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The Strategic Dynamics of B2B Feedback: Asset Characteristics, Capabilities and Values across Supplier–Customer Relationships

Doctoral dissertation

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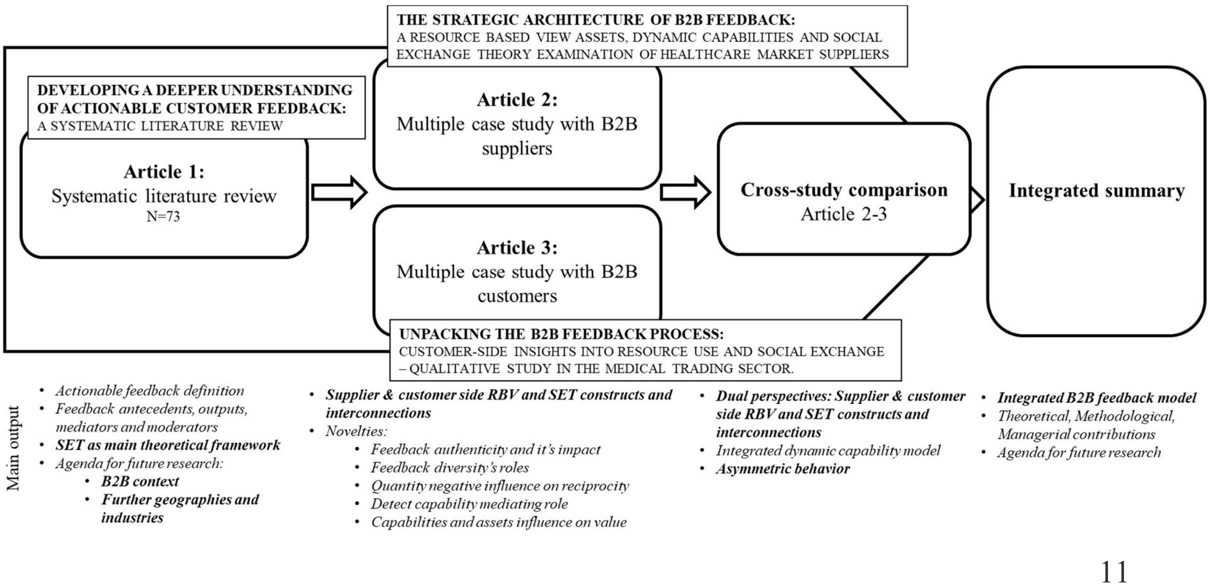
INTRODUCTION

Feedback is a central mechanism through which organizations learn, adapt, and co-create value with their stakeholders (Argyris and Schön, 1997, Payne et al., 2008, Day, 1994, Morgan et al., 2009). While feedback has been extensively examined in consumer markets, its role in business-to-business (B2B) settings remains comparatively underexplored (Molnár et al., 2024). B2B relationships are characterized by higher stakes, longer time horizons, and more complex interdependencies than typical consumer interactions, making feedback not only a communication tool but a strategic resource that shapes collaboration, innovation, and performance (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006, Anderson et al., 1994). Yet despite its importance, existing research offers limited insight into how feedback operates within B2B relationships, how its characteristics influence value creation, and how suppliers and customers experience the feedback process differently (Molnár et al., 2024).

This dissertation addresses this gap by examining B2B feedback through three complementary studies and a cross-study comparison, attempting to find an answer to our overarching research question: **How is feedback generated, interpreted, and acted upon in regulated B2B markets, and how do its drivers and processes shape its value-creating consequences?**

While each study is written in article form and stands on its own, together they follow a single coherent line of reasoning, depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Structure of the article-based dissertation. Source: Author.



The first study provides a systematic literature review (SLR) of feedback research across marketing, management, and service domains, addressing the current fragmentation of the field. By synthesizing insights from 73 peer-reviewed articles published between 2004 and 2023, this study maps how marketing, management, and service research conceptualizes and applies feedback, and it demonstrates why a consolidated overview is necessary for advancing B2B feedback research. The review reveals that the overwhelming majority of existing studies focus on B2C contexts, rely heavily on quantitative designs, and are grounded primarily in Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964a). Although this body of work identifies several antecedents and outcomes of feedback, it offers limited theoretical or empirical guidance for understanding feedback in B2B environments (Bilro et al., 2023, Molnár et al., 2024), where relational complexity, power asymmetry, and knowledge interdependence are more pronounced (Anderson et al., 1994, Ballantyne, 2004, Lambe et al., 2001). The SLR therefore establishes the need for deeper, theory-driven exploration of feedback in B2B markets.

From a feedback perspective, it is essential to determine whether it is consequential that firms often lack B2B-specific customer knowledge and instead rely on B2C-oriented assumptions. This question can be addressed by examining the literature on information handling and information value. Unlike in B2C contexts, access to high-value customer information in B2B markets typically depends on long-term relational ties (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), and such information may exist across multiple levels, including transactions, organizational structures, and individual actors (Rollins and Halinen, 2005). Prior research also emphasizes that meaningful data is more difficult to obtain in B2B settings (Rollins and Halinen, 2005). Beyond issues of access, scholars note that firms operating in B2B environments can obtain higher-quality data (Homburg et al., 2011), which is not only more accurate but also more timely and granular.

Given the distinct characteristics of B2B markets, it is reasonable to question whether feedback processes can be meaningfully understood through frameworks developed primarily for B2C contexts. The existing literature provides only limited guidance, as scholarly work on B2B feedback remains sparse and fragmented (Molnár et al., 2024). This absence of established theoretical models creates a justified need for exploratory inquiry (Eisenhardt, 1989). Consequently, employing exploratory techniques represents a logical and methodologically sound next step for uncovering how feedback operates within B2B relationships, where information flows, relational dynamics, and decision structures differ substantially from those observed in B2C settings.

Building on this foundation, the second and third studies adopt a qualitative, dual-perspective approach to investigate feedback from both sides of the exchange: suppliers as feedback receivers and customers as feedback providers. Conducted in a regulated healthcare B2B market in Eastern Europe, these studies reveal that feedback is perceived not merely as evaluative input but as a bundle of asset characteristics, such as value, depth, quantity, quality, diversity, sharedness, tacitness, and authenticity. The findings also show that suppliers and customers possess distinct dynamic capabilities, reflecting their different roles, information asymmetries, and organizational responsibilities. We must acknowledge that, although we explicitly asked respondents about this issue, neither of the empirical studies yielded meaningful insights regarding the connection between feedback and brand-related outcomes.

It is important to clarify that, despite applying the same methodology and theoretical foundations across both datasets in studies 2 and 3, we cannot claim that our research captures a dyadic customer–supplier relationship. Although customers and suppliers in this industry may, in principle, engage with one another reciprocally, our data collection did not involve pairing customer and supplier responses around the same transaction, nor did the database contain any identifiers that would allow us to establish dyadic links. For this reason, the two studies were analyzed separately. Nevertheless, because both datasets originate from the same industry and broadly similar geographical contexts, a comparative interpretation remains meaningful. This enables us to highlight convergences and divergences between customer and supplier perspectives and to synthesize these insights into an integrated set of key findings, represented in the fourth building block: Cross-study comparison, in Figure 1. This comparison creates an opportunity to map the dual perspectives of SET and RBV constructs and create an integrated dynamic capabilities model. This comparison also indicates that the two studies reveal meaningful asymmetries in how customers and suppliers perceive the value created through feedback. Suppliers attribute a broader range of benefits to feedback, including emotional, fairness-related, and reciprocal gains, than customers acknowledge.

The fifth building block of the dissertation provides an integrated synthesis of the three studies and their cross-study comparison, consolidating our overall understanding of B2B feedback. The integrated B2B feedback model explains how feedback inputs are created, how they are interpreted, how they trigger action, and what forms of value the feedback process ultimately generates. The model maps the relevant capabilities, core mechanisms, drivers or antecedents, and boundary conditions associated with each stage.

According to our analysis, in regulated B2B markets, feedback begins with customer-side input creation, where structured dynamic capabilities - such as scoping, detecting, generating, adapting, acting on, documenting, and enabling - produce actionable signals grounded in operational experience. Suppliers then interpret these inputs through gather, integrate, analyze, share, enable, and act on capabilities, evaluating characteristics like depth, diversity, tacitness, and authenticity under conditions of dependency and power asymmetry. Acting on feedback results in perceived economic value, strongly shaping the extent of supplier and customer action. In addition to that, feedback ultimately generates multiple forms of value - economic, relational, informational, social, reciprocal, and, for suppliers, emotional and fairness value - though these consequences emerge asymmetrically across actors. Through all stages, feedback is conditioned by key drivers, including asset characteristics (e.g., diversity, authenticity), relational structures (trust, dependency), process constraints (documentation, regulation), role-based differences, and cognitive factors such as tacit knowledge and interpretive effort. These mechanisms show that feedback functions not as a simple message but as a capability system and value-creation process embedded in complex industrial relationships.

The integrated summary also provides an opportunity to highlight the dissertation's theoretical and methodological contributions, outlines normative implications for managers, and proposes future research directions for scholars.

The dissertation integrates three theoretical frameworks: the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Wernerfelt, 1984), assets and dynamic capabilities, and Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964b). This multi-theoretical approach enables a richer understanding of how feedback characteristics influence capability development and value creation, and how asymmetries between suppliers and customers shape the feedback process. RBV explains how firms build and sustain competitive advantage through valuable, rare, inimitable, and well-organized resources (Barney, 1991, Peteraf, 1993). Viewed through this lens, feedback becomes more than a communication tool: it serves as an input to learning, capability development, and adaptive decision-making (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000, Teece et al., 1997). Suppliers that systematically collect and integrate customer feedback can convert it into a dynamic capability that enhances responsiveness and operational alignment, thereby supporting the continuous refinement of internal routines (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003). SET complements this view by emphasizing the relational and reciprocal nature of interorganizational exchanges (Blau, 1964b). Social exchange occurs when actors assess the benefits, costs, and fairness of interaction (Homans, 1958, Homans, 1961), and relationships endure when they generate mutual value (Blau, 1964b, Cook et al., 2013).

Integrating RBV and SET offers a more complete explanation of B2B feedback (Palmatier et al., 2007). RBV clarifies how feedback contributes to capability development (Teece et al., 1997), while SET explains the relational conditions under which feedback is exchanged and valued (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Combining resource-based and relational perspectives yields deeper insight into how firms leverage interorganizational interactions for performance gains (Krasnikov and Jayachandran, 2008, Palmatier et al., 2007). This dual lens also accommodates emerging constructs such as authenticity treated as a relational asset (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010) and enablement, conceptualized as a dynamic capability that strengthens organizational adaptability (Teece, 2014).

Methodologically, the dissertation contributes by combining an SLR with dual-sided qualitative inquiry and, in the multiple case studies, a hybrid coding (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) strategy that incorporates theory-driven constructs from RBV and SET. Hybrid coding contains deductive and inductive coding methods. Inductive coding allows context-specific insights to emerge (Charmaz, 2006), while deductive reasoning informed by RBV and SET maintains theoretical coherence and helps identify constructs that link resource-based and relational dimensions of feedback (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). This design allows for the identification of new constructs, such as feedback authenticity, and the development of cross-framework propositions that extend existing theory. The integration of supplier and customer perspectives also addresses a common limitation of qualitative research: its tendency to capture only one side of an exchange.

In an article-based dissertation, it is essential to ensure that the individual articles are coherent and collectively contribute to an overarching research agenda. In this regard, a clear connection exists between the research gaps identified in the systematic literature review and the subsequent qualitative studies as described in Figure 1. Although the supplier–customer investigations were not conducted as dyadic studies, their findings remain comparable and can be integrated in the final chapter of the dissertation to provide a comprehensive synthesis. The theoretical frameworks employed across the studies further strengthen the overall coherence of the dissertation. Social Exchange Theory (SET) was adopted in the qualitative investigations because it emerged as the most frequently applied theoretical perspective in the reviewed literature (Molnár et al., 2024). In contrast, the Resource-Based View (RBV) was incorporated as a complementary framework that had received limited attention in the existing literature, thereby offering a potentially novel perspective for examining the research phenomenon. Theoretical coherence was further enhanced through the application of a hybrid coding approach in the qualitative data analysis. This method enabled the identification of themes that emerged inductively from the data while simultaneously facilitating their interpretation in relation to established theoretical constructs (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006, Proudfoot, 2023). As a result, the analysis was grounded both in the empirical evidence and in the broader theoretical foundations of the field.

Overall, this dissertation advances the understanding of B2B feedback by offering new conceptualizations, uncovering previously unrecognized asset characteristics, identifying asymmetries in value perception, and proposing theoretically grounded relationships that warrant further empirical testing. By doing so, it contributes to both academic debate and managerial practice, highlighting feedback as a strategic mechanism for learning, coordination, and value co-creation in complex B2B environments.

STUDY 1: DEVELOPING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF ACTIONABLE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

This paper aims to enhance the understanding of the influencing factors and consequences of feedback, with a particular focus on brand outputs and co-creation, and to identify future research areas related to feedback. First, we propose to clarify definitions by introducing actionable customer feedback and drawing clear distinctions among synonymic concepts used in the literature. Then, we conduct a systematic literature review of 73 journal articles from the past two decades and synthesize their findings in the feedback, brand, and co-creation intercept. We also introduce a structure for feedback-related antecedents, moderators, mediators, and performance outputs.

As a main contribution, we offer a visual representation of the findings of the systematic literature review to support scholars of customer behavior who are discovering their own directions according to their expertise. Through the use of visual tools such as tables and figures, we provide summary statistics reflecting the methodologies used in the literature, the industries involved, the geographical spread, and adjacent theories used. We also summarize the different positions of feedback within conceptual frameworks. We contribute to the literature by proposing and visually demonstrating new grouping dimensions of the antecedents, mediators, moderators, and performance outcomes of the feedback literature.

Finally, we recommend directions for future research on actionable feedback. We recommend studying the mediating and moderating impacts of demographics, gender, environmental characteristics, geography (especially developing economies), and B2B businesses on actionable feedback. The roles of trust and feedback in brand outputs, for example, brand value and brand equity, require further investigation. Finally, we recommend exploring constructs in which feedback plays multiple roles in different positions.

Introduction

Consumer feedback is an essential building block of the customer-supplier relationship (Hanssens and Pauwels, 2016, Gremyr et al., 2022, Kohtamäki et al., 2021). As a significant source of information (Mou et al., 2019), it plays an essential role in the innovation capability of firms (Nathai-Balkissoon et al., 2017), and a vast amount of input is generated daily, especially by digital tools. As a result, gathering customer feedback has become more accessible and less expensive for firms. However, the easy accessibility of information has also made transforming it into a strategic advantage more challenging. Therefore, a structured approach is needed that offers understanding of the underlying mechanisms, the prerequisites and the effects of feedback. In addition, it is critical to understand how feedback can create value. Therefore, a structured approach should consider the relevance of feedback in co-creation and brand outputs.

There are various definitions of customer feedback in the literature. Guo and Li (2021) defined consumer feedback as "the product or service information that consumers feedback to sellers." Dargahi and Namin (2020) described feedback as a general communication process in which the sender provides information about the receiver's output. According to Yi and Gong (2013), feedback "contains solicited and unsolicited information for service improvement." Solicited feedback is often called active feedback because the receiver actively initiates it, whereas unsolicited feedback is often referred to as passive feedback (Gremyr et al., 2022). Both parties can initiate feedback in various formats, including one- and two-way feedback (i.e., co-creation). Gremyr et al. (2022, p. 7) highlighted that "codified feedback is data acquired and transmitted digitally, as in a formal database, whereas personalized feedback is generated and transmitted between people."

In this study, we propose further clarification of the definition of feedback. In behavioral science, feedback is actionable information about the difference between the desired and actual levels of any system parameters (Ramaprasad, 1983). Therefore, in the proposed definition, customer feedback should refer to the actionable information provided by customers to the vendor about the gap between an actual product parameter and the desired parameter from the consumer's point of view. Thus, in its content, feedback is a form of consciously provided customer insight.

Following the logic of actionable information related to a product parameter, we should draw a clear distinction between our definition and several concepts used synonymously with feedback in the literature. The term *customer information* describes any information about customers, especially their online behavior (Taylor, 2004); even if such data are gathered with the individual's consent, this information cannot be regarded as a conscious actionable input about a product parameter. *Customer reviews* and *customer opinions* (Hu and Liu, 2004) describe conscious information sharing from the customer's side, but the scope is broader than that of pure product parameter information. Therefore, customer reviews and customer opinions may contain actionable feedback but are not necessarily equal to that. *WOM (word of mouth)* is an interaction between consumers. By sharing market- and product-related information, consumers influence one another's behavior and attitudes (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Although firms analyze and use WOM as a vital source of information for product development and service improvement, WOM does not always contain actionable information on product parameters.

Feedback has already been studied extensively in the literature (Nasr et al., 2017). There are also systematic literature reviews (SLRs) on eWOM in the hospitality context (Chen and Law, 2016), on customer loyalty in the insurance industry (Larsson and Broström, 2019), and on mobile app data mining, with a particular focus on customer opinion (Genc-Nayebi and Abran, 2017). However, we did not find a general, industry-independent review that synthesizes recent customer feedback-related studies in the literature.

After conceptually narrowing the definition of feedback, this study poses the following research question: What are the influencing factors and consequences of feedback, especially regarding brand outputs and co-creation?

Co-creation is included in our research question for two reasons. First, the literature often examines feedback as part of the co-creation process. Second, according to our definition of feedback, value is created via one or two methods of communication. For example, a dialog (i.e., two-way communication) between customers and suppliers or between multiple stakeholders (Vargo and Lusch, 2008) can be regarded as a co-creation mechanism, as information is mutually shared and resources are mutually allocated behind the work stream. Our investigation should also focus on co-creation and subsets of co-creation theories (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

There is a wealth of literature on constructs with a feedback component. Therefore, there is an opportunity to integrate the knowledge attained from a feedback perspective to investigate the impact of feedback on brand outputs and its role in co-creation. As a result, this study aims to conduct a systematic literature review (Tranfield et al., 2003) using the relevant Q1-Q3 literature in the co-creation, feedback, and brand intercept.

This study has several implications. First, we narrow the definition of feedback by distinguishing it from synonymic terms; then, by reviewing the contemporary body of literature, we introduce a new general synthesis of the main antecedents, performance outputs, mediators, and moderators of feedback. Next, we identify relevant specific brand outputs. We provide figures and tables for the examined variables to support the academic community in finding future directions for research. Moreover, this study provides an extensive list of actionable directions for future studies to better understand the influence of feedback on brands. Finally, the study highlights the operational importance of our synthesis for managers.

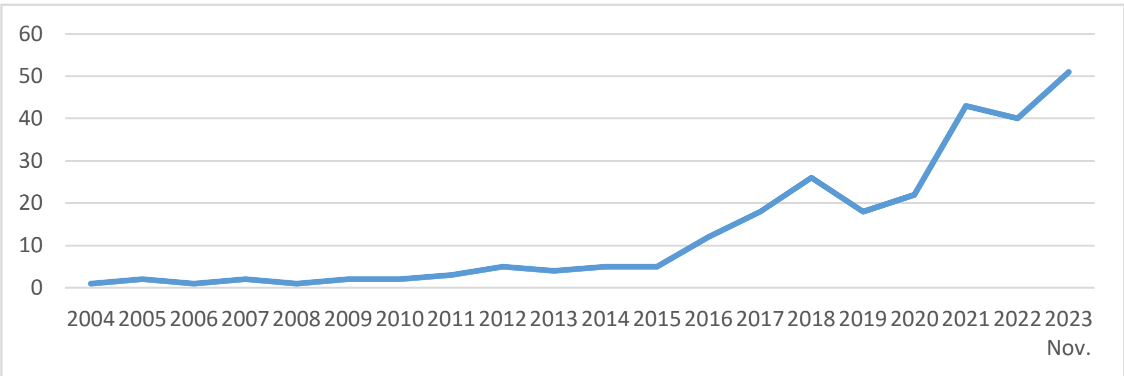
The remainder of this study is structured as follows. First, we explain the review process and share the findings of the feedback literature, focusing on its relation to co-creation and brand value. Accordingly, we describe how feedback and embracing constructs can occupy different positions in empirical models. After that, we summarize and synthesize the variables of the literature, explaining personal-individual, relational, and product- or process-related antecedents as well as brand output- and value proposition output-type performance variables. We also provide a summary of related moderators and mediators. Finally, based on the areas already covered in the contemporary literature, we highlight research gaps and recommend future research. At the end of the study, we also discuss the managerial implications of this paper.

Literature review

Process

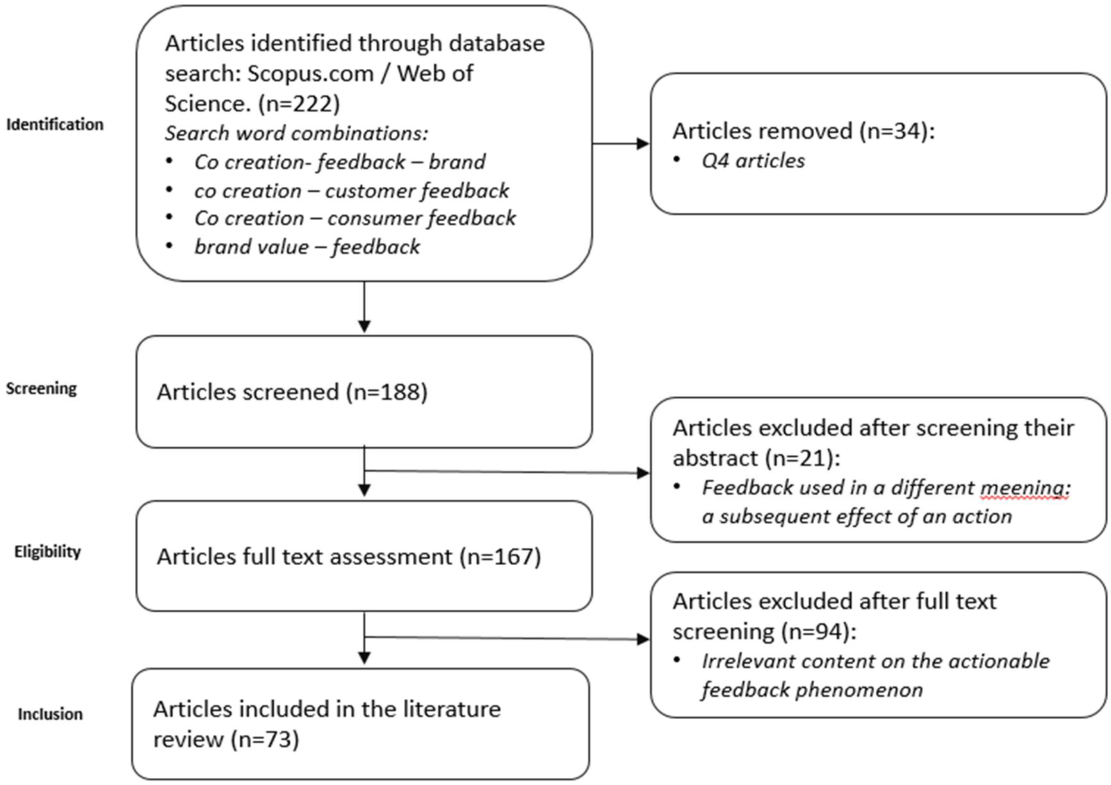
To understand the current academic viewpoints about feedback and its main antecedents and consequences, with particular attention given to brand outputs, we conducted a systematic literature review (Tranfield et al., 2003). Using the Scopus online search engine and Web of Science database, we collected articles from the past two decades, from November 2002 to November 2023. Feedback or customer feedback provided a general, broad scope. To focus on brand outputs and include co-creation, we used the following search term criteria for available journal articles: co-creation and (&) feedback and (&) brand (n=71)/co-creation and (&) customer feedback (n=45)/co-creation and (&) consumer feedback (n=11)/brand value and (&) feedback (n=95). The number of articles in the area has shown an accelerating trend in recent years. Within the studied period, 51% of all articles were published in the last three years (2021-2023) (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Number of journal articles by year of publication: co-creation & feedback & brand / co-creation & customer feedback / co-creation & consumer feedback/brand value & feedback. Source: Authors.



Following standard exclusion criteria (Keszey, 2020), we selected articles from Q1-Q3 journals (n=188). Of the selected articles, 21 were excluded because "feedback" had a different definition, namely, describing the subsequent effect of an action on a specific object (i.e., feedback of brand extension on the brand), and an additional 94 articles were removed based on a deeper analysis of the abstracts (Kohtamäki et al., 2018), as these articles did not elaborate on the feedback phenomenon. These exclusions reduced the number of relevant articles to 73 for further analysis, as illustrated in Figure 1.2. In the literature review, we used a coding scheme to collect information about the industry, geography, analytical method used, sample size of the empirical study, theoretical research framework, and variables examined in the empirical studies.

Figure 1.2: PRISMA-based model of the article selection process. Authors' own construction based on Page et al. (2021).



Overview of the literature

Table 1.1 provides summary statistics from the literature. Twenty-seven percent of studies were conducted in Asia, 25% in Europe, 15% in North America, 4% in Australia, 3% in South America, and 3% in Africa, while the rest did not specify the place of origin. Scholars have focused primarily on services or service-type activities within defined industries. In general, the importance of the hospitality industry has grown in academic studies over the past two decades (Morosan et al., 2014). In our research, hospitality and leisure was the most researched segment (n=20, 27%), with more than twice as many studies as the second most popular industry, technology/IT/telecom (n=7, 9%).

Ninety-three percent (n=68) of the research focused on business-to-consumer (B2C) or consumer-to-consumer (C2C) aspects, whereas only five articles discussed the business-to-business context (B2B) (Sarkar and Banerjee, 2020, Sandbacka et al., 2013, Gosling et al., 2017, Rubio et al., 2021, Gremyr et al., 2022). Most empirical research (n=51) was based on existing theories and studies of other latent variables and examined the interplay between sets of variables using structural equation modeling (SEM, n=36). Most models drew conclusions based on 200+ respondents. The average sample size was 354.

