021) offer an integrated model of the diffusion of B2B e-commerce, which does not cover the high level of customization and ongoing technical engagement that are common to many GIS relationships. Thus, the gap is not that there is no research on GIS or B2B relationships. It is the lack of conceptual linkage between them, and especially how collaborative value creation can affect the satisfaction of organizational GIS customers.

Toward a Conceptual Link between B2B Value Co-Creation and Customer Satisfaction in GIS Markets

Taken together, the literature shows that GIS is a promising context for exploring the value co-creation – customer satisfaction relationship. Once a client has entered into a contract to purchase a customized geospatial solution, he or she rarely evaluates the relationship based on the price of the solution or the number of features included in the software. Satisfaction also might be related to the provider's comprehension of the client's operational issue, involving relevant users in the definition of requirements, communicating information clearly, keeping in touch when things change, and further developing the solution following its implementation.

Samanta and Danson (2014) similarly identify relational drivers as important to B2B firms operating in e-commerce environments. Working with digital tools can be easier when it comes to these kinds of collaborations. Han et al. (2021) highlight the importance of AI and digital platforms in B2B marketing, while Alwan and Alshurideh (2022) view digital marketing as a means to create value and gain customer satisfaction. These technologies are thus most useful when they complement, not supplant, real interaction.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a conceptual, desk-based review rather than an empirical design based on newly collected primary data. The purpose of such an approach is to assemble pertinent theories and empirical evidence, find relationships within the field of research, and formulate hypotheses that will be tested subsequently. It is suitable for a paper that aims to develop an explanatory framework rather than present statistical results of an already performed survey or experiment (Malhotra, 2017). In that respect, the analysis will deal with the organization of the current literature in order to explain the relationship between B2B value co-creation and customer satisfaction in digital GIS markets.

The literature review was carried out across three interconnected areas. The first area included B2B marketing and value co-creation. More precisely, studies dealing with relational exchange, customer participation, trust, innovation, and satisfaction have been reviewed. The second area included GIS literature paying special attention to adoption, applications, organizational usage, and workforce development in Saudi Arabia. The third area included literature on digital markets and digital marketing. Particularly, research on competitive dynamics, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, and technologies allowing continuous provider-customer interaction has been analyzed. The sources have been included in the literature review if they contributed to at least one of the main themes of the paper: value co-creation, customer satisfaction, B2B exchange, digital collaboration, or conditions in the GIS market sector. More emphasis has been placed on those studies which provided an explanation of relationship- or collaboration-oriented processes rather than transactional price competition.

In that way, the literature review in this study is interpretive rather than systematic. This must be kept in mind while analyzing the propositions that follow. There is no claim about completeness of the literature search within B2B co-creation or GIS studies. Moreover, the propositions formulated by the author cannot be treated as scientifically verified findings. However, their purpose is to organize the findings of the literature in order to be tested in an empirical way. At the same time, it is convenient for the author to keep the present paper separate from his previous quantitative research in relation to GIS analysts and managers in Saudi Arabia. The conceptual review establishes the reasoning and expected relationships; the later empirical study can then assess whether those relationships are observed in practice.

DISCUSSION AND CONCEPTUAL PROPOSITIONS

Several themes emerge when the B2B, co-creation, satisfaction, and GIS literature are considered together. The first is that the importance of competition is different for every market. Second, customer engagement can help match an offering to the customer's actual needs. The third is that digital tools can contribute to this involvement – but only if they are used to maintain meaningful communication and collaboration.

First, a pure competition focus provides only a partial picture of value creation in relationship-dependent B2B markets. As Deller et al. (2021) and Asipi and Duraković (2020) take different angles at the subject, they both leave open the possibility that market rivalry and customer value are not necessarily synonymous. This distinction may be of special significance in GIS. Time and effort can be required for data preparation, system integration, staff training and workflow changes, all at the expense of a client. So, even if a different provider supplies it for less, it can be expensive to switch suppliers. In such situations, reliability, trust, continuity, and willingness of the provider to understand the client's operations can be as important as the original commercial offer to satisfaction.