Table 1.1: Literature statistics (n=73)
Search words: co-creation & feedback & brand/ co creation & customer feedback/co creation & consumer feedback/ brand value & feedback; Q1-Q3. Source: Authors.

Article distribution by geographies			**Article distribution by journal ranking**		
Asia		20		Q1	43
Europe		18		Q2	18
North America		11		Q3	12
Australia & New Zealand		3			
South America		2	**Analytical methods**		
Africa		2	Quantitative		
Multiple/not defined		17		SEM	36
				Experimental design	7
Article distribution by industries				Regression	4
Hospitality and leisure		20		Other	4
Cross industries		17	Qualitative		
Tech: IT, Telecom		7		Netnography	2
Not defined		6		Content analysis	1
Small business/services		5		Other	7
Banking, Finance		4	n.a.		12
Vehicle, Transport		4			
Fashion		3	**Adjacent theories appeared in multiple articles by frequency**		
Retail		3	Social exchange theory		10
Education		2	Customer citizenship theory		5
Consultancy		1	Stimulus-organism-response framework		3
Food		1	Consumer culture theory		2
			Expectancy theory		2
Article distribution by sample size*			Flow theory		2
Quantitative studies			Self-determination theory		2
	below 100	2	Self-presentation theory		2
	100-200	6	Stakeholder theory		2
	200-500	26	Uses and gratification theory		2
	above 500	17	Identity / Social identity theory		2
			Attribution theory		2
**Articles with multiple empirical studies included*					

Adjacent theories

Social exchange theory (SET) dominates the literature (Assiouras et al., 2019, Bozkurt et al., 2020, Van Tonder and Petzer, 2022, Paulssen et al., 2019, Torres-Moraga et al., 2021, Hussain et al., 2020, Seifert and Kwon, 2019, Saunders and Rod, 2012, Rubio et al., 2021, Kim et al., 2022). This theory posits that people engage in social interactions to gain personal or social benefits (Kim et al., 2022). The extended interpretation of SET suggests that these interactions extend beyond the activities necessary to maintain a pure customer-supplier relationship (Assiouras et al., 2019). Alongside core business transactions, there is additional perceived value in the information exchange characterized by informal reciprocity (Blau, 1964a). Therefore, the perceived cost and expected benefit of such interactions must be balanced. Furthermore, feedback is not necessarily part of operational transactions, and a perceived value must be attached to compensate for the effort of giving and receiving the information (Alford, 2002).

The second most frequently used theoretical approach is *customer citizenship theory* (Burnham et al., 2020, Dewalska-Opitek and Mitręga, 2019, Assiouras et al., 2019, Arica and Çorbaci, 2020, Van Tonder and Petzer, 2022). Customer citizenship behavior involves a set of actions that are not part of prompt core service delivery but rather help both the receiver and the provider in the long term (Groth, 2005). Finally, the third most frequently used theory is the *stimulus–organism–response theory* (Carlson et al., 2018, Aljarah and Alrawashdeh, 2020, Guo and Li, 2021, Zakiah et al., 2023), which provides a general framework for studying consumer behavior, elaborating the input/stimulus, output/response, and internal organismic factors (Jacoby, 2002). The stimulus–organism–response theory makes no specific reference to feedback. However, feedback is part of customer interaction, primarily in the online arena or social media (Al Amin, 2022); therefore, its presence is essential and cannot be excluded.

Conceptual clarification and the position of feedback in empirical studies

The selected articles with quantitative analysis (n=51) cover a wide range of antecedents and outcomes, among which we first focus on the position of feedback. Table 1.2 shows the various roles assigned to feedback in the empirical models.

The table is structured in three segments: antecedents, mediators/moderators and performance outputs. In each segment, we further separate the constructs into two groups: constructs in which feedback or its thematically identical variations are standalone variables and constructs in which feedback is present as an element of another construct. The relevance of constructs in which feedback is included must be explained. The following section introduces these embracing constructs and explains their feedback connections.

Feedback as part of another construct

Customer citizenship behavior (Yi and Gong, 2013, Arica and Çorbaci, 2020, Aljarah and Alrawashdeh, 2020, Assiouras et al., 2019, Dewalska-Opitek and Mitręga, 2019, Oertzen et al., 2020, Torres-Moraga et al., 2021, van Tonder et al., 2020, Van Tonder and Petzer, 2022, Zakiah et al., 2023) as a voluntary act (Groth, 2005) consists of a wide range of activities, such as "helping other customers, providing solicited responses to firms, affiliation, advocacy, and participating in firm activities" (Balaji, 2014). We regard solicited responses as feedback, which is helpful information for the firm to improve service delivery (Balaji, 2014).

Another essential construct is *co-creation* (Arica and Çorbaci, 2020, Akman et al., 2018, Assiouras et al., 2019, France et al., 2020, Liljedal, 2016, Shulga and Busser, 2020, Zhang and Ma, 2021, Chou et al., 2018, Ferm and Thaichon, 2021, Kennedy, 2017, Sarkar and Banerjee, 2020, Seifert and Kwon, 2019, Dretsch et al., 2023). It assumes a continuous dialog between firms and customers and drives processes from one-way, firm-to-customer communication to two- or multiway customer-to-firm or customer-to-customer communication (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Multiway communication to improve service delivery must include actionable information on performance parameter improvement; therefore, feedback is an integral part of co-creation (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2018).

Customer participation (Zhang et al., 2022b) generally refers to any activities a customer needs for successful service delivery (Yi et al., 2011). Therefore, customer participation is a construct in which feedback plays a role. It has also been proven in the banking industry that customer feedback surveys can be part of successful *customer retention* strategies (Chahal and Bala, 2017). Another feedback-embracing construct is *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). The literature describes flow as a focused and rewarding mental state during an extensively engaging activity (Sangroya et al., 2021). The prerequisites for reaching this psychological stage are clear goals, autonomy, feedback, and concentration (Yoo et al., 2018).

*Interaction behavio*r is two-way interpersonal communication between actors before, during, and after service delivery (Busagara et al., 2020). The exchange aims for optimal service; therefore, feedback is an integral part of it. *Customer engagement behavior* (Bozkurt et al., 2020, Carlson et al., 2018, Shen et al., 2020, Vokić et al., 2022, Zakiah et al., 2023) spans from recommendations and WOM to blogs, supporting other customers, writing reviews, and taking legal action (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Writing reviews and taking legal action meet the definition of feedback in terms of providing operational information on reducing the gap between the actual and the desired state of a parameter (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

Table 1.2: Summary of feedback roles and positions within conceptual frameworks in the literature. Source: Authors.

	Constructs		Studies
Antecedent	Feedback or thematically identical construct as a standalone variable	Feedback	(Wardley et al., 2016, Furenes et al., 2017, Windasari and Visita, 2019, Furenes et al., 2018, Guo and Li, 2021, Kim et al., 2022, Caber et al., 2023)
		Satisfaction with feedback	(Tandon et al., 2023)
		Social feedback	(Jain et al., 2023n.d.)
		Feedback mechanism	(Roy Bhattacharjee et al., 2023)
		Cost of feedback	(Dretsch et al., 2023)
	Feedback as a part of another construct	Customer citizenship behavior	(Yi and Gong, 2013)
		Co-creation	(Assiouras et al., 2019, Akman et al., 2018, Zhang and Ma, 2021, Shulga and Busser, 2020, Arica and Çorbaci, 2020, Liljedal, 2016, France et al., 2020)
		Consumer/customer engagement	(Vokić et al., 2022, Zakiah et al., 2023)
		Customer participation	(Zhang et al., 2022b)
		Customer retention strategy	(Chahal and Bala, 2017)
		Flow	(Sangroya et al., 2021)
		Interaction behavior	(Busagara et al., 2020)
Mediator/ Moderator	Feedback or a thematically identical construct as a standalone variable	Peer feedback	(Zhang and Ma, 2021)
		Organizational response	(Abro et al., 2020)
	Feedback as a part of another construct	Customer citizenship behavior	(Arica and Çorbaci, 2020)
		Co-creation	(Chou et al., 2018);
		Consumer engagement	(Vokić et al., 2022)
Performance outcome	Feedback or thematically identical construct as a standalone variable	Feedback	(Rubio et al., 2019, Rubio et al., 2021, Yang et al., 2021, Burnham et al., 2020, Celuch and Walz, 2020)
		Feedback intention	(Tseng, 2020, Abbas et al., 2018, Fagerstrøm et al., 2020)
	Feedback as a part of another construct	Customer citizenship behavior	(Assiouras et al., 2019, Torres-Moraga et al., 2021, Van Tonder and Petzer, 2022, Oertzen et al., 2020, Aljarah and Alrawashdeh, 2020, van Tonder et al., 2020, Dewalska-Opitek and Mitręga, 2019, Zakiah et al., 2023)
		Co-creation	(Akman et al., 2018, Ferm and Thaichon, 2021, Seifert and Kwon, 2019, Sarkar and Banerjee, 2020, Kennedy, 2017, Dretsch et al., 2023)
		Customer engagement behavior	(Carlson et al., 2018, Bozkurt et al., 2020, Vokić et al., 2022, Zakiah et al., 2023, Shen et al., 2020)
		Customer external role/indirect contribution	(Paulssen et al., 2019, Hussain et al., 2020)

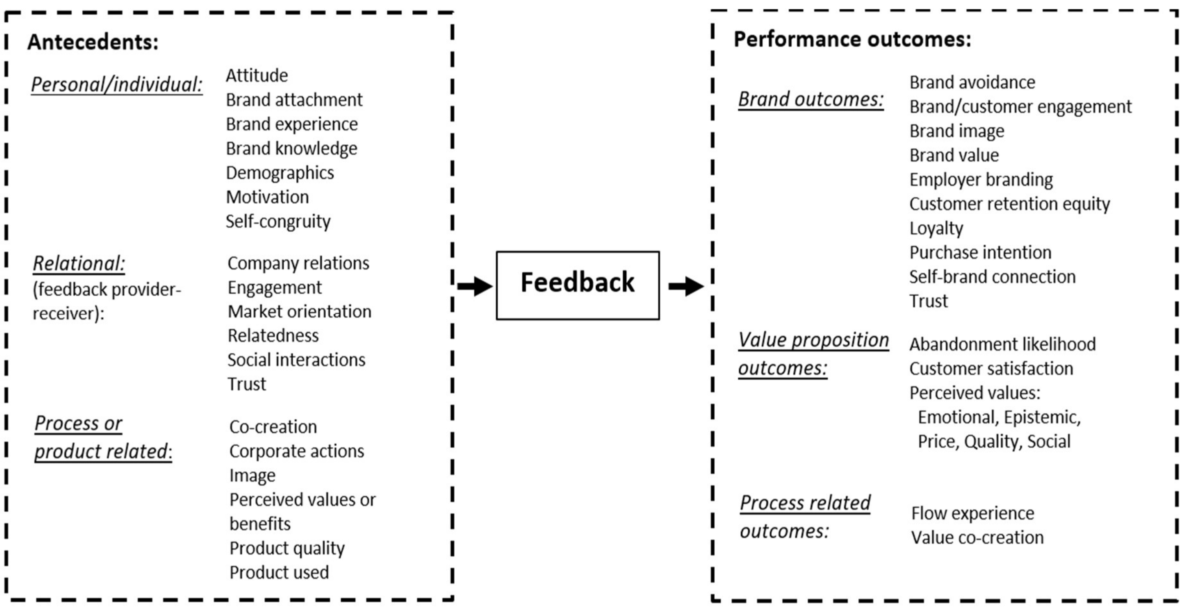
The *extra role of customers,* including customer citizenship behavior, describes the voluntary gestures of customers that do not involve actual purchase or consumption but can consist of product development participation, support for other customers, or the provision of constructive feedback (Paulssen et al., 2019, Hussain et al., 2020).

Introducing these concepts in our study provides an opportunity to better understand the feedback mechanism, as it is not a standalone action but part of a complex process. We observed that specific models locate feedback in multiple roles. For example, the co-creation process contains feedback, which impacts customer citizenship behavior, in which feedback is also included (Assiouras et al., 2019); as another example, customer citizenship behavior mediates the impact of value co-creation on satisfaction (Arica and Çorbaci, 2020).

Antecedents and performance outcomes of feedback in empirical studies

After reviewing the various feedback positions, we summarize their antecedents and performance outcomes. We created new grouping dimensions (Kohtamäki et al., 2018) to synthesize the empirical studies. First, we listed the individual variables from the analyzed literature and grouped the identical variables and the conceptually identical synonyms into subgroups; then, subgroups were consolidated into three main categories, as shown in Figure 1.2. The main categories of antecedents are *personal/individual, relational,* and *process- or product-related*, while the performance outcomes are summarized under two categories: *brand outcome* and *value proposition outcome*.

Figure 1.3: Summary of the antecedents and performance outcome variables of feedback. Source: Authors.



Antecedents of feedback

Personal/individual antecedents refer to the quality, knowledge, or attributes of the feedback provider. Accordingly, *attitude* refers to a set of emotions or beliefs of the feedback provider toward a particular object (Seifert and Kwon, 2019, van Tonder et al., 2020, Oertzen et al., 2020, Akman et al., 2018, Van Tonder and Petzer, 2022); *brand attachment* describes the emotional connection of the feedback provider to the brand (Hussain et al., 2020); *brand experience* is a subjective internal response to brand-related stimuli (Sarkar and Banerjee, 2020, Yang et al., 2021, Kennedy, 2017); *brand knowledge* refers to the individual's understanding of the brand and products (Sarkar and Banerjee, 2020); *demographics* (Oertzen et al., 2020) are related to the characteristics of the individual; and *motivation* is the driving force behind the individual's actions (Burnham et al., 2020, Dewalska-Opitek and Mitręga, 2019). *Self-congruity* refers to the difference or similarity between one's self-perception and one's perception of a brand (Shen et al., 2020).

Relational antecedents are those that refer to an aspect of a relationship between the feedback receiver (i.e., the firm) and the feedback provider (i.e., the customer), such as *company relations*, under which we categorize variables determining firms' activities targeting the customer-firm relationship (Fagerstrøm et al., 2020, Sarkar and Banerjee, 2020, Dewalska-Opitek and Mitręga, 2019, Paulssen et al., 2019), and *engagement*, through which we describe the strengths of the relationship between the actors (Yang et al., 2021, France et al., 2018, Ferm and Thaichon, 2021, Piyathasanan et al., 2017, Vokić et al., 2022). *Market orientation* (Robinson and Celuch, 2016) describes a company's attitude and willingness to utilize customer and market information (Hooley et al., 2000), while *relatedness* is vital for understanding individuals' motivation to relate to others and achieve meaningful involvement (Sarkar and Banerjee, 2020). *Social interactions* empower community members to provide feedback and increase individuals' interest in helping fellow members (Akman et al., 2018). Finally, *trust* highlights the importance of the feedback provider's confidence in the feedback receiver (Akman et al., 2018, Ferm and Thaichon, 2021, Rubio et al., 2021, Yang et al., 2021).

Process and product-related antecedents refer either to a process in which both the feedback provider and the feedback receiver are engaged (and exert an influence on the feedback, i.e., co-creation) or to a product and its attributes (i.e., quality). These variables are *co-creation* (Assiouras et al., 2019, Sarkar and Banerjee, 2020, Arica and Çorbaci, 2020), "a business strategy used in the practices based on cooperation with customers" (Arica and Çorbaci, 2020), and *corporate actions* involving various company processes and activities (Aljarah and Alrawashdeh, 2020, Abbas et al., 2018, Sarkar and Banerjee, 2020, Kennedy, 2017, Bozkurt et al., 2020). An *image* describes a general impression of a subject, such as a tourist destination (Vokić et al., 2022). *Perceived values or benefits* are product-related attributes (Rubio et al., 2019, Hussain et al., 2020, Van Tonder and Petzer, 2022, Sarkar and Banerjee, 2020, Celuch and Walz, 2020, Robinson and Celuch, 2016), similar to *product quality* (Carlson et al., 2018, Oertzen et al., 2020, Zakiah et al., 2023) and *product usage* (Tseng, 2020).

Performance outcomes of feedback

Performance outcomes are grouped into *brand outcomes* and *value proposition* outcomes. Under the **brand outcomes subcategory,** we summarize brand-related performance outcomes, such as *brand avoidance* (Abro et al., 2020), which describes the phenomenon in which consumers deliberately choose a different brand (Lee et al., 2009); *brand engagement*, which is the attachment between the brand and consumers (Sangroya et al., 2021, Caber et al., 2023, Shen et al., 2020); and *brand image* (Sandbacka et al., 2013), which is a subjective perception of brand performance based on set parameters (Patterson, 1999). *Brand value* is the financial worth of the brand (Chahal and Bala, 2017, France et al., 2020). *Employer branding* (Tandon et al., 2023) refers to the reputation of employers among employees and job seekers. *Customer retention equity* describes the monetary value of a firm's ability to retain customers (Chahal and Bala, 2017). *Loyalty* (Vokić et al., 2022) refers to employee attachment and devotion as a positive outcome of employer branding. *Purchase intention* refers to the customer’s willingness to purchase the brand or the product (Guo and Li, 2021, Liljedal, 2016). Finally, we also regard *trust* (Liu et al., 2023) as a brand outcome.

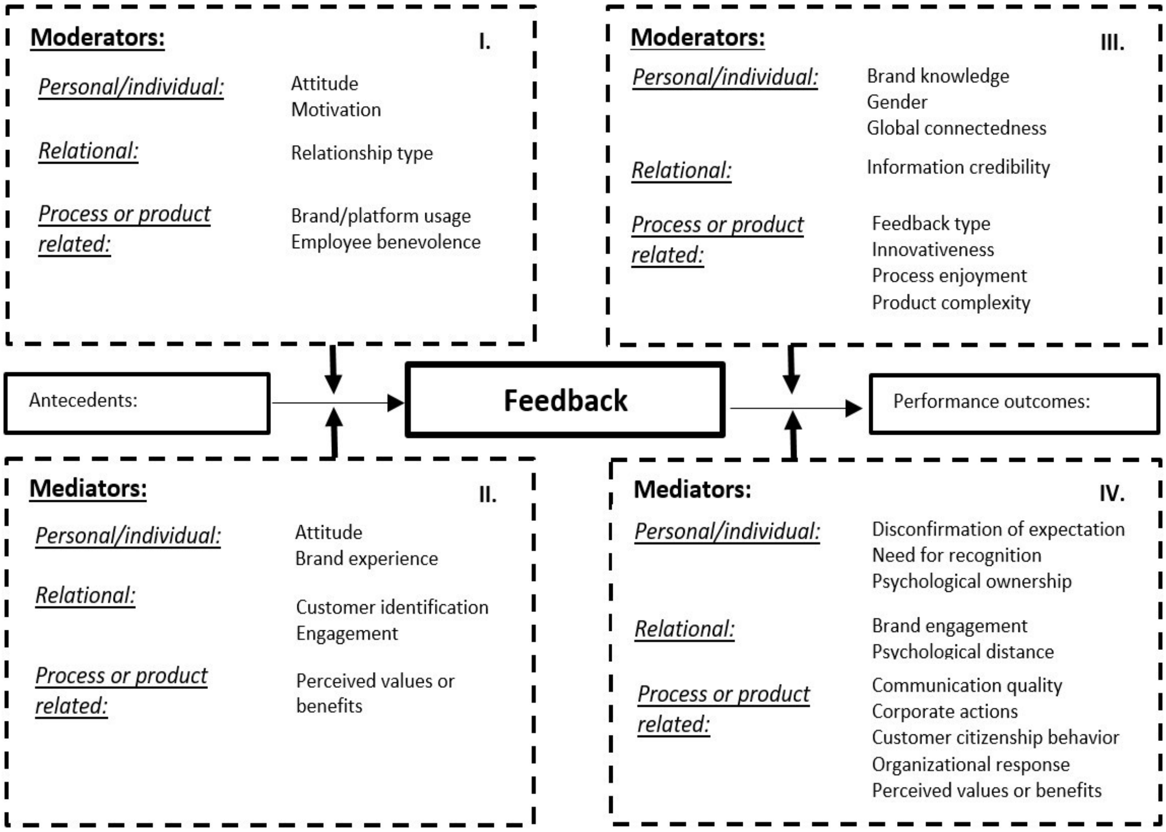
Regarding **value proposition outcomes**, we consider feedback outcomes related to either *customer satisfaction*, which describes to what extent the product meets the customer's expectation, or *abandonment likelihood,* which describes the probability of a negative purchase decision (Jain et al., 2023n.d.). The value proposition outcome can also be a set of perceived values (Furenes et al., 2017, Arica and Çorbaci, 2020, Furenes et al., 2018). Perceived values include *emotional value*, which is a positive feeling attached to an action or goods received (France et al., 2020); *epistemic value,* which is a perceived value of cognitive success (Piyathasanan et al., 2017); and *price, quality, and social values* (France et al., 2020, Kim et al., 2022). Price value refers to the monetary exchange required to obtain a product, whereas quality values are derived from the product’s perceived performance, including value for money and overall service ratings (Kim et al., 2022). In other words, these are economic values (Cabiddu et al., 2019), while social value is the product's ability to influence social identification (France et al., 2020).

Process-related outcomes refer to the set of coordinated activities as a whole on which the feedback or the feedback provider has a major influencing role. We regard *flow* *experience* (Zakiah et al., 2023) and *value co-creation* (Dretsch et al., 2023) as potential process-related outcomes of the feedback.

Moderators and mediators of feedback in empirical studies

The analyzed empirical studies provide a large selection of mediators and moderators, which are summarized in Figure 1.3. First, we discuss the moderators and mediators influencing the antecedent impact on feedback, and then, we summarize the variables moderating and mediating the influence of feedback on performance outcomes. As in the case of the antecedents of feedback, we group the moderator and mediator variables under the three main categories: personal/individual, relational, and process or product related.

Figure 1.4: Summary of the mediators and moderators of the feedback constructs. Source: Authors.



Moderators of feedback antecedents (Figure 1.3, Section I.)

Personal/individual moderators of feedback antecedents are *attitude,* which is a set of emotions or beliefs held by the feedback provider regarding a particular object (van Tonder et al., 2020, Van Tonder and Petzer, 2022, Yang et al., 2021), and *motivation,* which is the driving force behind individuals' actions (Paulssen et al., 2019). Under the title of **relational moderators** of feedback antecedents, *relationship type* refers to the length of the company-customer relationship and whether the customer is a member of the loyalty program (Rubio et al., 2021). **Process- or product-related** feedback antecedent moderators are *brand/platform usage,* which considers the feedback provider's choice of brand or digital platform (Rubio et al., 2019, Bozkurt et al., 2020), and *employee benevolence,* which measures the perceived goodwill of the employee of the service provider toward the customer (Celuch and Walz, 2020).

Mediators of the feedback antecedents (Figure 1.3, Section II.)

Like feedback antecedent moderators, attitude is positioned as a **personal/individual mediator** (van Tonder et al., 2020, Ferm and Thaichon, 2021)**;** similarly, we list *brand experience as an* individual mediator of feedback impact (Hongsuchon et al., 2023). **Relational mediators** of feedback antecedents include *customer identification,* which entails measuring the feedback provider's emotional association with the feedback receiver (Celuch and Walz, 2020), and *engagement*, which refers to customer engagement (Zakiah et al., 2023) as a "state of mind that motivates customers to adopt company-supporting behaviors" (Abbas et al., 2018). Under **process- or product-related** feedback antecedent mediators, we list *perceived values and benefits.* This term refers either to guest satisfaction (Assiouras et al., 2019) or to perceived service quality (Aljarah and Alrawashdeh, 2020).

Moderators of the performance outcomes of feedback (Figure 1.3, Section III.)

Personal/individual moderators of the performance outcomes of feedback are *brand knowledge*, which is also positioned as an antecedent of feedback (Liljedal, 2016); *gender* (Sangroya et al., 2021); *and global connectedness,* which refers to individuals' relationships with the globalized world (Roy Bhattacharjee et al., 2023). **Relational moderators** of the performance outcomes of feedback are *information credibility*, or the perceived quality of the information (Abro et al., 2020). Credible information is "information which has several supports" (Abro et al., 2020). **Process- or product-related** moderators of the feedback outcomes are *feedback type,* which refers either to the source of the feedback, i.e., peer feedback (Zhang and Ma, 2021), or to positive feedback (Furenes et al., 2018). *Innovativeness* refers to a user's skills and attitude toward participating in product development (Windasari and Visita, 2019). *Process enjoyment* describes participants' psychological state during the activity (Furenes et al., 2018). Finally, *product complexity* examines the level of perceived consumer competence to co-create (Liljedal, 2016).

Mediators of the performance outcomes of feedback (Figure 1.3, Section IV.)

Personal/individual mediators of the performance outcomes of feedback include the following. First, the *disconfirmation of expectations* occurs when an individual's initial expectations about a specific performance differ from his or her perceived performance (Piyathasanan et al., 2017). Positive disconfirmation drives satisfaction. The *need for* *recognition* is an individual characteristic of the co-creator (Piyathasanan et al., 2017) involving the “need to have one’s self, one’s works, and other things associated with one’s self, known and approved by others” (Schaffer, 1953). Finally, p*sychological ownership* describes a feeling of possessiveness regarding the target product (Roy Bhattacharjee et al., 2023). **Relational mediators** of the performance outcomes of feedback are *brand engagement* (Furenes et al., 2017, Sangroya et al., 2021), which is defined as “the level of an individual customer’s motivational, brand-related & context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional & behavioral activity in brand interactions” (Hollebeek, 2011), and *psychological distance*, which “refers to the subjective experience of something or someone being close to or far from the self” (Zhang and Ma, 2021).

Process or product-related mediators of the performance outcomes of feedback include *communication quality*, which refers to the perceived quality of the information exchange for the consumers (Kim et al., 2022), as well as *corporate actions* such as networking, corporate communications, and the service process (Sandbacka et al., 2013). *Customer citizenship behavio*r involves a set of actions that are not part of prompt core service delivery (Arica and Çorbaci, 2020) but that help both the receiver and the provider in the long term (Groth, 2005). *The organizational response* is the reaction of the firm to a service failure or negative customer feedback *(Abro et al., 2020)*. *Perceived values or benefits* are utilitarian values, which provide substantial gains (relevant information about product experiences, promotions, or value for money (Kim et al., 2022)) to the individual, and hedonic values, which relate to the psychological satisfaction derived from community interactions (Guo and Li, 2021).

Agenda for future research

In this paper, we performed a systematic literature review of the influencing factors and consequences of feedback, with a particular focus on brand outputs and co-creation. First, we formalized the definition of actionable feedback. Then, based on the systematic analysis of 73 journal articles from the past two decades involving the intersections of feedback, branding, and co-creation, we provided comprehensive statistics on geographical and industry distributions, adjacent theories, journal rankings, sample sizes, and methods used. We found that most of the studies were B2C related (mainly leisure and hospitality) and empirical based on social exchange and customer citizenship theory. We also identified that the antecedents, mediators and moderators used by scholars can be divided into three groups: personal/individual, relational and process/product related. Similarly, we classified performance outcomes into brand-related, value proposition-related, and process-related outcomes. Our findings are visually presented in two tables and two figures to support scholars in finding their own path for future research; nevertheless, in this section, we provide our own recommendations.

We recommend including additional demographic data in future studies. It is important to note that gender exerts a significant influence on engagement in customer citizenship behavior (Balaji, 2014). The moderating role of gender has been studied extensively in the literature (Setyowati et al., 2023, Harymawan et al., 2023, Mensah and Boachie, 2023). Gender moderates the feedback effect, but whether it moderates or mediates the impact of antecedents on feedback should be further explored. Current studies also need more information about the mediating or moderating impact of age groups and education. Thus, future research should explore this topic further. We also recommend studying how environmental characteristics influence the feedback process: examples could include the service sector versus production (manufacturing), the lucrative commercial situation versus struggling businesses, the profitability level of the category, or even the overall business ecosystem.

Adding different industries and other geographic regions would also contribute to the generalization of emerging theories. For example, although Western Europe is well covered in feedback-related research, Eastern Europe needs more representation in the literature. Although market orientation is applicable in transitioning economies, similar to Western Europe (Hooley et al., 2000), there are sociopolitical (Kornai, 2016) and economic developmental differences (Karo and Kattel, 2015) compared to Western economies. Therefore, we recommend exploring feedback-related processes in African, Eastern European, and South American companies.

Based on the literature, we identified *trust* as a relational antecedent of feedback. We recommend further studies on feedback-trust relations. One direction is to investigate how trust can mediate or moderate the influence of feedback on a brand outcome (i.e., brand equity). The second is to investigate how feedback can influence trust, similar to studies of the impact of credible online reviews (Tran et al., 2022). Among the 73 analyzed articles, we found only one recent study in which the impact of feedback on trust was explored in an online trading platform context (Liu et al., 2023). The rationale for this recommendation is that negotiation theories often link cooperation and trust (Ross and LaCroix, 1996). Customers are willing to promote service innovation if perceived support or trust is present (Rubio et al., 2021), and brand trust exerts an impact on purchase intentions (Husain et al., 2022).

We also recommend exploring the importance of feedback on brand preference and brand equity and deepening the understanding of the impact of feedback on brand value. Several brand-related antecedents and brand outcomes have been analyzed in the literature; among those, brand avoidance has been studied in the telecom context (Abro et al., 2020), but we did not find empirical data for brand preference concerning feedback. The influence of feedback on brand value has been shown in the banking (Chahal and Bala, 2017) and IT sectors (France et al., 2020). Nevertheless, we need to gain knowledge of this phenomenon in other industries. Moreover, examining the specific impact of feedback exchange, we could not find evidence of a strong influence on brand value, as it was not proven that the feedback element of the co-creation process exerts any positive impact on the perceived quality, emotional, price, or social values related to the brand in a B2C environment (France et al., 2020). Furthermore, we did not find brand equity among the variables in the studied literature. In addition to discussing brand value, brand equity, and feedback, we need more information about the potential negative impact of ignoring or not reacting appropriately to consumer feedback. Therefore, future studies should define and validate models in which feedback and the reaction to the feedback influence brand-related measures.

Feedback is a relevant element of the firm-to-firm relationship, as it plays a similar role in firm-to-customer or individual-to-individual relations (Rubio et al., 2021). However, the literature has focused primarily on business-to-consumer (B2C) examinations. Therefore, we recommend exploring feedback constructs in the B2B environment. The exploratory nature of the recommended path suggests the use of inductive qualitative methods (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). Within that approach, a multiple case study would enable the researcher to examine phenomena in context (Eisenhardt et al., 2016).

Additionally, we recommend conducting further quantitative studies on B2B feedback processes. According to the resource-based view (Wernerfelt, 1984), firm characteristics influence how information is used. Therefore, future research should also consider different firm characteristics. Mintz and Currim (2013) suggest using company size by the number of employees, ownership type, chief marketing officers' presence, business performance relative to competitors, goods versus service business, and B2B versus B2C business relations.

The main theory used in B2C studies related to feedback and co-creation is social exchange theory (Table 1), which assumes that such interactions occur even without financial benefits (Assiouras et al., 2019). However, in the B2B context, it is challenging to assume a lack of monetary motivation. The existence of monetary motivations highlights a new potential research aspect of the B2B feedback process, and future studies need to examine the validity of social exchange theory or citizenship behavior versus the resource-based view and negotiation theories. As certain variables are positioned in different roles in the feedback processes (i.e., attitude, engagement, perceived values, brand outcomes), we propose an experimental design approach to test the usage of the same variables in multiple positions in one model and to test the impact of the multiple occurrences of feedback, i.e., feedback on the feedback.

Managerial contributions

Employing data-driven decision-making contributes to higher productivity and profitability than those of one's competitors (McAfee and Brynjolfsson, 2012). However, data utilization requires technological, organizational, and cultural adoption from the firm (McAfee and Brynjolfsson, 2012). According to our definition, feedback is also essential actionable data for companies. The value of such data depends on the absorption capacity of the firm (Keszey, 2011) and what can be triggered if feedback-related processes are present (Gremyr et al., 2022). Therefore, it is imperative to approach feedback-related processes systematically. While established processes often handle product-related codified feedback, service-related, personalized feedback processes are often missing (Gremyr et al., 2022). Leaders should thoroughly understand how feedback works and the potential technological, organizational, and cultural aspects of the feedback process.

To support that understanding, we provide a structure of the potential antecedents of feedback. Depending on the context, managers can acknowledge or select from the individual/personal or relational antecedents or even influence or decide upon the product- or process-related antecedents. For example, a firm can select from whom to accept feedback but can also improve the feedback process by offering a mechanism that encourages feedback providers. By selecting the antecedents used for feedback, managers can better control the cost of the feedback process.

Although the primary benefit of feedback derives from leveraging data, feedback influences several brand outputs and value proposition outputs as well. Therefore, to understand the total benefit of the feedback process, managers should supplement the value of the feedback data with the value of those outputs. For managers, it is also essential to be aware of feedback performance outcomes, as they not only represent benefits but can also produce risk if ignored or mishandled. For example, feedback can change purchase intention and influence perceived quality value (Liljedal, 2016). To be able to read and interpret the outcomes from feedback processes, managers must be aware of the moderators and mediators as well, and we provide a structure for attaining such knowledge in this study.

Limitations

Despite its merit, we acknowledge that our work has some limitations. The data collection was limited to Q1-Q3 articles in the Web of Science and Scopus databases. Other sources (e.g., industry reports, textbooks, Google Scholar database) were excluded from our search, as were conference contributions and articles from Q4 journals. Another limitation is the keywords used. We examined articles by the search term criteria of feedback, co-creation, and brand. Synonyms of those search words and other search words were not included. Further search criteria could be added in future studies to expand the results.

The analysis focused on providing a conceptual overview of the topic and discovering how the influencing factors and consequences of feedback have been addressed in the literature. We must acknowledge that the rich literature provides a vast range of findings from different angles, but it was not our objective to provide an extensive description of those findings. Similarly, we cannot report all the different variables used in the studies. Rather, we had to follow a specific grouping and synthesizing logic, which the authors arbitrarily designed. We hope to provide helpful directions for future research, although the related section contains only the most relevant concepts and ideas from the authors' point of view. We recommend that researchers explore and identify further opportunities based on the figures included, especially by adding further mediators and moderators to the research agenda.

STUDY 2: THE STRATEGIC ARCHITECTURE OF B2B FEEDBACK: A RESOURCE-BASED VIEW ASSETS, DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES AND SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY EXAMINATION OF HEALTHCARE MARKET SUPPLIERS

This work constitutes an extended dissertation version of a manuscript intended for journal submission, enabling a fuller exposition of methodological procedures and a more granular presentation of findings than a journal article would permit. The authors of this article are László Molnár, Tamara Keszey, and Moreno Frau.

Abstract

Feedback is widely recognized as a driver of learning, innovation, and relationship development, yet it's functioning within business-to-business (B2B) contexts, particularly in regulated and high-stakes industries, remains insufficiently understood. This study explores how suppliers in the medical device and pharmaceutical sectors receive, interpret, and utilize customer feedback, focusing exclusively on the supplier perspective. Healthcare markets create a uniquely complex feedback environment due to professional gatekeeping, multi-layered value chains, and regulatory restrictions, all of which shape how suppliers access and make sense of market signals (McDermott and Kearney, 2025). Drawing on qualitative information from senior executives across Eastern European markets, we examine how suppliers perceive feedback, how they filter it through organizational routines, and how they translate it into strategic and relational value. Using the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Wernerfelt, 1984), we conceptualize feedback as a potential organizational resource that contributes to capability development, while Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964a) illuminates the relational and reciprocal dynamics that influence suppliers' willingness to act on feedback. Our analysis detects a set of feedback-related capabilities, asset characteristics, and value dimensions, as well as novel interconnections - including the roles of authenticity, diversity, and quantity - that shape how suppliers transform feedback into

actionable outcomes. The study promotes a more complete understanding of feedback as both a strategic resource and a social exchange mechanism in B2B markets, offering theoretical contributions to industrial marketing research and practical guidance for managing feedback in complex, regulated environments.

Introduction

Feedback plays an important role in influencing organizational learning, innovation, and customer relationships. In the literature, customer feedback is broadly defined as information consumers provide to sellers about products or services (Guo and Li, 2021), or as a communication process in which the sender evaluates the receiver's output (Dargahi and Namin, 2020). It encompasses both solicited and unsolicited input aimed at service improvement (Yi and Gong, 2013), and varies in format, ranging from codified, system-generated data to personalized, human-to-human exchanges (Gremyr et al., 2022). As such, feedback is more recognized not only as a transactional mechanism but as a relational and strategic asset (Hanssens and Pauwels, 2016, Kohtamäki et al., 2021).

In B2B contexts, feedback is often embedded within dyadic supplier–customer relationships, playing a role in brand development (Sandbacka et al., 2013), innovation capability (Nathai-Balkissoon et al., 2017), and co-creation processes (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). However, while feedback is acknowledged as a driver of customer satisfaction and trust (Murphy and Sashi, 2018, Pavlou, 2002), its processual dynamics - how it is initiated, interpreted, and acted upon - remain underexamined, particularly in regulated industries such as healthcare.

The medical device sector offers a unique B2B environment determined by strict regulatory systems (EU MDR 2017/745), complex value chains, and constrained marketing channels (McDermott and Kearney, 2025). These conditions alter traditional feedback loops, as healthcare professionals often act as gatekeepers with elevated decision-making power (Dubois and Singh, 2009). Moreover, brand sensitivity in this context is influenced not only by B2B buyer preferences but also by end-user perceptions, creating a layered feedback ecosystem (Bilro et al., 2023, Brown et al., 2012). The medical device value chain typically includes manufacturers, importers (who often hold market registrations), wholesalers, retailers (e.g., pharmacies and device shops), and institutional users such as hospitals and nursing homes. This study concentrates on manufacturers or importers as sellers, where the primary business interaction involves order–delivery or tender–delivery processes. Purchase decisions in these exchanges are shaped by multiple factors beyond price. Brand sensitivity in B2B markets, though generally less pronounced than in B2C (Brown et al., 2012), can gain strategic significance when end-user preferences strongly influence purchasing behavior (Bilro et al., 2023). In such cases, supplier brand strength may reduce the need for high service levels toward B2B clients, as brand-driven demand sustains transactions despite delays or limited responsiveness. Clients often resell supplier-branded products, unlike other industries where B2B buyers integrate raw or semi-finished goods into their own branded offerings.

Although feedback has been extensively examined across consumer behavior, service quality, and organizational learning domains, its role within business-to-business (B2B) contexts remains comparatively underexplored (Molnár et al., 2024). Existing literature tends to emphasize feedback in B2C environments, leaving unanswered questions about how it functions within inter-organizational relationships, particularly in regulated and high-stakes industries such as healthcare and pharmaceuticals (Molnár et al., 2024). As highlighted by Bilro et al. (2023), B2B customer behavior - including feedback mechanisms - requires further empirical investigation to capture its complexity and strategic relevance.

To advance understanding of how feedback operates within B2B relationships, particularly in regulated healthcare markets, this study examines the organizational processes through which feedback is initiated, interpreted, and translated into action. Feedback in these settings often crosses multiple organizational boundaries, involves diverse actors, and is shaped by both strategic and relational considerations (Schruijer, 2020). Yet, little is known about how firms make sense of such feedback or how it contributes to capability development and value creation (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). That is why we approach market players who are able to provide direct operational experience on the subject.

Guided by this motivation, we draw insights from senior executives in medical device and pharmaceutical firms, operating in several Eastern European countries. Their perspectives illuminate how feedback is embedded in everyday interactions, how it is filtered through organizational routines, and how it shapes supplier–customer relationships over time. To interpret these dynamics, we mobilize the Resource-Based View (RBV) to understand how feedback functions as a potential organizational resource, and Social Exchange Theory (SET) to explore the relational and reciprocal elements of feedback interactions. These theoretical lenses help reveal how firms perceive, value, and operationalize feedback in ways that extend beyond transactional information exchange.

By examining feedback from supplier viewpoints, the study uncovers a set of constructs and interconnections that highlight the strategic, relational, and capability-building roles of feedback in B2B contexts. This dual approach provides a more solid base for understanding how feedback processes unfold and why they matter for organizational performance and relationship development.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. We first present the theoretical background, followed by the empirical findings, including the identified constructs and their connections. We then discuss the study's theoretical and managerial implications and conclude with limitations and future research directions.

Theoretical background

Research on B2B feedback has traditionally emphasized managerial responses, supplier strategies, and performance outcomes, while giving limited attention to how suppliers themselves interpret and act upon the feedback they receive (Abraham et al., 2023, Molnár et al., 2024). This gap is particularly salient in regulated sectors such as medical devices and pharmaceuticals, where feedback is not merely evaluative but deeply intertwined with compliance, operational coordination, and long-term relational stability (Bakalo and Bogale, 2024, Han et al., 2024). To address this gap, our study draws on two complementary theoretical lenses, Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Exchange Theory (SET), to examine how suppliers perceive, process, and leverage customer feedback.

RBV provides an explanation of how firms develop and sustain competitive advantage through internal resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991, Peteraf, 1993). It emphasizes that strategically valuable, rare, inimitable, and well-organized resources (VRIO) form the basis of long-term performance (Barney, 1991). Feedback, when viewed through this lens, becomes more than a communication mechanism: it functions as an input into organizational learning, capability development, and adaptive decision-making (Teece et al., 1997, Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). Suppliers that can systematically collect, interpret, and integrate customer feedback may transform it into a dynamic capability that enhances responsiveness, product quality, and operational alignment. In this sense, feedback acts as a resource that supports continuous refinement of internal processes and strategic routines (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003).

SET complements this perspective by focusing on the relational and reciprocal nature of interorganizational interactions (Blau, 1964b). Social exchange is characterized as a voluntary process in which parties evaluate the expected benefits and costs of engaging with one another (Homans, 1958, Homans, 1961). SET posits that relationships are sustained when interactions generate perceived value, fairness, and mutual benefit (Blau, 1964b, Cook et al., 2013). In B2B contexts, feedback is inherently relational: suppliers interpret customer input not only as information but also as a signal of commitment, trust, and future cooperation (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). The willingness of customers to provide constructive feedback - and the willingness of suppliers to act on it - reflects expectations of reciprocity and long-term partnership value (Gounaris and Almoraish, 2024).

Integrating RBV and SET offers a more comprehensive understanding of B2B feedback than either theory alone (Palmatier et al., 2007). RBV explains how feedback contributes to capability development and strategic advantage (Teece et al., 1997), while SET illuminates the relational conditions under which feedback is exchanged, interpreted, and valued (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Recent research suggests that combining resource-based and relational perspectives provides deeper insight into how firms leverage interorganizational interactions for performance gains (Palmatier et al., 2007, Krasnikov and Jayachandran, 2008). In the context of feedback, this dual-theoretical approach reveals how suppliers evaluate the informational, operational, and relational benefits of feedback, and how these evaluations influence their responsiveness and long-term engagement with customers. It also enables the incorporation of emergent constructs such as authenticity (understood as a relational asset that enhances credibility, so far only in B2C relations (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010)) and enablement, conceptualized as a dynamic capability that strengthens organizational adaptability in exchange environments (Teece, 2014).

Despite the relevance of these theoretical perspectives, recent research continues to emphasize customer-side outcomes, with limited attention to how B2B suppliers themselves interpret and experience feedback (Gounaris and Almoraish, 2024). This gap is particularly pronounced in the medical and pharmaceutical trading sector, where suppliers operate under strict regulatory constraints and must balance commercial objectives with compliance obligations (Bos, 2022). Understanding how suppliers navigate these tensions when receiving and acting on feedback is essential for advancing theory and practice in B2B relationship management.

To address this gap, the present study employs a qualitative research design based on seven semi-structured interviews (Frau et al., 2022) with professionals in the medical and pharmaceutical trading sector. The qualitative design follows established methodological guidance for rigorous inductive research (Gioia et al., 2013) and aligns with contemporary perspectives on transparency and interpretive rigor in qualitative inquiry (Pratt et al., 2020). Semi-structured interviews allow respondents to articulate their perspectives in depth while providing enough structure to ensure comparability across cases (Vaivio, 2012). The analysis follows a hybrid inductive–deductive approach: inductive coding enables the emergence of context-specific insights (Charmaz, 2006), while deductive reasoning grounded in RBV and SET ensures theoretical coherence and facilitates the identification of constructs that bridge resource-based and relational dimensions of feedback (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). This methodological approach aligns with calls for richer, context-sensitive research in B2B marketing (Easton, 2010) and supports the development of a theoretically grounded yet empirically nuanced understanding of supplier-side feedback mechanisms.

Methodology

This research employs a multiple-case study design (Frau et al., 2022), which is particularly effective for exploring preliminary research questions (Yin, 2003). The approach provides a deep empirical lens into the intricacies of social phenomena (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Additionally, studying multiple cases enables the validation of emerging insights across diverse contexts, thereby strengthening theoretical generalizability (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

Respondents

This study derives its insights from firms operating within the pharma/medical device trading industry. While traditionally pharmaceuticals is a prosperous and stable sector of the world economy (Terblanche and Burgess, 2011), the medical device industry is gaining increasing importance within the healthcare sector (Maresova et al., 2015). Although the pharmaceutical and medical device sectors hold considerable importance within the global economy (Bhardwaj, 2024), they have received relatively limited scholarly attention concerning B2B feedback mechanisms (Molnár et al., 2024). We further narrow down our scope to medical device and pharmacy trading activities by having high ranked respondents as representatives of suppliers, who are receiving the feedback.

In the context of this study, supplier-side managers are defined as those responsible for the provision of pharmaceutical and medical device products to various market actors, including distributors, wholesalers, long-term care institutions, and hospitals. It is essential to emphasize that such transactions frequently occur within frameworks governed by public procurement mechanisms or reimbursement schemes, thereby involving public funds. In many cases, these processes are directly linked to municipal authorities or national entities such as social security systems or statutory health insurance funds.

This study employed a purposive case selection strategy, guided by the expectation that the chosen cases would yield theoretically significant insights and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of conceptual understanding (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). To minimize the risk of selection bias within the medical device/pharma trading industry, we applied predefined inclusion criteria (Frau et al., 2022): we selected firms a) of all sizes, to ensure that we examine small, medium and large players in terms of revenue but also taking into account the size of the organization via the number of people employed, b) that represent the geographical diversity across Eastern Europe c) covering both medical device trading as well as pharmaceutical suppliers. We further diversified our sample by including not just medical device manufacturers and wholesalers, but also pharmaceutical distributors to support robust theory building and enhance the generalizability of the findings (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, Yin, 2003). Our selection process began with a pool of fourteen firms recommended by industry experts in the medical device area. We concluded data collection after seven cases upon reaching theoretical saturation (Saunders et al., 2018). The respondents were gathered from Czech Republic (1), Slovak Republic (1), Hungary (2), Slovenia (2), and Bulgaria (1). For anonymity reasons we exclude the country of origin from the overview of the case studies (Table 2.1). To define the size of the firm we used external databases to map the revenue and the people employed using the SME classification of the European Commission (2003).

Table 2.1: Overview of the supplier case studies. Source: Authors.

Case	Company Description	Size	Informant	Interview duration
Supplier 1	Medical device distributor	large	Business Area Manager	0:57
Supplier 2	Representative of medical device manufacturer	medium	Sales Manager	0:53
Supplier 3	Representative of pharmaceutical manufacturer	large	Managing Director	1:04
Supplier 4	Representative of medical device manufacturer	large	Sales Manager	1:11
Supplier 5	Medical device distributor	small	Commercial Manager	0:51
Supplier 6	Representative of medical device manufacturer	large	Sales Manager	0:59
Supplier 7	Medical device distributor	medium	Managing Director	1:01

Data collection

We integrated data from multiple sources (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, Miles and Huberman, 1994) to avoid impression management, information bias (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) and retrospective sense making (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews (Frau et al., 2022), ensuring that respondents possessed comprehensive and contextually relevant knowledge of the subject matter and demonstrated a willingness to engage in substantive discussion (Kumar et al., 1993). These interviews followed a semi-structured protocol consisting of five main groups of questions designed to explore their view on the feedback process that occurs in their daily operation. The interview questions included: The respondents' attitude towards feedback / Information about frequency and the process / Handling and responsiveness / Feedback value and strategic impact / Roles and responsibilities in connection to feedback. We included the interview guideline in Annex 1. The interviews were conducted in English, which was not the native language of either the respondents or the interviewer.

All interviews were audio-recorded and auto-transcribed. The respondents had the opportunity to check and suggest corrections to the transcripts. A total of seven interviews were conducted between July 2023 and December 2023, with durations ranging from 51 to 71 minutes. Data collection was conducted till theoretical saturation (Saunders et al., 2018). During analysis, recurring patterns such as "share feedback internally" consistently reappeared, and no new conceptual categories were identified. This consistency across cases reinforced our empirical confidence in the adequacy of the collected data (Saunders et al., 2018).

As a secondary information source we used publicly available third party information about the participating firms' revenues and number of employees. This validated external data was appropriate to identify the size/complexity of the respondent's firm, reducing the selection bias.

While the study did not present any ethical concerns, participating medical device /pharma firms opted to remain anonymous to ensure that the collected data could not be attributed to any specific organization. To safeguard confidentiality no reference that can be used to track back the respondent has been provided (Coffelt, 2017).

Analysis

For the coding we have used a hybrid approach (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) combining inductive and deductive coding in order to secure both explanatory depth and theoretical alignment (Proudfoot, 2023). We utilized this approach to have deeper insights by blending theory-driven and data-driven analysis, encouraging flexibility and adaptability during coding and enhancing validity through triangulation of methods (Proudfoot, 2023).

First, supplier data were initially analyzed using an inductive coding approach. Subsequently, a deductive lens was applied, aligning the emergent observations with six predefined feedback categories conceptualized as assets within the Resource-Based View (RBV) framework. This deductive categorization was successfully implemented; however, certain inductively derived codes - such as feedback authenticity - did not conform to the existing RBV structure, thereby revealing emergent categories not previously captured by the framework. These findings suggest the presence of novel conceptual elements with potential to enrich the prevailing theoretical discourse.

Thereafter we repeated the deductive approach collecting the first codes into descriptions of the feedback process elements as Dynamic Capabilities within the Resource Based View (RBV) framework, followed by the identification of unique insights that point toward possible theoretical extensions.

In the next analytical step, the dataset was re-coded using constructs derived from Social Exchange Theory (SET), allowing for an alternative interpretive lens. Upon completion of these three analytical stages, an integrative mapping process was conducted to examine and visualize the interrelationships among elements emerging from the RBV and SET frameworks.

We have used NVivo 15 software for analysis, following the above mentioned inductive deductive logic in a three-stage coding process (Frau et al., 2022) relevant to each theoretical framework , which progressed from specific to generalized codes (Cabiddu et al., 2019). To mitigate confounding bias, two co-authors were tasked with organizing the emerging codes and their interrelations. Each coding stage involved independent analysis by the coders, followed by a comparison of their classifications to assess coding reliability. Finally, to enhance methodological rigor, we adhered to the qualitative research criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 2016), thereby strengthening the validity of our findings and minimizing potential biases related to information, selection, and confounding.

Data analysis using RBV Asset perspective

A hybrid coding strategy was adopted to guide the data analysis process (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In the initial phase, an inductive approach was applied to allow themes to emerge organically from the interview transcripts. Each of the seven cases was analyzed independently, and a data-driven coding framework was used to cluster sentences and paragraphs into thematically coherent categories (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These first-order codes were subsequently consolidated into eighteen second-order categories, with the intention of aligning them with established constructs found in the extant literature.

In the third stage, these second-order codes were systematically compared with existing theoretical classifications to explore how company-related information may function as a strategic asset. The final phase of analysis involved deductive reasoning, whereby second-order codes were synthesized into higher-order aggregate dimensions that revealed underlying relational patterns within the data. These dimensions were refined and validated through engagement with relevant literature, enabling the integration of inductive insights with deductive theory-building (Saldaña, 2021). The predefined asset characteristics included value, depth, quantity, quality, tacitness, sharedness, and diversity, as illustrated in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Data analysis process – RBV, feedback assets, supplier view. Source: Authors.