Secondly, the co-creation literature has indicated that customer satisfaction can be improved by involving the customer in the sense-making of the deliverables. The research articles of Sales-Vivó et al. (2021), Malik and Ahsan (2019), and Delpechitre et al. (2018) are not identical in terms of the industry that they study or the type of participation they investigate, but they all suggest the same underlying idea: Customers are not just recipients of value. It translates to GIS that there should be multiple points in the relationship where collaboration takes place. The data requirements can be co-developed with the client, and operational constraints can be identified and discussed. Prototype and test the output, and gather feedback after deployment. These activities help

minimize the chances that a technologically complex solution will not solve a problem for which it was bought. Co-creation is thus likely to result in higher satisfaction due to a better fit of the solution and a better feeling that the customer's needs are understood.

Third, digital marketing and collaborative platforms can reinforce this process when they ease and facilitate communication more and more continuously. According to Mandal and Joshi (2017) and Bala and Verma (2018), digital marketing is not merely a tool to attract customers. It can also facilitate interactions and relationship development. Alwan and Alshurideh (2022) reveal empirical evidence for the relationship between digital marketing and value creation and customer satisfaction. For the GIS industry, this could involve the use of common dashboards, web-based project spaces, online support channels, collaborative data environments, remote demonstrations, and other platforms for providers and clients to share information. These tools, however, do not produce co-creation by themselves. They have the primary functions of making participation, feedback, and adjustment more regular.

On the basis of this synthesis, two propositions are advanced for subsequent empirical examination:

Proposition 1 (P1): B2B value co-creation is positively associated with customer satisfaction in digital geospatial information systems (GIS) markets.

Proposition 2 (P2): The positive relationship between B2B value co-creation and customer satisfaction in GIS markets is strengthened when vendors use digital marketing and collaborative digital platforms to maintain client engagement.

The propositions are deliberately kept focused. P1 is related to the primary link between co-creation and customer satisfaction, and P2 acknowledges that digital technologies can reinforce this link by enabling easier collaboration that can be maintained over time. Factors could include the level of trust, digital maturity, firm size, customer expertise, and the duration of the business relationship in a more complex model. These variables were, however, added at this stage, rendering it less clear as to what the main conceptual contribution of this paper would be. The two-proposition framework thus offers a simple starting point which can be tested in future research and extended later, if it is supported by the evidence.

CONCLUSION

This paper is a synthesis of literature on B2B marketing, value co-creation, customer satisfaction, digital markets, and GIS, which provides a clear and focused argument for the geospatial sector. While the review indicates that competition is a significant factor in shaping organizational customers' evaluation of complex digital services, it does not account for all of the factors. More importantly, GIS relationships are formed in the process of implementing and utilizing GIS, where GIS providers give GIS clients information, help with problems, and modify the solutions to fit operational requirements. Value co-creation can be beneficial in understanding customer satisfaction, as the markets for digital transformation – like Saudi Arabia, where technical skills are not evenly distributed – demand geospatial skills. Based on this, the paper suggests a direct positive link between B2B value co-creation and satisfaction, which is anticipated to increase with the use of digital marketing and collaborative platforms. These are merely propositions, but they do serve to bridge B2B relationship research and GIS literature, where the emphasis has been more on adoption, technology, and applications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For GIS vendors, the takeaway is not that they should get out of competition, but rather that they will need to compete in part by the quality of their collaborations. Client involvement in the development of the service can be achieved through requirements workshops, joint solution design, shared access to data, staged reviews, and regular post-implementation feedback. They could be particularly effective when GIS solutions are highly customized or when the customers do not have technical expertise in their own organizations.

The review points to the potential benefits of mechanisms that foster knowledge exchange and collaboration among GIS providers and organizational users for Saudi Arabia's policymakers and industry bodies. Some of

the gaps highlighted by Alrwais (2023) could be met by improving links between providers and clients, in addition to developing local skills and the workforce. Coordinated efforts should enhance and not hinder competition and transparency in the market and in procurement procedures.

For researchers, the next step is to test the proposed relationships with data from the GIS sector. A quantitative analysis can investigate whether the higher the level of co-creation, the higher the level of customer satisfaction, and whether the use of a collaborative digital platform influences the relationship between the two. It would be helpful to have a study that includes both provider and client perspectives since co-creation is inherently two-way. Further studies may also delve deeper into other factors, including the level of digital maturity of the organization, the duration of the vendor-client relationship, client-side GIS experience, or the complexity of the solution, to assess the timing of the impacts of co-creation.

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