First Coding Stage	Second Coding Stage	Third Coding Stage
Feedback has positive impact on brand value Feedback builds trust Feedback improves cooperation Feedback is a good communication tools	Feedback relational value Feedback operational value	Feedback Value
Feedback content size Feedback complexity Feedback target audience number Feedback from different sources	Content depths Source depths	Feedback Depth
Solicited feedback timing Standard feedback regularity Actionable suggestions Structured vs. unstructured feedback	Feedback timeliness Feedback processability	Feedback Quality
High amount of feedback Number of verbal comments Number of questions answered Response rate	Volume of the feedback Relative volume	Feedback Quantity
Informal environment drives different discussion Customer insult has to be translated Missing information without F2F interaction	Environmental que Emotional element Nonverbal information	Feedback Tacitness
Supplier thinks that there is mutual understanding Information gap between third party and customer Unrealistic Feedback	Iterative feedback Extent of realism	Feedback Sharedness
Positive / negative feedback Collector and provider of the feedback Status of the respondent Negotiation starting / ending feedback Collecting channel of the feedback Data collection method	Valence Feedback source Feedback methodology	Feedback Diversity
Honest unsolicited or solicited input Respondent is not aware of giving feedback Fake feedback to avoid decision Use feedback to create artificial focus Customer is creating pressure via feedback	Feedback Honesty Agenda behind the feedback	Feedback Authenticity

However, not all inductively derived codes could be accommodated within these predefined categories. Through iterative analysis, recurring semantic patterns were identified that led to the emergence of novel theoretical insights (Kennedy and Thornberg, 2018). Most notably, the construct of authenticity was identified as a previously underexplored phenomenon in the literature. The richness of the dataset further enabled the development of a preliminary taxonomy of authenticity, offering a nuanced conceptual contribution.

Data analysis using RBV dynamic capabilities perspective

A similar coding logic was applied in a parallel stream of analysis, wherein first-order codes were mapped to fourteen intermediate categories. Several of these were partially aligned with existing constructs in the literature. In the final theory-building stage, these codes were organized into five core feedback-related capabilities: gather feedback, integrate feedback, analyze feedback, share feedback, and act on feedback.

Table 2.3: Data analysis process – RBV, feedback dynamic capabilities, supplier view. Source: Authors.

First Coding Stage	Second Coding Stage	Third Coding Stage
Active collection from all sources Register feedback Ask for clarification Check if the customer is right	Feedback collection methods Feedback validation process	Gather feedback
Categorize ad hoc feedback Feedback is allocated to the right department	Categorization of feedback Allocate responsible to handle	Integrate feedback
Compare with competition Compare with ideal status Analyze feedback reports Decide where the problem occurs	Compare to benchmark Identify root cause	Analyze feedback
Share feedback learning internally Adverse effect feedback has to be reported	Internal sharing External sharing	Share feedback
Change due to feedback Special action on drugs due to regulation Manage the right answer to the customer Thank the feedback	Action followed the feedback Answer the feedback	Act on feedback
Feedback collection responsibilities are set Feedback process is trained Incentive system for feedback collection Discussion preparation process CRM usage Customer categorization tool Build relationship Daily contact with customer	People enablement Process Enablement Technology enablement Customer enablement	Enable feedback

A substantial number of observations, however, could not be classified within these five categories. Accordingly, we propose the addition of a sixth dimension, enable feedback, to account for enabling mechanisms that support the feedback process but are not directly tied to the operational execution of feedback activities (Table 2.3).

Data analysis using SET value perspective

Applying the same coding logic, we consolidated the first-order codes into fifteen second-order categories. During the theory-building phase, these categories were subsequently integrated into a set of established constructs drawn from the literature: economic value, relational value, informational value, social value, emotional value, reciprocal value, and fairness value (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4: Data analysis process – Social exchange theory constructs, supplier view. Source: Authors.

First Coding Stage	Second Coding Stage	Third Coding Stage
Customer seeks only economic value Right usage of the product as a feedback process outcome Development idea and goals derived from feedback	Customer Centric Value	Economic Value
Future business potential identification Process simplification input	Business Growth	
Internal mindset change Regulatory compliance	Organizational Alignment	
Being open to feedback increases trust	Trust	Relational Value
Feedback process demonstrates cooperation	Cooperation	
Knowledge the customer gained from supplier Supplier knowledge on customer expectations Status understanding Future planning input	Outside in knowledge	Informational Value
Information about employee competence Understanding how big the problem is	Inside out knowledge	
Positive feedback is an opportunity to celebrate Feedback impacts working atmosphere	Recognition and Celebration	Social Value
Brand reputation is built by cooperation Feedback process influences brand image	Reputation and Image enhancement	
Customer emotional benefit of sharing opinion Feedback fatigue	Expression and emotional engagement	Emotional Value
Customer loyalty Customer satisfaction	Relational Outcomes	
Dialogue helps to define common objectives	Mutual Objectives	Reciprocal Value
Customer feels obliged to answer	Obligations	
Dialogue improves compromise	Compromise	Fairness Value
Dialogue improves flexibility in both sides	Flexibility	

Findings from the supplier perspective

Feedback asset attributes (RBV)

The Resourced-based view theory seeks to answer the question of how firms can develop a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). The Resource-Based View argues that firms gain sustainable competitive advantage by utilizing resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) (Barney, 1991). In B2B contexts, feedback from customers, partners, and stakeholders can be seen as one such resource (Molnár et al., 2024), and feedback can fit the VRIN requirements. Feedback is valuable as it helps firms improve offerings, tailor services, and innovate - directly impacting performance (Saraf et al., 2022). Rare: Deep, honest feedback from long-term B2B relationships is hard to replicate, especially if built on trust and shared history (Ha, 2020, Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Inimitable: The context-specific nature of feedback (e.g., industry nuances, relationship dynamics) makes it difficult for competitors to copy (Dyer and Singh, 1998). Non-substitutable: No other resource can fully replace the insights gained from direct customer experience and expectations (Triviño, 2024).

Feedback represents a form of knowledge derived directly from customers, serving as a critical input for organizational learning and strategic decision-making (Molnár et al., 2024, Skogsberg and Wedberg, 2019, Nasr et al., 2014). In this context, feedback is conceptualized as an intangible asset held by the firm, characterized by a range of distinct attributes. Drawing on the literature review conducted by Tamara Keszey (2021), we can group these attributes into coherent categories, including value, depth, quantity and quality, tacitness, sharedness, and diversity. Building on this framework and supported by our empirical dataset, we propose the addition of authenticity as a further essential attribute, reflecting the genuineness and credibility of the feedback received. The feedback asset attributes are summarized in Table 2.5.

Value of the feedback, supplier view

Value in relation to feedback pertains to the extent to which a given piece of feedback is perceived as meaningful or beneficial, based on its positive impact on a specific participant within the feedback process (Lipnevich and Panadero, 2021). Within our dataset, this dimension is conceptualized by framing feedback as a corporate asset (Rusthollkarhu et al., 2022, Tang and Marinova, 2020). For instance, one participant emphasized the reputational stakes in the pharmaceutical sector: "*So I think the pharma industry especially has to listen [to] feedback very well because in [the] other hand, the reputation can disappear very easily*" (Supplier 3). Another respondent underscored the fragility and importance of trust: "*Very important. To be [a] trusted partner or trustful supplier. It's a long way to build it and very fast way to use it*" (Supplier 2). These perspectives illustrate what we define as relational dimensions of feedback value. In addition to relational considerations, feedback also holds operational value, particularly in fostering communication and cooperation. As our interviewee noted, "*And also it is an opportunity to explain the situation. Also opportunity, for example, in this case, if I give the feedback, it sets the start to generate the dialogue with the customer who give that feedback*" (Supplier 2). These insights reflect the role of feedback in initiating dialogue and enhancing collaborative engagement.

Depth of the feedback, supplier view

Feedback can also be evaluated based on its level of depth, which reflects how exhaustive or comprehensive the information provided is (Crespin-Mazet et al., 2019, Volkmar et al., 2022). Within our framework, we distinguish between two subcategories: content depth and source depth. Content depth refers to the extent to which the feedback explores the underlying issues, offering detailed insights. This dimension is relevant for both solicited and unsolicited feedback, as it captures the richness of the information regardless of how it was initiated. In contrast, source depth appeared in connection with solicited feedback. It pertains to the diversity and number of contributors through which the feedback attains the necessary level of richness. As one respondent noted: "*And then when we got this feedback, usually we get it some, let's say, if there is 40 listeners, let's say 95% of participants*" (Supplier 7), illustrating how broad participation enhances the perceived depth and reliability of the feedback.

Quantity of the feedback, supplier view

By quantity we see the angle of volume or amount of feedback (Marinova, 2004, Berghman et al., 2012). In this one we do not just examine the absolute quantity but also the relative quantity. Relative quantity is often linked to response rate as an important measurement of solicited feedback request success. In our analysis we realized that the quantity scale has got a negative angle as well, as one respondent, Supplier 2 mentioned: "*…because maybe for comparing the size is too many clients, too many feedbacks that is difficult to handle*". This observation highlights that quantity is not inherently beneficial, as excessive feedback may generate cognitive overload and operational strain. Moreover, high-volume feedback environments can reduce the organization's ability to process, prioritize, and act upon incoming information effectively. Consequently, quantity must be interpreted in relation to organizational capacity, resource availability, and the strategic purpose of the feedback system.

Quality of the feedback, supplier view

Quality, in the context of feedback, generally refers to the extent to which the information accurately, consistently, and in a timely manner reflects the behavior and sentiments of the respondent (Zahay et al., 2004). Within our B2B dataset, we identified two key dimensions that characterize feedback quality: timeliness and processability. Timeliness encompasses both the promptness of unsolicited feedback and the regularity of solicited feedback cycles. As one participant noted, "*The other way of the feedback that we organize, unfortunately, it is not a good thing to say that it's a regular year by year feedback session*" (Supplier 4), highlighting concerns around insufficient frequency and responsiveness in structured feedback mechanisms. Processability refers to the degree to which feedback can be immediately utilized. For feedback to be actionable, the information must be well-structured and clearly interpretable. This dimension underscores the importance of transforming raw input into insights that can directly inform decision-making and operational improvements. As Supplier 2 underlines the phenomenon as a potential problem source: "*many feedbacks, that is difficult to handle*". Our data also suggests that solicited feedback is typified by its structured temporal delivery and frequency, while unsolicited feedback is primarily characterized by its emergent and contextually timely nature.

Tacitness of the feedback, supplier view

Feedback Tacitness refers to the extent to which information is difficult to articulate, codify, or transfer across individuals or organizations (Cui and Wu, 2016). In our dataset, we identified three distinct dimensions of tacitness. First, environmental cue coding: This captures how the interpretation of feedback can vary depending on the context in which it is received. One respondent illustrated this by emphasizing the value of informal settings for client interaction: *"Informal, let's say, environments where you can also engage with clients - where you can invite them and have a chance to talk informally."*(Supplier 2). Secondly, emotional element: In B2B exchanges, it is crucial to discern the underlying meaning of feedback, especially when it is delivered under emotional strain. As one interviewee noted: *"When it's an emotional reaction or even an insult, you take your time to try to figure out what's behind it."*(Supplier 2) Thirdly, non-verbal information: Tacitness also arises when feedback is stripped of non-verbal cues, such as body language or facial expressions. This was frequently observed in remote communication scenarios: *"Many times it happened without a camera, just by phone or whatever. Then you miss one important thing - the body language and the personal relationship."*(Supplier 2*)*

Sharedness of the feedback, supplier view

Sharedness denotes the degree to which feedback is grounded in information or conditions - whether realistic or unrealistic - that are mutually acknowledged, accepted, or endorsed by all parties involved in the feedback exchange (Nasr et al., 2017). Our data revealed two primary sources contributing to this phenomenon. First, iterative feedback reflects a process in which the content is continuously clarified and aligned between the parties. This dynamic is often referred to as dialogue, allowing space for misunderstandings or differing interpretations to be addressed and resolved, as Supplier 3 explains: *"Because if it's a dialogue, there is a chance to discuss if there is any misunderstanding or different understanding because it should not be misunderstood*." Second, the extent of realism captures the degree to which feedback corresponds with actual conditions or whether the expectations embedded in the feedback are feasible. As one participant (Supplier 4) noted: "*Then, of course, we have to evaluate the situation. Is it a realistic feedback or not? … Somebody just complains about the service level because it's not 100%. … We know … we are a business-oriented and profit-oriented company. Honestly, we cannot make the goal as a 100% service level*."

Diversity of the feedback, supplier view

Diversity refers to the breadth of variation across multiple dimensions of the feedback process (Cui and Wu, 2016), including the source, communication channel, content, emotional valence, provider characteristics (such as type and status), and the tools employed for feedback collection (Pazio Rossiter and Bale, 2023). While originally conceptualized within educational contexts, this definition is equally applicable to B2B environments. Our data revealed several distinct subcategories within this framework. One key dimension is valence, which plays a central role in unsolicited feedback by signaling the emotional tone embedded in unstructured responses. As one participant observed: "*I really believe that most of the feedback came from the negative things*" (Supplier 4). In contrast, solicited feedback tends to be more structured and methodologically varied, shaped by differences in feedback sources, intended recipients, and the evaluative techniques applied; thus, we identified methodology and source as a sufficient descriptive code. A notable characteristic of unsolicited feedback is its temporal positioning within broader relational dynamics - particularly its timing in relation to ongoing negotiations (e.g., whether it occurs before or after a deal is finalized). This timing introduces a critical layer of diversity that influences both the interpretation and the strategic impact of the feedback. As Supplier 3 explained: "*When we are setting up any opportunities, we are asking continuously how we can help them, what support they would need. … And after the deal is closed, we're asking how satisfied they were. Is there anything we can improve in the process or anything we need to change because it does not work*?"

Table 2.5: Summary of the identified constructs, RBV feedback asset attributes, supplier view. Source: Authors

Construct	Definition	Illustrative quote
Feedback Value	An attribute denoting the extent to which a specific piece of feedback is perceived as meaningful or advantageous, based on its positive contribution to a particular participant within the feedback process.	Supplier 1: *"[feedback]…I think that for sure this is important and for our company extremely more important. While we are doing business in many other fields, which one employers to the other. So it is very important. And if you don't have... I always say that this feedback is also the connection with the customer".*
Feedback Depth	The extent to which feedback provides detailed, nuanced, and context-rich information to the receiver.	Supplier 7: "*And then when we got this feedback, usually we get it some, let's say, if there is 40 listeners, let's say 95 % of participants, they give us this feedback. And then we can from this is quite enough that we get some picture or some information what is relevant...."*
Feedback Quantity	Volume or amount of the received feedback.	Supplier 2: "*Too big when they didn't get the feedback because of the size, because maybe for comparing the size is too many clients, too many feedbacks that is difficult to handle."*
Feedback Quality	The accuracy, timeliness, and consistency of feedback as perceived by the receiver.	Supplier 3: "*I would change the feedback session, be more frequent almost after each step, which is we have always milestones in the project, but we have to execute in the milestone what we achieve….* "
Feedback Tacitness	The extent to which feedback is implicit, experience-based, and challenging for receivers to articulate or formalize.	Supplier 2: "*But many times happened without camera, many times happened just by phone or whatever. Then you miss one important thing, the body language and the personal relationship."*
Feedback Sharedness	Refers to the extent to which feedback is based on a piece of information or condition (i.e. realistic/non-realistic) that is collectively held, recognized, or endorsed by the parties in the feedback process.	Supplier 3: "*Because if it's a dialogue, there is a chance to discuss if there is any misunderstanding or different understanding because it should not be misunderstood."*
Feedback Diversity	Degree of variety of the source, channel, content, valence, provider (type and status), and tools used to collect the feedback.	Supplier 4: *"I really believe it that most of the feedback came from the negative things. It's a concern or complaint or something."* Supplier 1: "*It's one thing that I already mentioned. It's the reclamations, help to the customer, your survey, and sales reports each day, and telephone call calls from the customer service each day. These are the main sources."*
Feedback Authenticity	Refers to the degree to which feedback (solicited) is regarded as genuine, original, and aligned with its true nature or intended identity.	Supplier 3: "*And people, in my experience, not really honestly sharing the real feedback, especially in case of …. local [official] bodies, they're not really honest because they cannot*"

Authenticity of the feedback, supplier view

Authenticity in psychology refers to the degree to which something - be it a person, expression, or - is regarded as genuine, original, and aligned with its true nature or intended identity (Lehman et al., 2019, Newman, 2019). In interpersonal and evaluative contexts, it denotes the congruence between internal values and external expression, often implying honesty, integrity, and absence of pretense (Dammann et al., 2020).

The literature offers diverse perspectives on how buyer–supplier relationships in B2B contexts may diverge from mutually intended trajectories (Bilro et al., 2023). Discrepancies between anticipated and actual behaviors within these relationships can result in incoherence (Wang et al., 2010), whereby deviations - whether exceeding or falling short of expectations - introduce uncertainty and erode trust. Bargaining power, present on both sides of the exchange, plays a critical role in shaping purchasing decisions (Porter, 1997). Drawing on qualitative B2B feedback data and applying the asset-based lens of the Resource-Based View, this study identifies Feedback Authenticity as a salient construct. It captures the customer's capacity to influence negotiation outcomes without overtly exercising bargaining power or disrupting communicative coherence. While honest feedback and the presence of an underlying agenda were employed as secondary codes contributing to the construct of feedback authenticity, the concept itself remains underexplored in existing literature. To advance theoretical understanding and empirical investigation, we propose a taxonomy comprising five distinct levels of authenticity. This framework aims to capture the nuanced ways in which feedback may align - or misalign - with the genuine intentions, values, and communicative transparency of the provider, particularly within structured B2B interactions, as illustrated in Table 2.6.

Honest feedback

The degree of honesty in interorganizational relationships has been extensively examined in the literature (Steward et al., 2018, Bilro et al., 2023). In this study, we conceptualize honest feedback as the highest tier within the framework of feedback authenticity - defined by its genuineness, originality, and transparency. This form of feedback is distinguished by the absence of intent to distort or obscure the message's meaning, thereby preserving its integrity in communication.

Selective feedback

Existing literature offers substantial insight into organizational silence and the deliberate withholding of opinions (Brinsfield et al., 2009, Premeaux and Bedeian, 2003, Ferrin et al., 2007). Building on this foundation, we introduce the concept of selective feedback as a distinct communicative behavior. Positioned just below fully honest feedback in terms of authenticity, selective feedback is marked by a moderate level of intentional distortion. Although it may convey truthful elements, it remains incomplete. The feedback provider deliberately curates the information, prioritizing content that serves economic or strategic interests, rather than presenting a holistic or balanced perspective.

Table 2.6: Feedback authenticity taxonomy. Source: Authors.

Authenticity category	Definition	Illustrative quote
Honest feedback	Original, unsolicited or solicited input reflecting true experiences.	Supplier 5: *"(They) Are giving their opinion. Without realizing they are doing so. Even by complaining, they are still giving you a lot of information."*
Selective feedback	Truthful but limited in scope - important info withheld or downplayed.	Supplier 3: "*During the process, when we are setting up any opportunities, we are asking continuously how can to help them, what support they would need? How they can leverage our knowledge in their business opportunities."* / Supplier 6: *"They are spreading their willingness and objectives toward us. We see the situation like that, we are performing like that and we're expecting from you this and this and this."*
Politicized Feedback	Crafted to maintain relationships or avoid conflict	Supplier 3: "*And they were a little bit complaining that we overcomplicated the process. Too many hours they spent with us. Program does not work."* *"....... They did not want the program work, and therefore it was difficult. How can you give feedback to a client which just needs something to stick it, but not really to have successful project. Sometimes there are some clients which just working for the notes and not for the success"*.
Agenda Driven feedback	Tailored to influence vendor actions or decisions.	Supplier 6: "*And this is the role of the customer as well on the other side, to create the pressure on the other side and to be willing to agree on that condition."...* *"Some of these customers, they are providing some negotiation condition through the system due to securing personal meetings. They would like to create a pressure."*
Strategic Misinterpre-tation	Intentionally misleading input to serve the customer's hidden interests.	Supplier 2: *"We can discuss about it. But they give the feedback, but they don't want to solve it because they are they knew. My feeling is in that time, somebody just take the monkey to my shoulder and say, Okay, I just complain. I think it's a good example about how we can manage the feedback. Because, again, this feedback is really relevant. We have a space to improve the service. But how much money do we have to plan for it? So the final result is, okay, try to do and organize everything. And also that's just the replay to the customer. Yes, of course, it is a good feedback. Let's working on it together. But they are quite close."*

Politicized feedback

A further stage in the spectrum of feedback is politicized feedback, where the goal extends beyond merely selecting which aspects to share - it involves actively steering the conversation to deflect honesty or sidestep potential conflict. This often manifests as offering a fabricated excuse. The intent to distort reality is moderate to high, yet it's crucial to note that, aside from conflict avoidance, the feedback provider gains no tangible benefit. Nor does the recipient suffer direct harm, aside from being left unaware of the full truth. This can be grounded in Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and

Facework Theory (Goffman, 1955), which offer foundational insights into how individuals manage social interaction and preserve face through strategic communication.

Agenda driven feedback

The next level is agenda-driven feedback, where the provider deliberately uses feedback as a strategic tool to exert pressure on the vendor (Alnahedh and Alrashdan, 2024) and steer their actions. While the content may contain factual elements, these truths are often manipulated - presented with skewed emphasis or misleading prioritization - to serve the provider's economic interests. The intent behind this feedback is highly calculated, aiming not at genuine improvement but at distorting the message to create leverage. It is evident that the provider expects a tangible commercial advantage as a result.

Strategic misinterpretation

The next tier is strategic misinterpretation (Flyvbjerg, 2008), marked by an exceptionally high degree of intentionality. Here, the feedback provider consciously crafts the message to manipulate the business partner's choices or actions in pursuit of economic gain. Instead of delivering objective or balanced input, the feedback is laced with contradictory signals, ambiguous critiques, and inconsistent cues - designed not to clarify but to confuse. The underlying motive is unmistakable: to advance the provider's concealed agenda under the guise of constructive dialogue.

Interconnections between the RBV asset related constructs

Drawing on our empirical data, we identified four main interconnections among asset-related constructs grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) framework.

S1: Feedback DIVERSITY influences Feedback VALUE

Feedback diversity, arising from multiple sources, roles, and interaction formats, enhances the strategic value of information by broadening the range of insights available to the organization. Prior research consistently shows that heterogeneous inputs improve the usefulness, relevance, and diagnostic power of organizational knowledge. In information systems research, Liang et al. (2012) demonstrate that diversity in informational inputs strengthens system effectiveness. Similarly, organizational learning scholars argue that varied perspectives reduce blind spots and enhance interpretive accuracy (Huber, 1991, Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011). Within the knowledge-based view, Kogut and Zander (1992) emphasize that the value of knowledge stems not merely from its possession but from the firm's ability to integrate and recombine diverse informational elements through combinative capabilities. Innovation research further shows that exposure to heterogeneous customer inputs increases the novelty and applicability of insights (Von Hippel, 1994, Laursen and Salter, 2006). Collectively, these perspectives indicate that diversity in gathered information reliably increases its strategic value. As Supplier 4 explained, "*we have plenty of tools, not only the survey, but also personal visit, personal negotiation, personal meeting or lunch… Many times, [these] improve the relations and also the openness and honesty in the communication*."

S2: Feedback AUTHENTICITY influences Feedback VALUE

Authentic feedback, characterized by honesty and transparency rather than politeness or strategic filtering, tends to be more actionable and trustworthy, thereby enhancing its strategic value. Conversely, feedback that is politically altered or lacks candor may diminish its utility. This was illustrated in a case involving a public health program, where the company misinterpreted ambiguous or overly positive signals from governmental partners. Substantial resources were invested based on this feedback, only to later discover that the client had no genuine intention to support the initiative. As one respondent reflected: *"… we were so positive and optimistic and believe in the program, and we did not realize that their intention is different. They did not want the program work, and therefore it was difficult…. Sometimes there are some clients which just working for the notes and not for the success"* (Supplier 3). This example underscores how the lack of feedback authenticity can deteriorate its strategic value, leading to misaligned decisions and resource misallocation. Notably, feedback authenticity is not widely recognized as an organizational asset within the Resource-Based View (RBV) literature. Its conceptual linkage to feedback value therefore represents a novel contribution to the theoretical understanding of intangible resources in B2B contexts.

S3 Feedback QUANTITY influences Feedback QUALITY

A greater volume of feedback can enhance its overall quality by enabling pattern recognition, triangulation of insights, and more reliable interpretation. Prior research shows that larger information pools improve the accuracy and consistency of organizational assessments, as repeated inputs help filter out noise and highlight stable signals (Daft and Lengel, 1986, Huber, 1991, Zahay et al., 2004). Zhang et al. (2022a) similarly demonstrate that feedback quantity can strengthen both productivity and quality in operational contexts by allowing individuals to self-correct and detect performance trends more effectively.

Supplier experiences reflect this dynamic clearly. Supplier 4 described how infrequent feedback limits its usefulness: *"The other way of the feedback that we organize, unfortunately, it is not a good thing to say that it's a regular year by year feedback session, but it's every two or three years we organize the local feedback session… So it is a little bit of a focus."* Supplier 3 likewise emphasized the need for more frequent input, stating, *"I would change the feedback session, be more frequent almost after each step, which is we have always milestones in the project."* These accounts illustrate how insufficient quantity constrains the ability to validate insights and assess performance reliably.

This relationship between information quantity and information quality is not new in the academic literature. Organizational information-processing theory, customer-information management, and information-quality research have long established that greater informational volume increases reliability, reduces equivocality, and enhances diagnostic value (Daft and Lengel, 1986, Huber, 1991, Zahay et al., 2004).

Feedback related dynamic capabilities (RBV)

Customer feedback constitutes a valuable source of knowledge, directly informing organizational learning processes and strategic decision-making (Molnár et al., 2024, Skogsberg and Wedberg, 2019, Nasr et al., 2014). Within this framework, feedback is regarded as an intangible asset embedded within the firm, underpinned by a set of distinct dynamic capabilities. While the Resource-Based View (RBV) centers on the types of resources a firm possesses, the Dynamic Capabilities perspective shifts attention to how these resources are mobilized and adapted in response to environmental volatility (Teece et al., 1997). Building on the insights of Keszey (2021), the Dynamic Capabilities theory asserts that sustainable competitive advantage stems not solely from resource ownership, but from the firm's capacity to identify, cultivate, deploy, and safeguard resources that are congruent with evolving market conditions (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2017, Teece, 2007). In this chapter, drawing on our dataset, we identify five dynamic capability constructs related to feedback: gather, integrate, analyze, share, and act, which are well-established in the existing literature (Keszey and Korhonen-Sande, 2021). Building on this foundation, we propose a sixth construct, enable, as a novel contribution to advance the theoretical discourse. The RBV dynamic capability constructs are summarized in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7: Summary of the identified constructs, RBV dynamic capabilities, supplier view. Source: Authors.

Construct	Definition	Illustrative quote
Gather feedback	The dynamic capability of systematically acquiring customer insights through structured and ongoing mechanisms.	Supplier 7: "*And also question about feedback is not every time the same.*"
Integrate feedback	The capability to systematically organize and assign feedback for action. Including feedback categorization. In solicited feedback, categorization is predefined. In ad hoc or unsolicited feedback, categorization must occur post-collection to ensure clarity and ownership	Supplier 3: "*…type of departments regarding based on the feedback that we are getting, if it's a complaint, if it's a question, if it's an inquiry, that who will answer for that special question or feedback.*" Supplier 1: "*And then we talk on the meeting what we will do better, how we are in comparison with the competition, and she's responsible for that feedback."*
Analyze feedback	The capability to interpret feedback data in order to generate actionable insights. This capability transforms raw feedback into strategic intelligence, enabling continuous improvement and informed decision-making.	Supplier 3: *"With the bad feedback we're analyzing the situation that what could cause it"*
Share feedback	The capability to distribute feedback insights across relevant internal and external stakeholders to drive transparency, accountability, and action	Supplier 7: *"They collect and introduce this to our colleagues who were also within the team of this. Let's say, on the end, after 40 days, we collect this, in one week, we put this together, in one month, we have internal meeting about feedbacks from our customers on this event, and we go through."*
Act on feedback	The capability to respond meaningfully and operationally to customer feedback. It closes the feedback loop by demonstrating that input is valued and leads to tangible outcomes	Supplier 4: *"Also, of course, on the top level, we always organize kind of action plan according to this result.*"
Enable feedback	The deliberate set of preparatory and structural actions undertaken by a business to foster the conditions necessary for effective feedback exchange with B2B partners. Solicited feedback includes preparing and incentivizing the customer. In unsolicited feedback, it focuses on internal readiness and proactive collection.	Supplier 7: *"Then they felt that they must do it. So we put some interest or some reward."* Supplier 3: *"We have to execute and we have obligation. So we have internal audit. So if we miss the training or if we miss any reporting and not giving the answer for feedbacks or inquiries, it's an issue from our side. So it's not like a normal FMCG company."*

Gather feedback dynamic capability, supplier view

Gather represents the dynamic capability of systematically acquiring customer insights through structured and continuous mechanisms (Martelo Landroguez et al., 2011). In the context of solicited feedback, it entails employing deliberate methods for collecting input, such as surveys or interviews. For unsolicited feedback, it involves ongoing monitoring of customer signals across various touchpoints, including social media, support interactions, and behavioral data. We identified two distinct subcomponents within the gather capability: the act of collecting feedback and the process of validating it. We posit that validation constitutes an integral part of the broader information acquisition process. As a respondent (Supplier 7) explained: *"….Then I checked. ….. To be honest, he has everything right and everything what he claim, he was right."*

Integrate feedback dynamic capability, supplier view

Integrate refers to the dynamic capability of systematically organizing and assigning feedback for actionable follow-up (Morgan et al., 2022). This includes the subcomponent of feedback categorization, which varies depending on the nature of the input: in the case of solicited feedback, categories are typically predefined; whereas in ad hoc or unsolicited feedback, categorization must be performed post-collection to ensure interpretability and accountability. Another key subcomponent is the allocation of responsibility, which involves designating individuals or teams to act on specific feedback items. As one respondent noted: *"...and they're responsible for this part of the customer feedback and to pass it to the right person in the company who is responsible for that work*" (Supplier 1).

Analyze feedback dynamic capability, supplier view

Analyze denotes the organizational capability to interpret feedback data and extract actionable insights (Gounaris and Tzempelikos, 2014). This process converts unstructured input into strategic intelligence, supporting continuous improvement and evidence-based decision-making (Bag et al., 2021). Two key subcomponents emerged from our findings: Benchmark Comparison, which involves evaluating feedback against competitive standards or internal expectations. As one respondent explained: *"And then we talk in the meeting about what we will do better, how we compare with the competition, and she's responsible for that feedback"* (Supplier 1). Root cause analysis focuses on diagnosing underlying factors behind negative feedback. As noted by another participant: *"With the bad feedback, we're analyzing the situation to understand what could have caused it"* (Supplier 3).

Share feedback dynamic capability, supplier view

Share refers to the capability to distribute feedback insights across relevant internal and external stakeholders to drive transparency, accountability, and action (Heimstädt and Dobusch, 2020). This construct was identified with 2 subcomponents referring to internal or external sharing of the information. External sharing is particularly important in the medical sector due to regulatory requirements. As Supplier 3 noted*: "... and regulatory, because for instance, in case of the pharmaceutical products, the most important what we have to monitor and report is the adverse events"*.

Act on feedback dynamic capability, supplier view

Act refers to the capability to respond meaningfully and operationally to customer feedback (Morgan and Vorhies, 2018). It closes the feedback loop by demonstrating that input is valued and leads to tangible outcomes. We identified two main categories of activities related to acting on feedback. The first involves implementing changes or improvements directly triggered by the feedback, for example *"organize kind of action plan according to this (feedback) result*." (Supplier 4). The second centers on engaging with the feedback provider typically through a response or acknowledgment as Supplier 4 described*: "We just say many thanks for the customer because it should be the first one*".

Enable feedback dynamic capability, supplier view

Enable represents the deliberate set of preparatory and structural actions that suppliers undertake to create the conditions necessary for effective feedback exchange with B2B partners (Gremyr et al., 2010). Our data show that solicited feedback relies on intentional preparation and incentivization of customers, whereas unsolicited feedback depends more heavily on internal readiness and proactive collection efforts. From the supplier perspective, enabling feedback is therefore a multifaceted dynamic capability. It begins with people enablement, reflected in organizational readiness and the presence of individuals positioned to capture customer signals: *"Then we have also the people who are on the market each day"* (Supplier 1). Process enablement involves the routines and mechanisms that encourage feedback sharing, including incentives and structured touchpoints; as Supplier 7 explained, *"...we prepared some small gifts, but small professional, some flyers about the product, some samples, maybe some small gift,"* while

Supplier 3 emphasized that *"it's reinforced to share feedback and not just feedback. We have some incentive behind it, not financial, but having some nice tool where we can just share feedback with each other and there is honored."* Technology enablement provides the digital infrastructure that supports systematic feedback capture and analysis, illustrated by Supplier 4's remark that *"The main data sources are the CRM system."* Finally, customer enablement concerns the relational and interactional structures that make it easy for customers to provide input, often through regular contact and ongoing dialogue: *"people who are on the market each day as sales rep and they get the feedback for the from the customer"* (Supplier 1). Together, these elements demonstrate that enabling feedback is not a single action but a coordinated capability that prepares the organization, its processes, its tools, and its customer interfaces to continuously generate meaningful insights.

Interconnections between the RBV dynamic capability constructs, supplier view

Based on our dataset, we managed to identify the following four interconnections between the Dynamic Capabilities related Resource Based View constructs.

S4 ANALYZE Feedback Dynamic Capability influences ACT on Feedback Dynamic Capability

The interconnection between the capability to analyze feedback and the ability to act on it reflects a critical organizational dynamic. The process of interpreting, synthesizing, and extracting insights from incoming feedback enhances its actionability, enabling more timely and targeted responses. As Supplier 4 explains: „*We have to analyze how... how many customers could be impacted for it, which is the weight of this decision. It's also give us a right position because before we start to do something, we should see that what is the goal and how big resource can we use for it*". This relationship is supported by Jayanti and Singh (2010), who propose that analysis serves as a prerequisite for effective action, particularly in distributed service environments where feedback traverses organizational boundaries. Their study underscores that the strategic utility of feedback is contingent upon the organization's capacity to derive meaningful insights, thereby aligning directly with the proposed linkage between analyze feedback and act on feedback dynamic capabilities.

S5 GATHER Feedback Dynamic Capability influences ACT on Feedback Dynamic Capability

This interconnection suggests that an organization's ability to gather feedback effectively by collecting timely, relevant, and comprehensive input from stakeholders directly shapes its capacity to act on that feedback. When feedback is systematically and consistently gathered, it provides a reliable foundation for informed decision-making, enabling organizations to respond with precision and agility. In B2B contexts, robust feedback collection enhances responsiveness, customer alignment, and strategic execution (Jayanti and Singh, 2010).

Our empirical data suggest that suppliers typically respond to customer feedback, particularly when it emerges in unsolicited form. However, if the supplier lacks the capability to gather such feedback, its ability to react is inherently constrained. As Supplier 3 noted, *"We have to listen and we have to react on the way how we heard the thing."* This phenomenon was observed exclusively in the context of unsolicited feedback, prompting us to propose an extension of the existing interconnection by introducing feedback diversity as a potential moderating variable. The act of seeking customer feedback has a direct impact on organizational responses, extending even to those customers who do not actively provide input. Unsolicited feedback can serve as a catalyst for substantive business adjustments, provided that firms possess the capability to effectively capture and interpret such information (Kaul et al., 2025).

However, the potential moderator role of feedback diversity in the relationship between the dynamic capabilities of gathering and acting on feedback represents a novel conceptual extension. Therefore, we derive the next potential connection. **S5A: Feedback DIVERSITY moderates the relation between GATHER Feedback Dynamic Capability and ACT on Feedback Dynamic Capability.** While prior research has examined the role of feedback in organizational learning and dynamic capabilities (Ashford and Cummings, 1983), the mediating influence of feedback diversity on the transition from gathering to acting remains underexplored. This study proposes that feedback diversity enhances the interpretive flexibility and responsiveness of organizations, thereby strengthening the link between gather and act capabilities.

S6 ENABLE Feedback Dynamic Capability influences ACT on Feedback Dynamic Capability

This interconnection suggests that an organization's ability to enable feedback by creating systems, culture, and incentives that support feedback flow directly enhances its capacity to act on feedback. When feedback is actively encouraged and facilitated, it becomes more accessible and actionable, allowing the organization to respond with greater speed, relevance, and strategic alignment (Hood and Bartunek, 2022, Can et al., 2019). Respondents highlighted the presence of internal processes supporting feedback management. As one participant, Supplier 1, noted: *"And for the reclamation, we have also the organizational SOP, how we handle the reclamations."* Additionally, evidence of incentive mechanisms emerged, as described by an expert (Supplier 3): *"We have some incentive behind it, not financial, but having some nice tool where we can just share feedback with each other and there is honored."* These insights suggest that both structured procedures and non-financial incentives play a role in enabling feedback practices within the organization.

Feedback values (SET)

This chapter examines the applicability of the SET framework within the context of B2B feedback. Specifically, we explore the characteristics and functional roles of various constructs associated with feedback value and the value derived from the feedback process. We systematically analyze the seven constructs economic (Blau, 1964b), relational (Blau, 1964b), informational (Wasko and Faraj, 2005), social (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975), emotional (Rich, 2000), reciprocal (Wang and Huff, 2007) and fairness (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005) values. As summarized in Table 2.8 we identify relevant sub-constructs, and assess their association with either performance outcomes or capability development. Furthermore, we investigate whether these sub-constructs are perceived by suppliers as contributing primarily to supplier value or to customer value, described in Table 2.9.

Economic value of B2B feedback – supplier view.

The concept of economic value in exchange relationships originates with Blau (1964b), who characterized economic exchanges as short-term, quid pro quo interactions. Most B2B relationships continue to be grounded in economic value (Sawhney and Di Maria, 2007), with traditional models emphasizing efficiency and transaction cost reduction through electronic marketplaces and digital transactions. Moreover, B2B sales are increasingly embedded in value creation processes, often centered on economic outcomes within evolving digital ecosystems (Rusthollkarhu et al., 2021).

Economic value was evident in our dataset, and further sub constructs within this dimension were also identified**.** Customer-centric values, derived from the concept of customer centricity (Shah et al., 2006) are deeply embedded in the marketing and service-dominant logic literature (Sobrinho et al., 2025), which emphasizes value co-creation and customer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2016). Respondents consistently noted that customers primarily seek economic value, like Supplier 3: *"And it's always about money."* Through dialogue, customers gain a clearer understanding of how to utilize the products offered: *"In that case, it's a continuous feedback session because they are asking their opinion and experience in the product, but they're just turning it to another type of conversation for engaging the doctor that the practice was correct and they were able to use the product correctly."* (Supplier 3). Additionally, suppliers benefit from feedback that generates development ideas aligned with customer needs. Supplier 4 stated: "*The customer feedback should be based on our future development goals*."

A distinct subcategory within economic value pertains to business growth optimization. Feedback has a strategic role in shaping business decisions, improving customer relationships, and driving long-term value creation (Bilro et al., 2023). Respondents identified feedback as a critical resource for uncovering future business opportunities and enhancing internal processes. For example, in case 3, feedback was explicitly linked to process improvement, as Supplier 3 explains: *"...we realized that there are some processes which could be simplified. And this is why we need to collect the feedback*." This perspective aligns with existing literature on data-driven execution, where rapid feedback loops are recognized as key success factors for high-growth startups (Onifade et al., 2022).

The third subcategory of economic value pertains to organizational alignment (Semler, 1997) where we coded respondents' input reflecting the notion that feedback contributes to the dynamic evolution of organizational alignment. This contribution manifests at multiple levels (Alagaraja et al., 2015) as confirmed by our respondents, ranging from internal shifts in colleagues' mindsets to external drivers such as regulatory compliance.

Relational value of B2B feedback – supplier view.

In B2B settings, relational value (Blau, 1964b) encompasses the intangible advantages gained through enduring, trust-driven partnerships between suppliers and clients (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). Social Exchange Theory (SET) posits that workplace relationships are grounded in reciprocity, trust, and interdependence, with obligations forming through repeated interactions (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). This theoretical foundation was reinforced by our respondents, who consistently identified Trust (Supplier 3: *"Then I can trust the company because they are taking care of my complaints, for example. If there will be a silent mode, I will never buy again the goods or using your service.")* and cooperation (Supplier 4: *"But I should say I really a believer of the feedback also in the normal life also. In the normal life is also based on the cooperation and the partnership, the feedback*") as key value elements within the feedback process.

Informational value of B2B feedback – supplier view.

Informational value (Wasko and Faraj, 2005) denotes the perceived advantage of acquiring relevant, timely, and actionable knowledge from another party within a relationship, which supports decision-making and mitigates uncertainty (Davlembayeva and Alamanos, 2023). Based on the dataset, we identified outside in (Frau et al., 2020) value as information sourced from outside the organization. Supplier 2 states: "*But from my previous experience, it's always important to get a mirror from the customer that the end-customers, not B2B, but also could be a B2B, when you can see their reaction and their observation, how they see you as a supplier or as an employer"*. We can also observe inside out (Frau et al., 2020), or internally generated knowledge derived from customer feedback. Supplier 1 explains: "*Our main value of the company is also that our employees are competent. So if customer feedback is good, that we know we are competent, then it for sure increase the value of employees".*

Social value of B2B feedback – supplier view.

Social value (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975) has been also conceptualized within the framework of interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959) as a non-material reward derived from social interaction, frequently associated with constructs such as trust, respect, and fairness. It has also been characterized as a set of beliefs concerning what is considered good and meaningful in life, guiding individuals in their behavioral choices (Rokeach, 1979). Our dataset revealed two distinct subcategories within this domain. The first, recognition and celebration, encapsulates the symbolic and emotional dimensions of social exchange, wherein feedback serves as a catalyst for pride (Smith et al., 2021), morale (Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2022), and team cohesion. Illustrative respondent (Supplier 7) reflections include: *"Then I read this mail and everybody was laughing and then we drink champagne and we were happy and we were professionals."* and *"…from the positive side, that's something that we really need to think because I know how a positive feedback could affect and how could change the working atmosphere"* (Supplier 2). The second subcategory, reputation and image enhancement, pertains to the esteem-related and social signaling functions (Poggi and D'Errico, 2011) of feedback. In this context, participation in feedback processes contributes to the enhancement of both internal and external perceptions, thereby fostering stakeholder trust. As one respondent noted: "*We have to identify clients who we never worked for. Therefore, to call them or to send them an invitation or email, it means that you need to sell yourself without any reputation or without any experience with you or your company name. And if they have good experience or good knowledge about our brands, they will happy to cooperate*" (Supplier 3).

Emotional value of B2B feedback – supplier view

Emotional value (Rich, 2000) denotes the affective benefits or positive emotional responses elicited by a product, service, or interaction for an individual or stakeholder (Ruiz-Roqueni, 2021). It encompasses a spectrum of emotions including pride, happiness, satisfaction, and a sense of belonging that collectively enhance the perceived value of an experience or relationship (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). As a non-financial impact, emotional value plays a critical role in shaping stakeholder perceptions and engagement. Drawing on interview data, two distinct subcategories of emotional value were identified. The first, expression and emotional engagement, refers to emotional activation (Nasr et al., 2017) and the cognitive demands associated with participating in feedback processes. While the act of sharing opinions can foster empowerment, excessive solicitation may result in emotional fatigue and disengagement (Carless, 2019) as reflected in Supplier 3's observations *"…what I realized that people like to share their opinion"*. An opposite reaction is explained by Supplier 7: *"…a lot of companies now it's feedback. Something you buy over the internet, you booking the hotel, there is always feedback, feedback, feedback. And people are a little bit fed up of this feedback"*. The second subcategory, relational outcome, captures the affective and evaluative consequences of feedback interactions, wherein emotional resonance contributes to sustained commitment, loyalty (McMullan and Gilmore, 2008) and satisfaction (Otto et al., 2020). This dynamic is illustrated in Supplier 4's reflections: "*So it's just finally, most of the cases in the final result of this discussion and dialogue, but everybody quite satisfied because understand the other part of position and it's a good way*".

Reciprocal value of B2B feedback – supplier view

Reciprocal value (Homans, 1958) denotes the perceived benefit derived from mutual exchanges within a relationship, wherein each party contributes and receives resources, be they material, informational, or emotional, with an underlying expectation of evenhandedness and equilibrium (Blau, 1964b).

Drawing on insights from our respondents, we identified two distinct sub dimensions within the construct of reciprocal value. The first, termed mutual objectives, encapsulates the presence of shared goals and a collaborative orientation (Palmatier et al., 2006). As one respondent articulated: *"You can write the same sentence for the both party, but they will take it differently. But how we achieve it, it could have a conversation, the result of a conversation or a dialogue with all of the feedback, and still the partners could be happy with the outcome"* (Supplier 3). The second sub dimension, referred to as Obligation, aligns with the normative expectation to reciprocate and uphold relational balance (Gouldner, 1960). This was exemplified by another respondent's reflection: *"[when we ask]…, will you give us some feedback or some thoughts? And they are king then. Then they felt that they must do it…"* (Supplier 7).

Fairness value of B2B feedback – supplier view.

Fairness value (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005) denotes the perceived benefit derived from treatment that is just, impartial, and ethically grounded within social or organizational exchanges (Fleurbaey, 2008). It underscores principles such as equal opportunity, transparency, and consistency, and is frequently associated with moral legitimacy and stakeholder trust (Fleurbaey, 2008). Based on respondent insights, two sub dimensions of fairness value were identified. The first, compromise in negotiation, is conceptualized as a form of procedural fairness, wherein conflicting interests are reconciled through mutual concessions. This approach reflects equity by recognizing diverse claims and aiming for proportionate outcomes (Albin, 1993, Jones and O'Flynn, 2013). As Supplier 3 noted*: "And therefore, when there is a dialogue, there is have a* *chance for having not only a compromising situation, but something which potentially it's a totally different type of outcome"*. The second sub dimension, flexibility, contributes to fairness by accommodating varying needs, contexts, and constraints. It enables adaptive responses that preserve fairness without imposing rigid uniformity (Schroeder et al., 2019). This perspective was reflected in the following interview excerpt: *"...potentially, this is why we need to be a little bit more flexible to make it happen or just change a little bit the original program scope to match it much better to the client needs. And it could happen only with dialogue and with continuous feedback*" (Supplier 3).

Table 2.8: Summary of the identified constructs, Social exchange theory constructs, supplier view. Source: Authors.

Construct	Description	Illustrative quote
Economic Value of feedback	Tangible benefits like cost savings, increased revenue, or ROI from the feedback activity	Supplier 3:"*...we realized that there are some processes which could be simplified. And this is why we need to collect the feedback"*
Relational Value of the feedback	Trust, commitment, and long-term partnership potential	Supplier 2, talking about the customers' thinking process: *"Then I can trust the company because they are taking care of my complaints, for example. If there will be a silent mode, I will never buy again the goods or using your service*."
Informational Value of the feedback	Access to knowledge, expertise, and market insights shared between partners	Supplier 4: *"We're working together and the customer opinions should be our engine for the future planning."*
Social Value of the feedback	Reputation, prestige, and network benefits from being associated with a partner	Supplier 5: *"But from the positive side, that's something that we really need to think because I know how a positive feedback could affect and how could change the working atmosphere."* Supplier 3: "*… if they [customers] have good experience or good knowledge about our brands, they will happy to cooperate"*
Emotional Value of the feedback	Satisfaction, loyalty, and psychological comfort in the relationship	Supplier 4: *"It's also that if we just see the brand, and also if we just thinking about the [Company] as the brand, because in the professional part is also working, it can build the loyalty of the customers..."*
Reciprocal Value of the feedback	Mutual obligations and favors that strengthen relational bonds	Supplier 7: *"And then we also asked them, Please, will you give us some feedback or some thoughts? And they are king then. Then they felt that they must do it. So we put some interest or some reward. We are good partners, we are friends."*
Fairness Value of the feedback	Perceived fairness in the exchange, influencing satisfaction and retention	Supplier 3: *"And therefore, when there is a dialogue, there is a chance for having not only a compromising situation, but something which potentially it's a totally different type of outcome.*

Feedback related value sub constructs and the beneficiaries, supplier view

Based on our analysis, the feedback concerning various SET value constructs is summarized in Table 2.9 below. All seven identified constructs were recognized by the supplier respondents as potential sources of value, with a particular emphasis on performance-related benefits. Informational and reciprocal values were described as capabilities that suppliers can leverage. Additionally, respondents articulated several benefits directly gained by customers, including economic, emotional, and equity/fairness-related advantages. In contrast, informational and reciprocal benefits were more commonly perceived as capabilities gained by the customers.

Table 2.9: Summary of the identified value sub constructs according to the beneficiary, supplier view. Source: Authors.

Feedback related values	Supplier Benefit		Customer Benefit	
	Performance	**Capability**	**Performance**	**Capability**
Economic Value	Customer Centric Values Business Growth and Optimization Organizational Alignment		Customer Centric Values	
Relational Value	Trust & Cooperation			
Informational Value		Outside in knowledge Inside out knowledge		Outside in knowledge
Social Value	Recognition and Celebration Reputation and Image enhancement			
Emotional Value	Relational Outcomes		Expression and Emotional engagement	
Reciprocal Value	Obligation	Mutual objectives		Mutual objectives
Fairness Value	Compromise in negotiations Flexibility		Compromise in negotiations Flexibility	

According to supplier perspectives, customers who engage in feedback processes, particularly those initiated by the supplier, do not appear to derive relational or social value, or at least do not consciously perceive such benefits. The focus here is on supplier-initiated feedback, and the aim is to identify underlying cues that explain customer participation from the suppliers' point of view. Respondents in our dataset largely did not associate customer involvement in feedback with relational or social gains, despite evidence that increased contact frequency, such as through feedback, can foster cooperative behavior and trust between parties (Heide and Miner, 1992). Nevertheless, customers also rely on supplier cooperation and trust within strategic alliances and value co-creation processes (Torvinen and Ulkuniemi, 2016). Existing literature offers models for assessing value creation from the customer's perspective (Grönroos and Helle, 2010, Kusnirova et al., 2025), and emphasizes that value extends beyond financial metrics to encompass partnership dynamics (Freudenreich et al., 2020) and long-term business sustainability (Grönroos and Helle, 2010).

Interconnections between the SET related constructs

Our dataset suggests four sets of interconnections between the Social Exchange Theory related feedback value constructs.

S7 RELATIONAL Value of the feedback influences feedback's ECONOMIC Value

In a B2B context, relational value refers to the intangible benefits derived from strong, trust-based, and cooperative relationships between business partners, such as mutual commitment, shared norms, and effective communication. This relational value can significantly influence economic value, which includes measurable outcomes like cost savings, revenue growth, and profitability. When relational value is high, firms experience smoother coordination, reduced transaction costs, and greater willingness to invest in joint initiatives (Berenguer-Contri et al., 2024). These relational dynamics foster long-term collaboration, enhance customer satisfaction, and ultimately lead to improved economic performance (Gounaris and Almoraish, 2024). That is summarized by Supplier 2: *"…it's somehow linked also for the economic value because if you translate that in reality, if you take care, so it means that you are in contact with me."*

S8 INFORMATIONAL Value of the feedback influences EMOTIONAL Value of the feedback

In a B2B context, informational value, the relevance, clarity, and usefulness of information shared between partners can significantly influence emotional value, such as trust, satisfaction, and relational commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). When information is timely, transparent, and tailored to stakeholder needs, it fosters a sense of reliability and respect, which strengthens emotional bonds and deepens engagement (Pandey and Mookerjee, 2018). In our dataset where we are exploring feedback related connections, we discovered that feedback triggers positive emotions when it is explained properly. Supplier 2 explains: *„There is a complaint that they are too expensive. The* *feedback for that is, and the problem, the issue was not the price increase, but the explanation of price. ... This explanation needs to be properly transferred to the final client."*

S9 ECONOMIC Value of the feedback influences RECIPROCAL Value of the feedback

In a B2B context, economic value, such as cost savings, profitability, or performance gains, can positively influence reciprocal value, which refers to the willingness of partners to engage in mutual support, collaboration, and long-term commitment (Berenguer-Contri et al., 2024). When a business partner consistently delivers strong economic outcomes, it fosters trust and a sense of obligation, prompting the other party to reciprocate through loyalty, shared investments, or cooperative behavior (Berenguer-Contri et al., 2024). Our dataset also reflects reciprocity, as the presence of immediate economic value, such as an incentive for the feedback provider, creates a sense of obligation in the respondent to engage with the feedback request. Supplier 7 states: *„And people are a little bit fed up of this feedback. So we also, on these lectures, we prepared some small gifts, but small professional, some flyers about the product, some samples, maybe some small gift. And then we also asked them, please, will you give us some feedback or some thoughts? And they are king then. Then they felt that they must do it."*

S10 INFORMATIONAL Value of the feedback influences ECONOMIC Value of the feedback

Informational value of feedback, the relevance, clarity, and usefulness of the insights provided, can significantly influence its economic value, such as improved decision-making, cost efficiency, and revenue growth (Goldstein, 2023). When feedback delivers actionable, high-quality information, it enables firms to optimize operations, tailor offerings, and strengthen customer relationships, all of which contribute to measurable financial outcomes (Molnár et al., 2024). It is precisely articulated in our dataset by Supplier 2: *„a new client, for example, we need to do an analysis. ... gather all the available data, public data, whatever, together. Based on this analysis, we can establish, let's say, the first draft of strategy, what we will do."*

Interconnections between strategic resources, capabilities and values

The study has identified the principal constructs associated with the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Exchange Theory (SET), specifically in the context of B2B feedback mechanisms within the medical device and pharmaceutical trading sector in Eastern Europe. Building on this theoretical foundation, the research now seeks to explore potential interconnections among these constructs, particularly those that traverse the boundaries between the two theoretical frameworks. Drawing upon a robust dataset, these cross-framework relationships have been systematically summarized.

S11: ENABLER Dynamic Capability influences feedback INFORMATIONAL Value of the feedback

Dynamic capabilities, particularly enabling ones, are known to enhance organizational learning and knowledge flows (Easterby-Smith and Prieto, 2008). Studies show that enabler capabilities such as coordination, integration, and reconfiguration foster the development of feedback systems that generate actionable insights (Chen et al., 2021). IT-enabled dynamic capabilities, for example, have been empirically linked to improved innovation and feedback responsiveness (Ilmudeen, 2022). We also consider structured feedback processes to be a form of enabler capability. These mechanisms can shape the informational value of feedback not only for suppliers but also for clients. As Supplier 3 noted: *"... a lot of municipality has the problem that they cannot find out how they can manage the execution, how they can give it to people. And from this point of view, giving them some example [during the feedback session] helps make the decision making process shorter.*"

S12: ACT on Feedback Dynamic Capability influences ECONOMIC Value of the feedback

Act capability, which involve executions and operational responsiveness, is consistently associated with improved financial performance (Wu et al., 2010). Literature on SMEs and dynamic capabilities confirms that firms with strong act capabilities are better positioned to capture economic value through agility, cost efficiency, and market responsiveness (Akkaya and Qaisar, 2021). This hypothesis aligns with the RBV's assertion that executional strength is a source of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). The way of action on the feedback is often commented on in our data. Respondents articulated that even a negative feedback if handled right can lead to a positive result. There is one example from Supplier 1: "*This was the customer feedback on our delivery that was not okay. And we did otherwise [by acting right]. We took this reclamation… back as opportunity for a new business.*"

S13: Feedback ENABLER Dynamic Capability influences ECONOMIC and SOCIAL Values of the feedback

Enabler capabilities play a role in driving both economic sustainability and social outcomes (de Almeida Barbosa Franco et al., 2024). The dual influence on economic and social value reflects the growing importance of integrated value creation in dynamic environments (Schoenmaker and Schramade, 2023). Based on our data set the economic value derived from customer feedback is contingent upon internal organizational processes. Structured internal reviews to identify root causes, coupled with systematic communication strategies directed at customers, contribute to enhanced business outcomes. As Supplier 7 explains: *"And then we have quarterly meetings. ..., we go through all these negative thing…also, we explained to the customer that we didn't receive the goods,…but we replace it ... We sold it."* Implementing a structured approach to capturing and interpreting customer feedback can enhance internal recognition mechanisms. In our data, Supplier 7 also described how positive feedback was leveraged as an opportunity for team-wide celebration. They reinforced the culture of appreciation and continuous improvement: [at the end of an ad hoc meeting] *"I said, No, it's one more reason. Then I read this mail and everybody was laughing and then we drink champagne".*

S14: EMOTIONAL Value of the feedback influences feedback ENABLER Dynamic Capability

Emotions of key strategists shape the development of organizational capabilities. Emotional experiences influence decision-making and adaptation processes (Kars-Unluoglu and Kevill, 2021). Supplier satisfaction with received feedback can significantly influence their openness to process modification. When satisfaction levels are high, there is typically no perceived need to alter existing enabling mechanisms. Supplier 2 notes: *„I never thought about this process [to change] because it's done really naturally..."*

S15: ECONOMIC Value of feedback influences GATHER feedback Dynamic Capability

Economic performance often drives the need for better sensing and data collection (Carriere-Swallow and Haksar, 2019). Firms that experience financial growth or pressure tend to invest in GATHER capabilities to maintain momentum and anticipate market shifts (Wamba et al., 2015). Literature on value capture and dynamic sensing confirms that economic value acts as both a motivator and a resource for capability enhancement (Dyduch et al., 2021). Our dataset reflects this dynamic in reverse: unsolicited feedback tends to be collected when outcomes fall short of expectations, triggering a reactive sensing response. Supplier 2 explains: *„Usually, if everything's going well, it's a silent mode. It's also a type of.... When it's something wrong, usually, they don't hesitate to call direct boss of the account managers or direct me and complaining what and how and what happened".* This observation indicates that feedback valence moderates the relationship between economic value and the gather dynamic capability. Since valence is a component of feedback diversity, this relationship can be conceptualized as follows:

C15 A: Feedback DIVERSITY moderates the connection between ECONOMIC Value of feedback and GATHER feedback Dynamic Capability

This moderating effect suggests that economic value alone may not be sufficient to trigger capability enhancement unless accompanied by a rich and varied feedback environment. In contrast, homogeneous or narrowly scoped feedback may limit the organization's ability to sense emerging trends or deviations, even when economic stakes are high. While existing literature touches on related constructs, this specific interplay between feedback diversity, economic value, and gather capability appears to offer a novel perspective that warrants further exploration.

S16: RELATIONAL Value of the feedback influences ACT on feedback Dynamic Capability

Relational value, built on trust, shared norms, and long-term partnerships, has been shown to strengthen executional capabilities (Singh et al., 2024). Studies on alliance management and inter-organizational collaboration reveal that relational capital enhances coordination, responsiveness, and joint action (Liu et al., 2022). This supports the idea that relational value is a precursor to act dynamic capability, especially in B2B ecosystems. Respondents noted that displaying trustworthy behavior throughout the feedback process contributes to more efficient and effective responses. Supplier 1 notes: *“I always say when you come and when you're open, the half is forgiven. This is the thing s what are supporting with customer feedback”.*

S17: Feedback QUALITY influences feedback EMOTIONAL Value

High-quality feedback, characterized by clarity, relevance, and timeliness, has a direct impact on emotional engagement (Anseel et al., 2015). This hypothesis aligns with SET’s emphasis on affective exchange and the emotional consequences of communication quality.

In our dataset, feedback quality was predominantly associated with timeliness, specifically, the speed and punctuality of responses. As Supplier 3 noted, *„the answer for the complaint does not come within few days, it's a disaster from my point of view”*, highlighting how delays can trigger dissatisfaction. This suggests that timeliness is a critical determinant of satisfaction or disappointment in feedback processes.

S18: Feedback DIVERSITY influences EMOTIONAL, RELATIONAL, and RECIPROCAL values of the feedback.

Feedback diversity refers to the variation in feedback sources, formats, tones, and timing within a communication system. This diversity plays a pivotal role in shaping the emotional, relational, and reciprocal value of feedback exchanges (Dai et al., 2025). As noted by Dai et al. (2025), feedback that evokes positive emotions and invites further communication contributes to a more relational experience, where individuals feel valued and seen. Relationally, feedback diversity supports the development of trust and mutual understanding, particularly when it includes varied perspectives and formats that humanize the interaction (e.g., video, voice, or personalized comments) (Dai et al., 2025). Reciprocity is also strengthened when feedback is perceived as thoughtful and multidimensional, encouraging individuals to respond in kind, whether through improved performance, collaboration, or continued dialogue (Voss et al., 2019). Social exchange theory reinforces this, suggesting that diverse and meaningful exchanges increase the likelihood of reciprocal behavior in organizational and interpersonal contexts (Mitchell et al., 2012).

Feedback channel, an element of feedback diversity such as face-to-face versus online communication, was found to enhance respondent satisfaction. This was especially evident in post-COVID client interactions, where in-person exchanges were appreciated. Supplier 7 explains: *„Now, there are some improvements... and also people for who it was boring in the past, now they missed some lectures, something new. And now I must say that we are quite right, quite active"*. Feedback type, including verbal versus written formats, also contributes to feedback diversity. Verbal feedback fosters trust and strengthens relational value, while its face-to-face nature encourages reciprocal engagement: *„...many cases, written form is very important. On the other side, sometimes you have some meetings where the very, very confirmation, it's important as well because it's creating the trust"* (Supplier 6).

The potential influence of feedback diversity, encompassing variations in source, format, tone, and timing on the emotional, relational, and reciprocal dimensions of feedback remains relatively underexplored in B2B contexts. This interconnection may offer a novel lens for understanding how feedback practices shape trust, engagement, and mutual responsiveness in inter-organizational relationships.

S19 Feedback QUANTITY influences RECIPROCAL Value of the feedback.

While Social Exchange Theory (SET) has long emphasized reciprocity as a foundational mechanism in interpersonal and interorganizational relationships (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976), its application in B2B feedback systems remains underdeveloped. Existing research predominantly explores how trust, commitment, and emotional engagement foster reciprocal behaviors in business partnerships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). However, the role of feedback quantity, the sheer volume or frequency of feedback exchanges, as a potential antecedent to reciprocity has received little empirical attention (Kahmann and Mulder, 2011). Recent studies have begun to highlight the complexity of reciprocity in B2B innovation and relationship management, noting that its mechanisms are still poorly understood (Ren et al., 2025). This gap presents an opportunity to investigate whether high-volume feedback acts as a behavioral cue that activates or hinders reciprocal value creation. Our empirical data set suggests a reverse connection. When feedback request volume is high, it is less likely that the respondent feels the need to answer. Supplier 2 explains: „*You can ask for plenty of questions, but you have to be simple and not too many questions there because then it's time consuming and the ratio of answers is really low, close to zero. You have to have a reasonable size of it*". By linking feedback quantity to reciprocal value, this study contributes a novel perspective to SET and enriches the understanding of feedback as a strategic resource.

Discussion

This study set out to examine the B2B feedback mechanism from the supplier's perspective, that is, from the viewpoint of organizations receiving, interpreting, and acting upon customer feedback. Because this perspective remains underrepresented in the literature (Molnár et al., 2024), we employed a qualitative research design and focused on suppliers operating in the Eastern European medical and pharmaceutical sector. Our findings demonstrate that the supplier-side feedback process can be systematically described through three complementary theoretical lenses: RBV asset characteristics, RBV dynamic capabilities, and SET values.

Drawing on the dynamic capabilities perspective, we argue that the supplier feedback process comprises six distinct capabilities: gather, integrate, analyze, share, act on, and enable feedback. Among these, enable feedback, the capability to create structures, routines, and organizational conditions that support ongoing feedback exchange, emerged as a novel and previously unarticulated element of the process. This addition extends existing conceptualizations of feedback-related capabilities by highlighting the infrastructural and cultural work required to sustain feedback practices over time.

From an RBV standpoint, we identify a set of asset characteristics that shape how suppliers perceive and evaluate incoming feedback: value, depth, quantity, quality, diversity, sharedness, and tacitness. To these established dimensions, we add authenticity as a new characteristic. We define authenticity as the degree to which feedback is perceived as genuine, unfiltered, and aligned with its true intent or identity. Authenticity emerged primarily in relation to solicited feedback, and the richness of our data enabled us to develop a taxonomy comprising honest, selective, politicized, agenda-driven, and strategically misinterpreted forms. We argue that authenticity is a meaningful addition to the literature and propose that it influences the perceived value of feedback.

Finally, applying Social Exchange Theory, we show that B2B feedback generates multiple forms of value for suppliers, including economic, informational, relational, emotional, social, reciprocal, and fairness value. These values illuminate why suppliers engage with feedback, how they interpret its significance, and how feedback shapes ongoing inter-organizational relationships.

Having established these conceptual building blocks, we identified the interconnections between them. Many of these relationships align with established findings in RBV and SET research summarized in Table 2.10, which reinforces the robustness of our methodology and confirms that supplier-side feedback processes share foundational mechanisms with broader organizational learning and relationship-marketing literature.

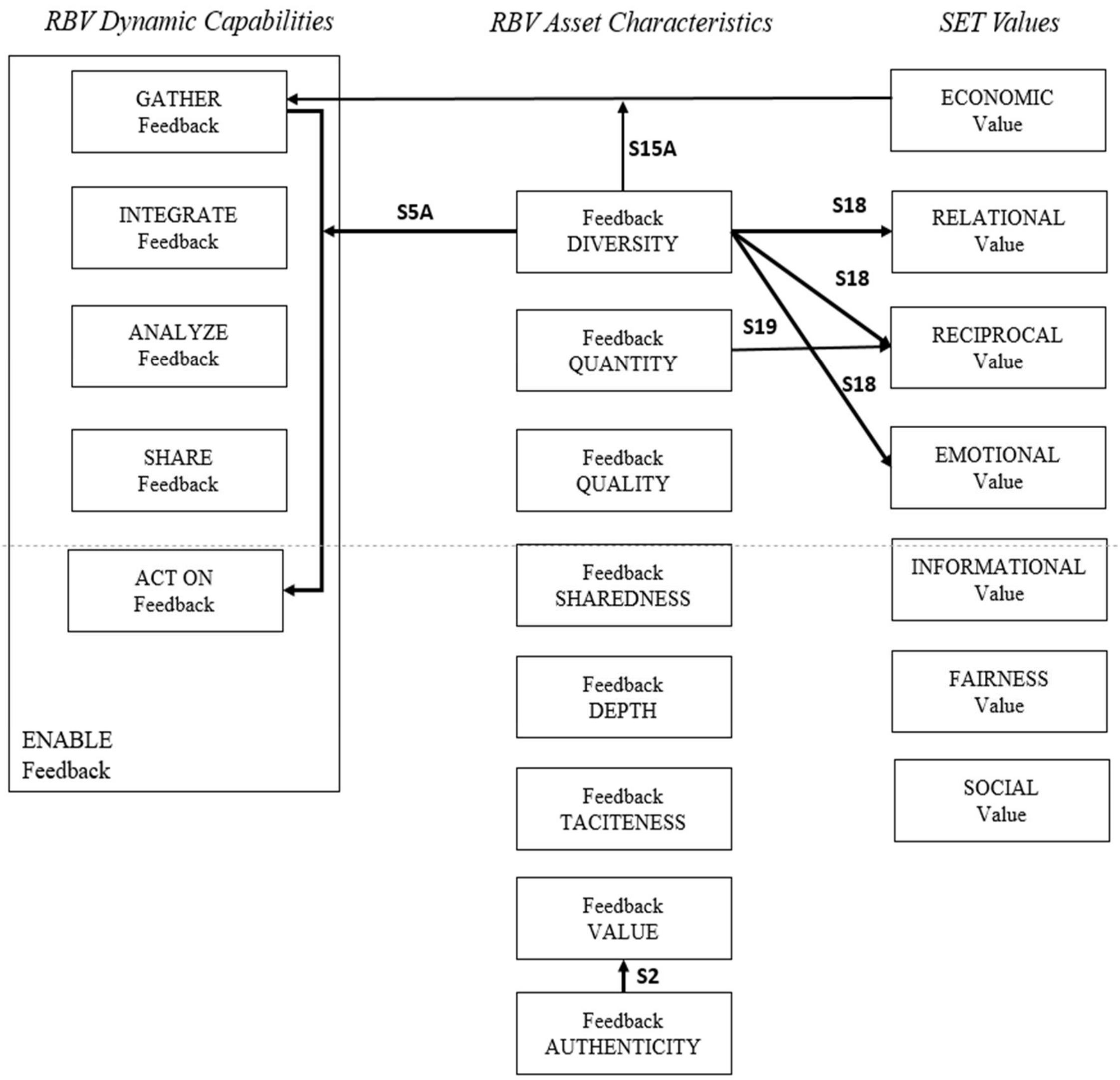
Table 2.10: Identified connections between constructs supported by prior literature, supplier view. Source: Authors.

Identified connection	Direct theoretical support
S1 Feedback DIVERSITY influences Feedback VALUE	Feedback diversity enhances the strategic value of information because heterogeneous inputs broaden insight, reduce blind spots, and strengthen knowledge integration, as demonstrated across information systems (Liang et al., 2012), organizational learning (Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011, Huber, 1991), the knowledge-based view (Kogut and Zander, 1992), and innovation research (Von Hippel, 1994).
S3 Feedback QUANTITY influences Feedback QUALITY	Feedback quantity enhances feedback quality because larger and more frequent information inputs improve accuracy, reduce equivocality, and strengthen diagnostic value, a relationship well-established in organizational information-processing theory (Daft and Lengel, 1986, Huber, 1991), customer-information quality research (Zahay et al., 2004), and empirical evidence showing that frequent feedback improves both productivity and quality (Zhang et al., 2022a).
S4 ANALYZE Feedback Dynamic Capability influences ACT on Feedback Dynamic Capability	Analyzing feedback enables acting on feedback because organizations can only make timely, targeted, and effective decisions once insights have been interpreted and synthesized, a relationship well-established in research showing that analytical sense-making is a prerequisite for coordinated action (Jayanti and Singh, 2010, Huber, 1991).
S5 GATHER Feedback Dynamic Capability influences ACT on Feedback Dynamic Capability	Effective feedback gathering enables responsive action because systematically collected and timely information improves organizational decision accuracy and agility, a relationship well-established in service-system research (Jayanti and Singh, 2010), organizational learning (Huber, 1991), and customer-information quality studies (Zahay et al., 2004)
S6 ENABLE Feedback Dynamic Capability influences ACT on Feedback Dynamic Capability	Enabling feedback strengthens a firm's ability to act on feedback because systems, routines, and incentives that facilitate feedback flow increase its accessibility and actionability, a relationship well-established in research on organizational responsiveness and feedback infrastructures (Can et al., 2019, Hood and Bartunek, 2022, Huber, 1991).
S7 RELATIONAL Value of the feedback influences feedback's ECONOMIC Value	Relational value enhances the economic value of feedback because trust-based, cooperative relationships reduce transaction costs, improve coordination, and strengthen long-term performance outcomes, a link well-established in B2B relationship research (Berenguer-Contri et al., 2024, Gounaris and Almoraish, 2024).
S8 INFORMATIONAL Value of the feedback influences EMOTIONAL Value of the feedback	Informational value enhances emotional value because clear, relevant, and transparent information strengthens trust, satisfaction, and relational commitment, a relationship well-established in B2B relationship marketing and information-quality research (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, Pandey and Mookerjee, 2018).

Identified connection	Direct theoretical support
S9 ECONOMIC Value of the feedback influences RECIPROCAL Value of the feedback	Economic value strengthens reciprocal value because partners who benefit financially develop trust and a sense of obligation that fosters loyalty, cooperation, and mutual commitment - a relationship well-established in B2B reciprocity and value-creation research (Berenguer-Contri et al., 2024, Gounaris and Almoraish, 2024)
S10 INFORMATIONAL Value of the feedback influences ECONOMIC Value of the feedback	Informational value enhances economic value because actionable, high-quality insights improve decision-making, operational efficiency, and customer alignment, a relationship well-established in research on information quality and performance outcomes (Goldstein, 2023, Zahay et al., 2004, Huber, 1991)
S11 ENABLER Dynamic Capability influences feedback INFORMATIONAL Value of the feedback	Enabler dynamic capabilities enhance the informational value of feedback because coordination, integration, and IT-enabled routines strengthen knowledge flows and generate more actionable insights, a relationship well-established in dynamic capability research (Easterby-Smith and Prieto, 2008, Chen et al., 2021, Ilmudeen, 2022)
S12 ACT on Feedback Dynamic Capability influences ECONOMIC Value of the feedback	Acting on feedback enhances its economic value because executional responsiveness, agility, and operational follow-through translate insights into financial performance gains, a relationship well-established in dynamic capability research (Wu et al., 2010, Akkaya and Qaisar, 2021).
S13 Feedback ENABLER Dynamic Capability influences ECONOMIC and SOCIAL Values of the feedback	Enabler dynamic capabilities enhance both the economic and social value of feedback because structured processes, coordination mechanisms, and supportive routines strengthen integrated value creation, a relationship well-established in sustainability-oriented capability research (de Almeida Barbosa Franco et al., 2024, Schoenmaker and Schramade, 2023).
S14 EMOTIONAL Value of the feedback influences feedback ENABLER Dynamic Capability	Emotional value shapes enabler dynamic capabilities because positive emotional experiences influence decision-making, openness to adaptation, and the development of organizational routines, a relationship well-established in research on emotions and capability formation (Kars-Unluoglu and Kevill, 2021, Helfat and Peteraf, 2003).
S15 ECONOMIC Value of feedback influences GATHER feedback Dynamic Capability	Economic value drives the development of gather-feedback capabilities because financial performance pressures motivate firms to invest in sensing and data-collection routines, a relationship well-established in research on economic drivers of organizational sensing and capability enhancement (Carriere-Swallow and Haksar, 2019, Wamba et al., 2015, Dyduch et al., 2021)
S16 RELATIONAL Value of the feedback influences ACT on feedback Dynamic Capability	Relational value strengthens act-on-feedback capabilities because trust, shared norms, and long-term relational capital enhance coordination, responsiveness, and joint execution, a relationship well-established in inter-organizational collaboration research (Singh et al., 2024, Liu et al., 2022).
S17 Feedback QUALITY influences feedback EMOTIONAL Value	Feedback quality enhances emotional value because clear, relevant, and timely responses strengthen affective engagement and satisfaction, a relationship established in feedback and communication research (Anseel et al., 2015, Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

At the same time, our analysis reveals several novel connections, which we elaborate in the sections that follow and visualize in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Summary of novelty propositions on interconnections between assets, dynamic capabilities and SET constructs, supplier view. Source: Authors.



Feedback authenticity influences feedback value

Our findings show that authenticity is a critical determinant of how suppliers assess the strategic value of customer feedback. Authentic feedback, characterized by candor, transparency, and alignment with genuine intentions, was consistently perceived as more trustworthy and actionable than feedback shaped by politeness, political considerations, or strategic filtering. When authenticity was low, suppliers frequently misinterpreted the situation, leading to misguided decisions and inefficient resource allocation. This dynamic was evident in a public health program case, where overly positive and ambiguous signals from municipal partners created a false sense of support; substantial investments were made before it became clear that the client had no real intention to advance the initiative. Such examples illustrate how the absence of authenticity can erode the strategic value of feedback by obscuring true expectations and intentions. Notably, authenticity is not widely recognized within the RBV literature as an asset characteristic, and its conceptual linkage to feedback value therefore represents a novel contribution to the understanding of intangible resources in B2B contexts.

Proposition S2. Feedback authenticity positively influences feedback value.

Feedback diversity moderates the relationship between gather and act dynamic capabilities

Our findings indicate that suppliers generally respond to customer feedback, particularly when it arises in unsolicited form. However, the supplier's ability to act is contingent on the customer's capability to generate or surface such feedback in the first place. This dynamic appeared exclusively in the context of unsolicited feedback, suggesting that the *type* of feedback, its valence, spontaneity, and origin, shapes how suppliers mobilize their response capabilities. Unsolicited feedback, when effectively captured and interpreted, can trigger substantial business adjustments, even among customers who do not actively participate in formal feedback processes (Kaul et al., 2025). These observations point to a previously unarticulated mechanism: the possibility that feedback diversity moderates or mediates the transition from gathering to acting on feedback. While prior research has examined feedback's role in organizational learning and dynamic capability activation (Ashford and Cummings, 1983), the influence of feedback diversity on this transition remains underexplored. We propose that diverse feedback, varying in form, valence, and source, enhances interpretive flexibility and responsiveness, thereby strengthening the linkage between gather and act capabilities.

Proposition S5A. Feedback diversity moderates the relationship between gather feedback capability and act-on-feedback capability.

Feedback diversity moderates the relationship between economic value and gather capability

Our findings suggest that the economic value of feedback does not automatically translate into enhanced sensing or data-collection efforts; rather, this relationship is contingent on the diversity of feedback available to the supplier. When feedback is rich, varied, and multidimensional, economic stakes appear to heighten organizational attentiveness and motivate investments in gathering routines. Conversely, when feedback is homogeneous or narrowly scoped, even strong economic incentives may fail to trigger meaningful capability activation, as firms lack the informational breadth needed to detect emerging issues or opportunities. Although prior research has examined how economic pressures shape organizational learning and sensing behaviors, the moderating role of feedback diversity in this process has not been explicitly theorized. This interplay introduces a novel perspective on how value perceptions and informational heterogeneity jointly influence dynamic capability deployment.

Proposition S15A. Feedback diversity moderates the relationship between the economic value of feedback and the gather-feedback capability, such that economic value strengthens gather capability primarily when feedback is diverse.

Feedback diversity influences emotional, relational, and reciprocal values

Our findings indicate that feedback diversity, the variation in sources, formats, tones, and timing, plays a significant role in shaping the emotional, relational, and reciprocal value that suppliers derive from customer feedback. Diverse feedback tends to evoke stronger emotional engagement, as varied and personalized forms of communication make recipients feel acknowledged and valued (Dai et al., 2025). Relationally, diversity fosters trust and mutual understanding by incorporating multiple perspectives and more humanized formats, such as face-to-face conversations, voice messages, or personalized comments. These richer forms of interaction were particularly appreciated in post-COVID client exchanges, where in-person communication was perceived as more meaningful and energizing. Feedback diversity also strengthens reciprocity: when feedback is thoughtful, multidimensional, and delivered through channels that signal care or investment, suppliers are more inclined to respond in kind, whether through improved performance, collaborative behavior, or continued dialogue (Voss et al., 2019). Social Exchange Theory supports this dynamic, suggesting that diverse and meaningful exchanges increase the likelihood of reciprocal behavior in organizational relationships (Mitchell et al., 2012). Despite its relevance, the influence of feedback diversity on emotional, relational, and reciprocal value remains underexplored in B2B contexts, offering a novel perspective on how communication practices shape inter-organizational engagement.

Proposition S18. Feedback diversity positively influences the emotional, relational, and reciprocal value of feedback.

Feedback quantity influences reciprocal value

Social Exchange Theory (SET) positions reciprocity as a central mechanism in interorganizational relationships (Blau, 1964b), yet its role within B2B feedback systems remains insufficiently theorized. While prior research has emphasized how trust, commitment, and emotional engagement foster reciprocal behaviors (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), the influence of feedback quantity, the volume or frequency of feedback requests, has received limited attention (Kahmann and Mulder, 2011). Recent work highlights that reciprocity in B2B innovation and relationship management is more complex than previously assumed (Ren et al., 2025), suggesting the need to examine additional antecedents. Our findings reveal that excessive feedback requests may actually diminish reciprocal engagement: when the volume of questions becomes too high, suppliers perceive the process as burdensome, reducing their willingness to respond. This dynamic suggests that feedback quantity can shape reciprocal value not by increasing engagement, but by signaling respect, or lack thereof, for the respondent's time and effort. By linking feedback quantity to reciprocal value, this study introduces a novel extension to SET and enriches the understanding of feedback as a strategic resource in B2B contexts.

Proposition S19. Feedback quantity influences the reciprocal value of feedback, such that excessive feedback volume diminishes reciprocal engagement.

Managerial contribution

This study provides operational insights for managers seeking to strengthen feedback practices and improve supplier–customer collaboration in B2B settings. First, by mapping the supplier-side feedback process into six dynamic capabilities (gather, integrate, analyze, share, act on, and enable), the findings highlight that effective feedback management requires more than collecting information. Managers should invest in enabling structures such as clear routines, internal coordination mechanisms, and supportive cultural norms that make feedback processing systematic rather than ad hoc. The identification of enable feedback as a distinct capability underscores the importance of building organizational conditions that sustain continuous learning and responsiveness.

Second, the study introduces a comprehensive set of feedback asset characteristics that managers can use as diagnostic criteria when evaluating the quality and usefulness of customer input. Beyond established dimensions such as value, depth, quality, quantity, diversity, sharedness, and tacitness, we identify authenticity as a critical yet often overlooked characteristic. Managers should be attentive to whether feedback is genuine or strategically filtered, particularly in solicited contexts. The taxonomy developed, ranging from honest to politicized or agenda-driven feedback, provides a practical tool for assessing the reliability of customer signals and avoiding costly misinterpretations.

Third, the findings show that feedback generates multiple forms of value for suppliers, including economic, informational, relational, emotional, social, reciprocal, and fairness value. Managers can leverage this insight by designing feedback processes that intentionally cultivate these value dimensions. For example, diverse feedback channels (e.g., face-to-face, voice, written) can enhance emotional and relational value, while balanced feedback volumes can strengthen reciprocal engagement. Recognizing these value pathways helps managers move beyond transactional feedback collection toward more relational and mutually beneficial exchanges.

Finally, the study identifies several novel interconnections with direct managerial relevance. Feedback diversity was shown to influence emotional, relational, and reciprocal value, and to moderate or mediate key capability linkages, such as between economic value and gather capability, or between gather and act capabilities. Managers should therefore avoid relying on narrow or homogeneous feedback streams. Instead, cultivating diverse feedback sources and formats can improve sensing accuracy, strengthen relationships, and enhance the likelihood that feedback will translate into meaningful action.

Collectively, these contributions equip managers with a more nuanced understanding of how feedback functions as a strategic resource and how organizational capabilities and communication practices can be designed to unlock its full value in B2B relationships.

Limitations and future research proposal

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the empirical setting, suppliers in the Eastern European medical and pharmaceutical sector, offers a focused and contextually rich environment, but it may limit the transferability of insights to other industrial markets with different regulatory structures, power asymmetries, or relational norms. Second, the qualitative design relies on self-reported accounts, which may introduce retrospective bias, particularly in relation to sensitive constructs such as authenticity, reciprocity, or political filtering of feedback. Third, although the study identifies several novel constructs and interconnections, it does not empirically test the proposed relationships; quantitative validation is required to assess their generalizability and explanatory power. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the data restricts our ability to observe how feedback capabilities and value perceptions evolve over time, an important consideration in long-term B2B relationships.

These limitations open several promising avenues for future research. First, the newly identified constructs, such as enable feedback capability and feedback authenticity, should be examined across different industries and cultural contexts to establish their boundary conditions and relevance in diverse industrial markets. Second, longitudinal and process-oriented research designs would allow scholars to trace how gather–analyze–act routines unfold over time and how authenticity, diversity, and other asset characteristics shift across relationship stages. Third, the role of feedback diversity warrants deeper investigation, particularly its potential mediating or moderating effects on dynamic capabilities and value creation. Experimental or quasi-experimental studies could isolate the effects of different feedback formats, tones, and channels on emotional, relational, and reciprocal value.

Fourth, the taxonomy of feedback authenticity developed in this study invites conceptual refinement. Future research could explore how authenticity is perceived by different actors within the same organization, how it varies between solicited and unsolicited contexts, and how it influences decision accuracy, resource allocation, or conflict escalation. Fifth, we encourage scholars to examine how suppliers conceptualize the multiple dimensions of customer value: economic, informational, relational, emotional, social, reciprocal, and fairness; and how these perceptions shape their responses to feedback. We propose that the feedback process itself may act as a moderating mechanism, influencing how suppliers interpret and prioritize different forms of customer value. Understanding this moderating role would deepen theoretical insight into how value perceptions are constructed, negotiated, and operationalized in industrial relationships.

Finally, as digital platforms, analytics tools, and AI-enabled sensing systems become increasingly embedded in industrial marketing practice (Riti et al., 2025), future research should investigate how these technologies interact with human judgment, relational norms, and dynamic capabilities. Such work would help clarify how organizations can design feedback systems that enhance - not erode - relational quality and strategic responsiveness in B2B markets.

STUDY 3: UNPACKING THE B2B FEEDBACK PROCESS: CUSTOMER-SIDE INSIGHTS INTO RESOURCE USE AND SOCIAL EXCHANGE – QUALITATIVE STUDY IN THE MEDICAL TRADING SECTOR.

This work constitutes an extended dissertation version of a manuscript intended for submission to an academic journal, enabling a fuller exposition of methodological procedures and a more granular presentation of findings than a journal article would permit. The authors are: László Molnár, Tamara Keszey, and Moreno Frau.

Abstract

This study investigates how customer feedback creates value in buyer–supplier relationships by analyzing the dynamic capabilities and asset characteristics that shape feedback processes. Drawing on the Resource-Based View and Social Exchange Theory, the research examines how customers scope, detect, generate, adapt, deploy, act on, and document feedback, and how these routines influence informational, economic, relational, reciprocal, and social values. Using six qualitative cases from the medical device trading sector in Central and Eastern Europe, the study identifies feedback-related dynamic capabilities and feedback asset characteristics that jointly determine value creation. The findings show that feedback operates as a multi-stage capability system rather than a simple communication act, producing actionable information, safeguarding operational continuity, supporting regulatory compliance, and strengthening cooperation. The study contributes an integrated model of feedback-driven value creation and highlights mechanisms, such as feedback diversity, evidence quality, and documentation that extend existing theory and offer practical guidance for managers.

Introduction

Business-to-business (B2B) relationships in the medical device and pharmaceutical sectors are shaped by stringent regulatory requirements, complex coordination needs, and long-term interdependencies between buyers and suppliers (Han et al., 2024). In such environments, customer feedback plays a dual role: it informs product and service improvements while also supporting regulatory compliance, operational alignment, and trust across the value chain (Bakalo and Bogale, 2024, Paluri and Mishal, 2020). Despite its strategic importance, B2B feedback, particularly from the customer's perspective, remains underexplored (Molnár et al., 2024). This gap is especially salient in Eastern Europe, where evolving regulatory frameworks and institutional transitions shape how feedback is articulated, interpreted, and acted upon (Chettri and Ravi, 2024, McDermott and Kearney, 2025).

Existing research has largely emphasized supplier-side responses, managerial strategies, and performance metrics (Abraham et al., 2023, Molnár et al., 2024), while giving limited attention to the experiences and practices of customers who provide feedback (Bilro et al., 2023, Gounaris and Almoraish, 2024). In contrast, B2C scholarship has evolved from viewing feedback as a satisfaction indicator to conceptualizing it as an active, customer-driven process embedded in value co-creation (Yi and Gong, 2013, Siering et al., 2018). B2B research, however, has only recently begun to acknowledge customers as co-creators of value (Kohtamäki et al., 2018) and to call for more relational, customer-centric perspectives (Gounaris and Almoraish, 2024). Yet, systematic examination of how customers themselves generate, communicate, and leverage feedback in B2B exchanges remains limited.

This study addresses this gap by examining how customers in Eastern Europe's medical device and pharmaceutical trade experience and enact feedback within complex, regulated B2B relationships. Drawing on six in-depth interviews with professionals in procurement, distribution, and clinical evaluation, we adopt a qualitative, hybrid inductive - deductive approach (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The Resource-Based View (RBV) provides a lens for understanding how feedback enhances organizational capabilities, while Social Exchange Theory (SET) illuminates its relational and reciprocal dimensions (Barney, 1991, Peteraf, 1993). Integrating these perspectives enables a comprehensive analysis of how feedback creates informational, economic, relational, and reciprocal value (Blau, 1964b).

Accordingly, this study asks: How do customers in regulated B2B markets generate, communicate, and leverage feedback, and through which mechanisms does this feedback create value for both parties?

Our findings make three contributions relevant to B2B marketing and industrial relationship management. First, we conceptualize feedback as a multi-stage dynamic capability system, including scoping, detecting, generating, adapting, deploying, acting on responses, documenting, and enabling feedback - rather than a single communicative act. Second, we identify previously unarticulated mechanisms of value creation, such as feedback diversity, evidence-rich communication, and regulatory-driven documentation, which extend RBV and SET by demonstrating how feedback functions simultaneously as a strategic capability and a relational currency. Third, we provide empirical insights from an under-researched region and sector, highlighting how regulatory pressures and institutional conditions in Eastern Europe shape feedback practices in ways not captured by existing literature.

Together, these contributions advance theoretical understanding of B2B feedback and offer actionable implications for managing supplier relationships in regulated industrial markets.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. We begin by outlining the theoretical background and methodological approach, after which we present the empirical findings. These findings are then developed into broader discussion themes that highlight the study's contributions. Finally, we offer managerial implications, acknowledge the study's limitations, and propose directions for future research.

Theoretical background

In B2B, customers are motivated to give feedback less by convenience or rewards and more by strategic, relational, and compliance-driven factors (Bilro et al., 2023). Customers provide feedback to strengthen trust, co-create value, manage risks, and ensure alignment with their long-term goals (Pathak et al., 2022). From an RBV perspective, feedback is a resource contribution that enhances organizational capabilities, while from a SET perspective, it is a reciprocal exchange that sustains partnerships (Ahmed et al., 2018). Following from these considerations, the study turns to the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Exchange Theory (SET) as guiding frameworks.

RBV, originally proposed by Barney (1991), explains how firms achieve and sustain competitive advantage by leveraging internal resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and well-organized (VRIO) (Pattanayak and Punyatoya, 2020). Unlike external market or industry factors, RBV emphasizes the central role of a firm's intrinsic capabilities in driving long-term performance. Within this framework, feedback serves as a mechanism for organizational learning, adaptation, and continuous improvement, enabling firms to refine and reconfigure resources in response to changing conditions (Chukwuma et al., 2024).

A growing body of research has employed the Resource-Based View (RBV) to explore customer perspectives, often linking it to Customer Engagement Behavior (CEB). Zeng et al. (2023) conceptualize diverse forms of business-to-consumer (B2C) engagement and connect them to underlying motivational drivers, offering valuable insights into why customers interact with firms beyond transactional exchanges. This framing underscores the strategic role of engagement as a resource that contributes to value creation. Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) further advance this perspective by identifying four distinct types of CEB: augmenting, co-developing, influencing, and mobilizing; and argue that such behaviors, including feedback, constitute resource contributions that strengthen firm capabilities. They emphasize the integration of customer knowledge as a critical strategic asset. Similarly, Harmeling et al. (2017) highlight customer-provided feedback and advocacy as resource flows that organizations can harness to drive innovation and sustain competitive advantage.

Social exchange, as defined by Homans (1958), involves reciprocal transfers of tangible or intangible resources, where participants weigh potential rewards and costs. It is rooted in voluntary actions motivated by expected returns, forming the basis for understanding interpersonal and interorganizational dynamics (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). SET argues that relationships endure through reciprocal interactions built on perceived value and mutual benefit. In B2B contexts, feedback functions as a form of exchange (Lambe et al., 2001), emerging when parties anticipate constructive outcomes: suppliers provide evaluative input to improve coordination and efficiency, while buyers offer feedback to enhance service delivery, innovation, or strategic alignment (Lambe et al., 2001, Simmons et al., 2010). These exchanges strengthen trust and support the longevity of partnerships (Liu et al., 2018).

To better grasp the customer perspective of feedback within Social Exchange Theory, it is essential to first distinguish between B2C and B2B exchanges. Unlike B2C contexts, B2B exchanges are characterized by long-term contracts, strategic alignment, and mutual dependence (Lambe et al., 2001). Here, feedback functions as a form of exchange (Lambe et al., 2001, Simmons et al., 2010): Suppliers provide evaluative input to improve coordination and efficiency. Buyers offer feedback to enhance service delivery, innovation, and strategic alignment (Håkansson and Ford, 2002, Walter et al., 2001). These reciprocal exchanges are not merely transactional but relational, reinforcing trust and commitment over time (Lambe et al., 2001).

When considering customer-based values in B2B relationships, economic value emerges as a central driver (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006, Walter et al., 2001). Customers are willing to provide feedback when they anticipate constructive outcomes such as improved service delivery, innovation, or compliance support (Jeong and Oh, 2017). In this sense, feedback is not merely transactional but part of a broader relational exchange that sustains long-term partnerships and reduces uncertainty (Simmons et al., 2010).

Liu et al. (2018) further argue that customers provide feedback when they believe suppliers will reciprocate with improvements or concessions, highlighting the reciprocal nature of value creation. This reciprocity extends to customer behavior: high-quality service is rewarded with loyalty and continued engagement (Ali, 2020).

Recent scholarship reinforces this perspective. Gounaris and Almoraish (2024) contend that feedback in B2B contexts is a voluntary, reciprocal act that strengthens trust and supports the longevity of partnerships. They frame customer input as a relational resource within Social Exchange Theory (SET), emphasizing its strategic role in sustaining interorganizational ties.

Taken together, these studies suggest that customer feedback in B2B exchanges can be meaningfully interpreted through Social Exchange Theory, as a voluntary and reciprocal contribution motivated by anticipated benefits and embedded in relational exchanges. While SET provides a crucial lens for understanding trust, loyalty, and long-term collaboration, it is not the only perspective; the Resource-Based View (RBV) complements this by framing feedback as a strategic resource that enhances innovation, efficiency, and competitive advantage.

Integrating RBV and SET offers a comprehensive foundation for analyzing B2B feedback processes (Molnár et al., 2024). Together, they illuminate how customers interpret feedback, assess its benefits for themselves and for the suppliers, and leverage it to build capabilities and relationships. This dual-framework approach highlights the interdependencies between feedback-related assets, dynamic organizational capabilities, and socio-relational outcomes.

Methodology

This study adopts a multiple-case study design (Frau et al., 2022), a method well-suited for investigating preliminary research questions (Yin, 2003). Such an approach offers a rich empirical perspective on the complexities of social phenomena (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Moreover, the use of multiple cases allows for the cross-validation of emerging insights across varied contexts, thereby enhancing the robustness and theoretical generalizability of the findings (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

Respondents

This study derives its insights from firms operating within the pharmaceutical and medical device trading sectors. While pharmaceuticals have long constituted a prosperous and stable segment of the global economy (Terblanche and Burgess, 2011), the medical device industry has been gaining increasing prominence within the broader healthcare landscape (Maresova et al., 2015). Although both sectors represent substantial economic weight globally (Bhardwaj, 2024), they have received comparatively limited scholarly attention with respect to B2B feedback mechanisms (Molnár et al., 2024). To address this gap, we delimit our focus to trading activities in pharmaceuticals and medical devices, concentrating specifically on high-ranking respondents from the customer side.

In this study, customer-side leaders are defined as those engaged in the acquisition of medical or pharmaceutical products, either for direct institutional use (e.g., hospitals) or for redistribution. While such customers may also act as suppliers within the broader healthcare ecosystem, our analysis concentrates specifically on their role as purchasers and their engagement in feedback mechanisms associated with procurement activities. In this sense our respondents are customers and as such feedback providers.

A purposive case selection strategy was employed, guided by the expectation that the chosen cases would yield theoretically significant insights and contribute meaningfully to conceptual development (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). To minimize selection bias within the medical device/pharma trading industry, we applied predefined inclusion criteria (Frau et al., 2022): a) firms representing geographical diversity across Eastern

Europe; b) firms of all sizes, ensuring coverage of small, medium, and large players, measured both by revenue and number of employees; c) firms with strong potential to identify corresponding business counterparts, enabling bilateral evaluation of the feedback process from both customer and supplier perspectives, as highlighted in earlier studies.

We further diversified our sample by including medical device wholesalers, pharmaceutical retail and wholesale operations, and hospitals, thereby supporting robust theory building and enhancing the generalizability of findings (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, Yin, 2003). The selection process began with a pool of nine firms recommended by industry experts in the medical device sector. Data collection concluded after six cases, upon reaching theoretical saturation (Saunders et al., 2018). Respondents were drawn from the Czech Republic (1), Slovak Republic (1), Hungary (2), Slovenia (1), and Kosovo (1). For anonymity reasons, the country of origin is excluded from the case study overview, summarized in Table 3.1. Collectively, these countries represent approximately 4% of Europe's population (30 million inhabitants) and 3% of its nominal GDP. Firm size was defined using external databases to map revenue and employee numbers, applying the SME classification of the European Commission (Commission, 2003).

Table 3.1: Overview of the customer case studies. Source: Authors.

Case	**Company Description**	**Size**	**Informant**	**Interview duration**
Customer 1	Medical device and hygiene products distributor	small	Director of Operations	0:46
Customer 2	Pharmaceutical and medical device wholesaler	medium	Chief Financial Officer	0:37
Customer 3	Pharmaceutical and medical device wholesaler	large	Head of Purchasing	0:49
Customer 4	Pharmaceutical and medical device wholesaler	large	Business Director	0:35
Customer 5	Hospital	large	Head of Purchasing	0:32
Customer 6	Medical device retailer	medium	Managing Director	0:34

Data collection

To reduce risks of retrospective rationalization, impression management, and information bias, data were drawn from multiple complementary sources (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, Miles and Huberman, 1994). The core of the dataset consisted of semi-structured interviews, selected because they allow respondents with deep contextual knowledge to articulate their perspectives in detail and engage meaningfully with the subject matter (Kumar et al., 1993).

A detailed interview guide is included in Annex 2. The script was organized into five thematic clusters: (1) attitudes toward feedback, (2) frequency and process of feedback exchange, (3) handling and responsiveness, (4) perceived value and strategic implications, and (5) roles and responsibilities in feedback practices. All interviews were conducted in English, which was not the native language of either the interviewer or the participants. Sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently returned to respondents for clarification when necessary.

Between July and December 2023, six interviews were completed, each lasting between 32 and 49 minutes. Data collection was terminated once theoretical saturation was reached, as no new categories emerged and recurring themes such as "regular feedback request" consistently reappeared across cases (Saunders et al., 2018). This repetition strengthened confidence in the adequacy of the dataset (Saunders et al., 2018).

To complement the primary data, publicly available third-party information on firm revenues and employee numbers was consulted. These external sources provided validation of organizational size and complexity, thereby reducing potential selection bias.

Although no ethical concerns arose during the study, participating pharmaceutical and medical device firms requested anonymity. To protect confidentiality, no identifiers that could link responses to specific organizations were retained (Coffelt, 2017).

Analysis

To analyze the data, we employed a hybrid coding strategy (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) that combined inductive and deductive techniques. This approach ensured both explanatory depth and theoretical alignment (Proudfoot, 2023) while also enhancing flexibility and validity through the triangulation of theory-driven and data-driven insights (Proudfoot, 2023).

First, the customer data were analyzed inductively, allowing categories to emerge organically from the dataset. Building on this inductive coding, we then applied a deductive approach, aligning the emergent observations with predefined categories drawn from the Resource-Based View (Dynamic Capabilities and Asset Types) and Social Exchange Theory. These three theoretical lenses, applied during the second and third coding stages, provided alternative interpretive pathways through which to examine the data. The constructs identified within each lens enabled us to trace connections among the emerging categories and to explore interrelationships between elements of the RBV and SET frameworks. This dual inductive–deductive process allowed for both data-driven insight and theory-informed interpretation, strengthening the analytical depth of the study.

NVivo 15 software was employed to conduct the analysis, with coding structured around a three-stage process that combined inductive and deductive logic (Frau et al., 2022). Each stage was tailored to the relevant theoretical framework and moved progressively from detailed, case-specific codes toward more generalized categories (Cabiddu et al., 2019). To safeguard against confounding bias, two co-authors independently carried out the coding, organizing emerging categories and mapping their interrelations. Their separate analyses were then compared to evaluate consistency and reliability. Methodological rigor was further reinforced by adhering to established qualitative research criteria - credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 2016). This systematic approach strengthened the validity of the findings while minimizing risks associated with information bias, case selection, and confounding factors.

Data analysis from RBV dynamic capabilities perspective

In the Dynamic Capabilities view of RBV, we employed a hybrid coding strategy. In the first phase, an inductive approach allowed themes to emerge organically from the interview transcripts. Each of the six cases was analyzed independently, using a data-driven framework to cluster text into coherent categories (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In the next stage, these categories were systematically compared with existing theoretical classifications to examine how company-related information may function as a dynamic capability. The final phase involved deductive reasoning, synthesizing second-order codes into higher-order aggregate dimensions that revealed relational patterns in the data. These dimensions were refined and validated through engagement with relevant literature, integrating inductive insights with deductive theory-building (Saldaña, 2021). We then attempted to match the third-order coding with supplier codes from an earlier study, with limited success. It is important to emphasize that, unlike supplier-focused coding, our approach was defined from the customer's perspective as the feedback provider. Therefore there are differences in definitions, especially within the dynamic capabilities as customers or feedback provider's processes are different from the feedback receivers' processes. The resulting categories, included in Table 3.2, comprised: scope feedback, detect feedback need, generate feedback, adapt feedback, deploy feedback, act on feedback response, document feedback and enable feedback.

Table 3.2: Data analysis process – RBV, feedback dynamic capabilities, customer view. Source: Authors.

First Coding Stage	Second Coding Stage	Third Coding Stage
Define base for feedback Select parameters to follow up Scope before the supplier realizes the importance	Select parameters Initiate focus area	Scope feedback
Regular feedback request Supplier approaches customer Feedback is forced by law Realize price difference Assume different conditions	Get feedback request Compliance feedback Realize deviations	Detect feedback need
Constant measurement of KPIs Conscious market information gathering Prepare factual details Compile market observation Prepare answer to solicited input request	Intentional generation Turn observation to input Follow input request	Generate feedback
Pharma vs Medical device logic Questionnaire complexity Long term relationship helps Supply chain footprint differences Company size/geo/culture differences Bigger company-better understanding Importance of supplier defines frequency	Contextual responsiveness Temporal evolution Strategic recalibration Relational sensitivity	Adapt feedback
Not all suppliers get frequent feedback Supplier size defines frequency Inform when the sales drop Initiate change in supplier behavior Grant an award Mutual interest to solve a problem Exclusive feedback source	Strategic delivery Activate supplier processes Value maximization	Deploy feedback
Measure feedback impact Suppliers act differently to feedback Prefer suppliers who listen	Analyze feedback response Redesign cooperation	Act on feedback response
Test results must be stored Supplier yearly evaluation	Feedback files Management report	Document feedback
Data collection responsible Different responsibility levels No written process General process for supplier evaluation No complex systems SAP usage provides data	People enablement Process Enablement Technology enablement	Enable feedback

Data analysis from RBV feedback assets perspective

A similar coding logic was applied in a parallel stream of analysis from an RBV Asset perspective. The first-order codes were consolidated into 13 second-order codes aligned with established constructs in the literature. In the next stage, these categories were systematically compared with existing theoretical classifications to examine how company-related information may function as a strategic asset. The final phase involved deductive reasoning, in which second-order codes were synthesized into higher-order aggregate dimensions that revealed relational patterns in the data. These dimensions were refined and validated through engagement with relevant literature, integrating inductive insights with deductive theory-building (Saldaña, 2021). We then matched the third-order coding stage with supplier codes from an earlier study. The resulting categories included feedback value, depth, quality, quantity, sharedness, and diversity, while no evidence emerged for feedback authenticity or feedback tacitness. Table 3.3 summarizes the asset characteristics.

Table 3.3: Data analysis process – RBV feedback assets, customer view. Source: Authors.

First Coding Stage	Second Coding Stage	Third Coding Stage
Feedback is an effort for cooperation Feedback to change business practice	Feedback operational value	Feedback Value
Feedback on product features Feedback on cooperation and communication Feedback media channels Inability to give face-to-face feedback	Content depths Source/Channel depths	Feedback Depths
Customer improves feedback depths Level of commitment in regular feedback sessions	Customer Commitment	Feedback Quality
Regular unsolicited (by the supplier) data sharing Regular solicited data sharing Award in different categories Quantity depends on the ad hoc issues	Volume of the feedback Relative volume	Feedback Quantity
Customer organizes the frequency of the dialogue Debate on accepting customer data	Iterative feedback Extent of realism	Feedback Sharedness
Negative feedback for deviating from plan Feedback as an award (positive!) Organizational source (i.e. function) Planned vs unplanned platforms Feedback collection method Dialogue or one-way data flow Product related feedback Relation related feedback	Valence Feedback source Feedback methodology Feedback direction Feedback content	Feedback Diversity

It is important to emphasize that, unlike supplier-focused coding, our approach was defined from the customer's perspective as the feedback provider. This distinction introduces differences in definition. For instance, in the current study, feedback value as an RBV characteristic refers to the perceived benefit for the customer offering the feedback, rather than the perceived value for the supplier receiving it. In a co-creation context, such value would be complementary for both parties (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014); however, our dataset contained no references to this phenomenon.

Data analysis from Social Exchange Theory perspective

The analysis from the Social Exchange Theory perspective followed the same logic as the RBV analyses. In the third coding stage, we were able to establish academically anchored constructs of economic, relational, informational, reciprocal, and social value.

These value constructs are summarized in Table 3.4. Notably, we did not find evidence for emotional or fairness value within our dataset.

Table 3.4: Data analysis process – SET constructs, customer view. Source: Authors.

First Coding Stage	Second Coding Stage	Third Coding Stage
Cooperative business development Prompt sales increase	Joint benefit	Economic Value
Direct business impact Functional value Regulatory compliance	Customer business growth	
Supplier knowledge on improvement Direct business threat (supplier)	Supplier centric value	
Customer feels cared for	Care and Trust	Relational Value
Relationship continuity Cooperation focus	Cooperation	
Customer draws product availability information	Outside in knowledge	Informational Value
Correcting mistakes (internal) together	Inside out knowledge	
Cooperation in feedback creates recognition	Recognition and Celebration	Social Value
Award by the customer motivates supplier for cooperation Status recognition by the award Customer's power as award giver	Reputation and Image enhancement	
Dialogue helps to define common objectives Clinical test forces parties to cooperate	Mutual Objectives	Reciprocal Value
Supplier feels obliged	Obligations	

Findings from the customer perspective

Feedback-related dynamic capabilities (RBV)

In examining B2B feedback from the perspective of the feedback provider, our analysis reveals a coherent set of dynamic capabilities, understood in line with Teece et al.'s (1997) conceptualization of how firms sense, shape, and reconfigure activities, that collectively structure how organizations generate, adapt, and mobilize feedback within inter-organizational relationships. These capabilities: scoping the feedback, detecting the feedback need, generating the feedback, adapting the feedback to the receiver, deploying the feedback, acting on the feedback response, documenting the feedback, and enabling the feedback - form a sequential yet iterative process through which providers navigate uncertainty, tailor their communication, and sustain relational value. Together, they illuminate feedback not as a single act but as an orchestrated capability system that allows firms to learn, coordinate, and influence outcomes across complex B2B interfaces. This is demonstrated in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Summary of the identified constructs – RBV dynamic capabilities, customer view. Source: Authors.

Construct	Definition	Illustrative quote
Scope feedback	The capability to define the boundaries, focus, and depth of the feedback to be given. This includes determining what the feedback should cover (content), what it should exclude, how detailed it should be, and which aspects are most relevant for the receiver's goals and the relationship context.	Customer 2: "*If there is an initiative on our side, we mainly deal with some objective parameters that are important for us, such as, let's say, invoice terms or participation of some our activities or evaluating some level of reaction time that we have from our partner. So we usually evaluate just some important parameters that are important for us.*"
Detect feedback need	The capability to sense and recognize when feedback is required to maintain or improve performance, alignment, or collaboration. It involves noticing deviations, emerging issues, unmet expectations, or opportunities for improvement before they escalate.	Customer 4: "*...when something is urgent, like when something is not working, when there is some problem and we solve it immediately, it's very hard to say how often it is.*" Customer 1:"*…if that product sells much more expensive than other products, we have to give them the feedback.*"
Generate feedback	From the feedback provider's perspective, generate refers to the capability to intentionally create and articulate feedback by transforming experiences, perceptions, and relational insights into communicable inputs that can be mobilized as strategic resources within the supply network (Teece et al., 1997, Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000, Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).	Customer 3: "*...we have normally weekly purchase orders sent to our suppliers, and we are just measuring that what percentage of this order was supplied by the supplier / we could show them all of the details. It means that we have Excel sheets back of the award or the read*" Customer 1:"*...when we asked to them to send to us displays in order to get as much more space as we can. They send to us the displays, we send to them pictures. It helps also that helps to have more sales.*"
Adapt feedback	The customer's capacity to modify the form, content, and timing of feedback in response to changing relational conditions, evolving expectations, and shifting strategic objectives, thereby ensuring its continued relevance and impact within the supply network.	Customer 5: "*...we have two different measuring parts because we are dealing with pharmaceuticals or medicinal products, it means that from quality assurance point of view, we have to make KPIs for the suppliers as well*" Customer 4: „*So generally, we have much more better relationship with local companies because they understand our position and our advantages. And it's easier to negotiate some things with them….*"
Deploy feedback	From the feedback provider's perspective, deploy refers to the capability to strategically deliver and channel feedback into relational exchanges in ways that maximize its influence, activate supplier learning, and reconfigure shared resources to generate mutual value (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).	Customer 1: "*...we inform them in case of the sales are dropping and if we don't have, for example, any other disadvantage of that product, because if the quality is great, if the design is good, then, for example, might be that reason of the prices*" Customer 3: "*I think that it's very interesting because we are starting with working harder with the negative feedbacks behavior suppliers, because we would like to just make them changes in their thinking method*"
Act on feedback response	The capability to translate feedback response insights into concrete actions that address the issue, opportunity, or request identified.	Customer 2: "*...we develop our business cooperation more often with the companies that are closely to us and can communicate with us in such way that they are accepting our opinions.*" Customer 3: „*I think that we could get 20% more positive feedback than in the first time.*"

Construct	Definition	Illustrative quote
Document feedback	The capability to systematically capture, structure, and store feedback in a way that preserves its context, relevance, and traceability.	Customer 5:*„...and then I just file those testing somewhere here....”* Customer 5: “*We have to once a year, which is usually in January or beginning of February, we have to make a report to our management, to our general management, about every supplier”*
Enable feedback	The capability to create the conditions, channels, and relational climate that make it easy and safe for stakeholders to provide feedback.	Customer 4: *“...we do not have any written procedures, but we are doing this on two levels”* Customer 4: *“We needed to collect customer satisfaction from our main suppliers and customers. We are trying to collect data electronically.”*

Scope feedback dynamic capability, customer view

The capability to scope feedback refers to the provider’s ability to purposefully outline the boundaries, focus, and depth of the feedback to be delivered. This involves deciding which issues, performance dimensions, or behaviors should be included, which should be excluded, and the level of detail appropriate for the situation. As Customer 2 explains: *„…we give our feedback to reasons that we evaluate*”. Such scoping requires assessing which elements are most relevant to the receiver’s objectives and the broader relationship context, reflecting the selective attention and prioritization processes emphasized in dynamic capabilities research (Teece, 2007, Teece et al., 1997). By defining the content and granularity of the feedback, the provider engages in a micro-level sensing and shaping activity that aligns with the firm’s broader capacity to interpret environments, focus managerial attention, and configure communication in ways that support relational and strategic outcomes.

Detect feedback need dynamic capability, customer view

The capability to detect the feedback need refers to the provider’s ability to sense when feedback is required to sustain or enhance performance, alignment, or collaboration. It involves recognizing deviations, emerging issues, unmet expectations, or improvement opportunities before they escalate. This early-stage sensing aligns with the foundational role of detection and interpretation in dynamic capabilities, where firms must identify shifts, anomalies, or latent problems in their environment as part of their adaptive processes (Teece et al., 1997, Cavusgil and Deligonul, 2025). By noticing subtle signals and emerging concerns, the provider engages in the micro-level sensing activities that underpin effective coordination and timely intervention in inter-organizational relationships. Customer 4 describes the complexity of such activities: „*Number one is* *some annual meetings where we are negotiating things, what happened in the past year, what we want to improve it into the next year. The second part is when something is urgent, like when something is not working, when there is some problem and we solve it immediately, it's very hard to say how often it i*s”. This capability also includes recognizing situations in which feedback is solicited by the supplier, as such requests similarly signal a perceived need for clarification, alignment, or improvement and therefore fall within the provider’s sensing activities (Cavusgil and Deligonul, 2025, Teece et al., 1997). As Customer 2 explains: „*If our supplier is asking for the feedback, we, of course, give the feedback*”.

Generate feedback dynamic capability, customer view

Generate captures the most prominent capability observed in the data: the provider’s ability to turn lived experiences, day-to-day observations, and relational interactions into concrete feedback messages. Empirically, in our dataset, this capability manifests in three forms. First, **i**ntentional generation, where providers deliberately craft feedback based on accumulated impressions or strategic considerations. As Customer 3 explains: *„…and we are just measuring what percentage of this order was supplied by the supplier*”. Second, turning observations into input, where subtle cues, such as behavioral patterns, performance deviations, or interactional signals, are translated into explicit, actionable statements. Customer 1 refers to market observations:*”... for example, the living standards in [country], for example, are not the same as in Germany,… or as in Sweden*”. Third, providers respond to feedback requests by quickly and coherently assembling relevant information. Across cases, these subprocesses show how providers actively shape the content and timing of feedback, demonstrating that feedback is not merely reactive but a constructed output requiring interpretation, synthesis, and communicative skill. This aligns with the broader understanding of dynamic capabilities as purposeful, knowledge-intensive activities that support adaptation and relational alignment (Teece, 2007, Teece et al., 1997).

Adapt feedback dynamic capability, customer view

Adapt feedback captures the customer’s ability to adjust how feedback is framed and delivered as relational circumstances evolve. Empirically, this involves modifying tone, detail, emphasis, or timing when expectations shift, when collaboration dynamics change, or when strategic priorities are updated. Such adjustments mirror the reconfiguration processes described in dynamic-capabilities research, where organizations reshape existing practices to stay aligned with a changing environment (Teece et al., 1997, Cavusgil and Deligonul, 2025). Across cases, this capability ensures that feedback remains actionable and context-appropriate, preserving its impact and maintaining alignment within the supply network. By the International Council of Harmonization (ICH) (2008) in regulated industries such as pharmaceuticals and medical technology, the ability to adapt feedback is further shaped by strict compliance and quality-assurance requirements. Feedback providers must ensure that any changes to form, content, or timing remain aligned with regulatory expectations, documentation standards, and auditability norms. This adds another layer of constraint and intentionality to the adaptation process, as feedback cannot be altered solely based on relational or strategic reasons but must also satisfy externally imposed quality and reporting obligations, based on the World Health Organization guideline (2007). As Customer 3 emphasized: *"I think that I have to mention that we have two different measuring parts because we are dealing with pharmaceuticals or medicinal products, it means that from quality assurance point of view, we have to make KPIs for the suppliers as well."* This illustrates how adaptation is not only a relational capability but also a compliance-bound activity, requiring providers to balance responsiveness with regulatory rigor.

Deploy feedback dynamic capability, customer view

From the feedback provider's perspective, deploy refers to the capability to purposefully deliver and channel feedback into relational interactions in ways that enhance its impact, stimulate supplier learning, and support the reconfiguration of shared resources to create mutual value (Brandon-Jones and Knoppen, 2018). This involves not only choosing the appropriate communicative pathways and timing but also embedding feedback within ongoing collaboration so that it becomes a catalyst for joint improvement. Feedback deployment can range from informing suppliers about their performance as Customer 5 explains:"*... almost every day we have to let our suppliers know if we are satisfied with the delivery or with the material quality, or, I don't know, response time for delivery or for if something is not available..*" to introducing a wide range award system for suppliers „*It is very interesting because [company] made an award for the suppliers*" (Customer 3). Such deployment reflects the performative dimension of dynamic capabilities, where firms enact practices that shape partner behavior and co-create value (Teece et al., 1997, Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000, Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

Act on feedback response dynamic capability, customer view

Act on feedback response refers to the capability to translate insights derived from a supplier's feedback response into concrete actions that address the underlying issue, opportunity, or request. These actions can take analytical forms, such as systematically interpreting the supplier's reaction, identifying root causes, or evaluating the adequacy and credibility of the response. Customer 3 highlights that process: *„I think that we could get 20% more positive feedback than in the first time"*. They can also be business-oriented, where customers use feedback responsiveness as a criterion for strategic decision-making - prioritizing collaboration, resource allocation, or partnership development with suppliers who demonstrate the capacity to react constructively. As Customer 2 notes: *„… we develop our business cooperation more often with the companies that are closely to us and can communicate with us in such way that they are accepting our opinions"*. In some cases, this capability involves deliberately investing additional time and attention in suppliers who fail to respond adequately, with the aim of elevating the relationship to a more strategic level. Through these analytical and strategic actions, the provider closes the feedback loop and leverages feedback responsiveness as a driver of learning, alignment, and long-term value creation within the supply network. As Customer 3 explains: *„… we are starting with working harder with the negative feedbacks behavior suppliers, because we would like to just make them changes in their thinking method"*.

Document feedback dynamic capability, customer view

Knowledge must be captured, articulated, and stored in forms that allow it to be shared and reused (Nonaka, 1998). Document feedback refers to the capability to systematically capture, structure, and archive feedback in a way that preserves its contextual meaning, relevance, and traceability over time. Beyond supporting internal reporting or managerial oversight, documentation is essential in regulated sectors such as pharmaceuticals and medical technology, where organizations must comply with strict quality-assurance, auditability, and record-keeping requirements (Guideline, 2008). In these environments, feedback records must be complete, accurate, and retrievable to satisfy regulatory expectations and external inspections. This capability becomes even more critical when the customer also acts as a test maker - designing, administering, or evaluating supplier-related tests or assessments. In such cases, the proper filing of test results, feedback exchanges, and corrective-action evidence is indispensable, as these documents form part of the formal quality system and may be subject to regulatory review. As Customer 5 refers to: *„…then I just file those testing somewhere here… … we have to make a lot of administration, because this is some parts of the law, I have to archive everything*”. Through this capability, organizations transform episodic relational insights into durable knowledge assets that support compliance, learning, and long-term value creation within the supply network.

Enable feedback dynamic capability, customer view

Similarly to the supplier-side enablement infrastructure, the feedback provider's enablement capability also comprises people, process, and technology subcategories. It refers to the capability to establish the conditions, channels, and relational climate that make it easy, safe, and worthwhile for stakeholders to share feedback. This includes cultivating the interpersonal skills, procedural routines, and technological tools that lower the barriers to speaking up and ensure that feedback can flow openly and constructively within the relationship. In our dataset, people enablement primarily appeared through the identification of responsible functions:” *in our company we have the merchandisers who are responsible”* (Customer 1), rather than formalized roles or documented procedures. Although explicit written processes were often absent, feedback providers demonstrated a notable degree of technical literacy, ranging from practical Excel skills:” *We are just using some stupid Excel papers or something like that*” (Customer 4) to the use of SAP and other enterprise systems: „*We have SAP system that is recording everything*” (Customer 3). This suggests that even in the absence of codified routines, providers rely on a mix of functional responsibility and technical competence to support feedback collection and communication.

Interconnections between the RBV dynamic capability constructs, customer view

This chapter examines how the dynamic capabilities identified in the previous sections operate not as isolated routines but as an interconnected system that follows a natural sequence - from scoping and detecting, through generating, adapting, and deploying feedback, to acting on, documenting, and ultimately enabling the entire process. Dynamic capabilities are widely understood as interdependent, mutually reinforcing routines that collectively support adaptation and resource reconfiguration (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009). Recent work further emphasizes that dynamic capabilities rely on both stable routines and improvisational adjustments, underscoring their systemic and relational nature (Carvalho, 2023). In addition to this sequential flow, our dataset also revealed several lateral and reinforcing connections between capabilities, indicating that feedback processes operate not only as a linear progression but as a more complex, interdependent system.

C1 SCOPE Feedback dynamic capability influences GENERATE Feedback dynamic capability

Our data shows that the way customers scope feedback - what they choose to pay attention to and define as relevant - directly shapes the content and form of the feedback they subsequently generate. Scoping acts as a filtering mechanism that prioritizes the performance areas customers monitor most closely, particularly KPI-driven or objective parameters of cooperation. As Customer 2 explained, *"they keep looking on their KPIs and they want to communicate the things… they have to succeed on… usually some objective parameters of the cooperation."* This indicates that feedback generation is not an open-ended activity but is anchored in the scoped priorities that guide what is considered important, measurable, and worth communicating to suppliers.

We did not find evidence in the existing literature for an established connection between feedback scoping and feedback generation as a distinct causal link. While this relationship has not been formally theorized, several research streams offer indirect hints that support the logic emerging from our data. Dynamic-capabilities research highlights the role of selective attention mechanisms and filtering routines that determine which signals become inputs for subsequent organizational action, suggesting that scoping shapes what is ultimately produced or communicated (Carvalho, 2023). This perspective indicates that although the scoping - generation link has not been explicitly articulated, it is consistent with broader theoretical understandings of how organizations prioritize, filter, and transform information.

C2 DETECT Feedback need dynamic capability influences GENERATE Feedback dynamic capability

Our data shows that the generation of feedback is directly shaped by what customers detect as deviations, signals, or issues in the supplier relationship. Detection acts as the trigger that determines both the necessity and the substance of the feedback to be produced. When customers identify concrete discrepancies - such as price differences or performance variations - they immediately begin assembling evidence to support the feedback they will generate. As Customer 1 explained, *"we see the difference of the prices… we get those pictures to our producers and we make a proof that comparing this to this."* Detection also occurs through direct interaction with suppliers, where hands-on evaluations or technical discussions surface strengths and weaknesses that then become the basis for formal feedback. As another customer (Customer 5) noted, *"they go together through… pros and cons of this machine."* These examples illustrate that feedback generation is not arbitrary but emerges directly from the issues and insights uncovered during detection activities.

We did not identify any published research that formally links the detection of feedback-relevant issues to the subsequent generation of feedback in customer–supplier relationships. Even so, several theoretical perspectives offer useful indirect grounding for this connection. Within the dynamic-capabilities literature, sensing activities are described as the initial triggers that surface anomalies, performance gaps, or emerging concerns, which then set in motion further organizational responses (Carvalho, 2023). Routine-dynamics research similarly emphasizes that everyday detection work - spotting deviations, comparing performance, or noticing inconsistencies - feeds directly into downstream routines by supplying the cues and materials that later become formalized outputs (Salvato, 2021). Taken together, these perspectives suggest that while the "detect – generate" relationship has not been explicitly articulated in prior studies, it aligns well with broader theoretical accounts of how organizations identify and transform signals into communicable information.

C2A DETECT feedback need mediates the relationship between SCOPE feedback and GENERATE feedback.

Taken together, our findings suggest that detection functions as a mediating mechanism between how customers scope feedback and how they ultimately generate it. Scoping determines which performance areas, KPIs, or cooperation parameters are treated as relevant, but these scoped priorities only become actionable once customers detect concrete deviations, signals, or issues within those predefined domains. In other words, scoping sets the boundaries of what should be monitored, while detection identifies the specific instances that warrant feedback. Once discrepancies are detected, such as price differences, performance variations, or technical shortcomings, customers begin assembling the evidence that forms the basis of the feedback they generate. This layered process indicates that feedback generation is not driven by scoping alone; it is the interaction between scoped priorities and detected issues that produces the content, urgency, and structure of the feedback communicated to suppliers.

C3 ENABLE Feedback dynamic capability influences GENERATE Feedback dynamic capability

Our findings show that feedback enablement, particularly the people dimension, directly shapes how feedback is generated. When frontline personnel such as sales teams act as the primary information conduits, their observations, interpretations, and informal assessments become the raw material from which feedback is produced. As Customer 1 explained, *"We get the information from our sales team who operate in the field… at first, we would check by the management… we will tend to come with a solution without sending feedback to the producers."* This illustrates that the availability, competence, and positioning of personnel influence not only what information enters the system but also whether it is transformed into formal feedback or resolved internally. In this way, enablement conditions determine both the volume and the nature of the feedback that ultimately gets generated.

We did not find evidence of an established academic connection between feedback enablement and feedback generation in the customer–supplier context. However, other research streams provide indirect support for this relationship. Dynamic-capabilities research emphasizes that organizational actions depend on the availability and competence of human actors, who serve as carriers of routines and enablers of information flows (Salvato, 2021).

C4 ADAPT Feedback dynamic capability influences ENABLE Feedback dynamic capability

Our findings indicate that the way customers adapt feedback, particularly how they tailor messages to different cultural, managerial, or market contexts, directly shapes the conditions under which feedback can be effectively enabled. When suppliers operate under foreign leadership or management structures, customers often need to adjust not only the content but also the framing of their feedback to ensure it is understood and actionable. As Customer 4 explained, *"it's more difficult to communicate with them… the thinking of the people are different… they do not understand the specification of the [country] market."* These adaptation challenges influence enablement by determining how easily feedback channels can function, how much relational effort is required, and whether the supplier is capable of receiving and processing the feedback as intended. In this way, adaptation becomes a prerequisite for creating an environment where feedback can flow smoothly and meaningfully.

We did not find evidence in the academic literature for an established connection between adapting feedback and enabling feedback as a formal link. At the same time, several well-established research streams provide indirect theoretical grounding for this relationship. Cross-cultural communication research shows that differences in managerial cognition, communication norms, and cultural expectations can hinder message clarity and reduce the effectiveness of information exchange, making adaptation a prerequisite for enabling functional communication channels (Gudykunst, 2004). International management studies similarly emphasize that when interacting across cultural or organizational boundaries, actors must adjust the framing, detail, and delivery of information to ensure that it is interpretable and actionable for the receiver (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1999). Organizational information-processing theory further argues that communication effectiveness depends on the fit between message complexity and the receiver's interpretive capacity, implying that adaptation directly influences whether communication can be enabled at all (Daft and Lengel, 1986). These perspectives collectively suggest that while the "adapt – enable" link has not been explicitly theorized, it is consistent with broader evidence on how cultural and contextual adjustments are necessary to create conditions in which communication - and thus feedback - can operate effectively.

C5 SCOPE Feedback dynamic capability influences ENABLE Feedback dynamic capability

The way customers scope feedback, particularly how they define what should be measured and monitored, directly shapes the enablement conditions that support the feedback process. When scoping prioritizes KPI-based evaluation, organizations must ensure that the necessary people, processes, and technological structures are in place to generate and interpret those metrics. As one customer (Customer 3) noted, *"we have a reporting team who is making the results for the measurement of the KPIs."* This illustrates that scoping decisions create specific enablement requirements: dedicated personnel, reporting routines, and data-handling capabilities become essential for sustaining the feedback system. In this way, scoping not only determines what is important but also dictates what must be enabled for feedback to function effectively.

We have found only indirect theoretical grounding for the scope-enable relationship. Research on performance measurement systems shows that defining what is measured - particularly through KPIs - creates specific organizational requirements in terms of personnel, processes, and information infrastructures needed to support those measurements (Neely et al., 1995). Similarly, work on management control systems argues that measurement choices shape the design of reporting routines and the allocation of analytical responsibilities, effectively determining what organizational structures must be enabled to process and interpret performance information (Simons, 1994). Organizational information-processing theory further suggests that scoping decisions increase information load and therefore require corresponding increases in processing capacity, such as reporting teams or data-handling routines(Galbraith, 1974).

C6 DOCUMENT Feedback dynamic capability influences ACT ON Feedback reaction dynamic capability.

Our findings show that the way customers document feedback directly shapes how they act on the supplier's reaction to that feedback. Documentation provides a structured record of how suppliers respond, how quickly they react, how thoroughly they address issues, and how reliably they follow through, which then becomes the basis for subsequent customer action. As Customer 5 explained, *"once a year… we have to make a report to our management about every supplier… how long did they take to give me feedback… we give them points, and if the supplier gets really low number of points, then* *he's the last one to call."* This illustrates that documented evidence of supplier reactions is not merely stored; it actively informs how the customer responds - whether by escalating issues, deprioritizing the supplier, or adjusting the strategic relationship. In this way, documentation becomes a critical input for acting on the supplier's feedback response in a consistent and evidence-based manner.

We did not find evidence in the academic literature for an established connection between documenting feedback and acting on the supplier's reaction to that feedback as a formal causal link. Nonetheless, there is indirect theoretical support for this relationship. Work on performance evaluation and supplier management shows that documented records of supplier behavior - such as responsiveness, reliability, and issue-resolution performance - serve as critical inputs for subsequent managerial decisions, including supplier selection, prioritization, and escalation (Krause, 1997, Choi and Hartley, 1996). Similarly, research on organizational learning emphasizes that written records of past interactions enable organizations to compare expectations with actual responses, thereby shaping future action and strategic adjustments (Huber, 1991). Studies on management control systems further argue that documentation transforms dispersed observations into formal evaluative information, which then guides corrective action and resource allocation (Simons, 1994).

Feedback asset characteristics (RBV)

Traditionally, RBV views ASSETS and resources as firm-held (e.g., by suppliers) and central to sustaining competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 1984, Barney, 1991). In relational exchanges, however, customers also mobilize resources, most notably feedback, as part of their strategic positioning (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Within the RBV framework, feedback functions as an intangible relational asset: it enhances provider influence, strengthens relational capital, externalizes knowledge, and fosters co-created innovation (Dyer and Singh, 1998). At the same time, customers leverage feedback to advance their own competitive standing in the supply network (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004, Nambisan and Baron, 2009). Importantly, feedback is not automatic but a voluntary contribution (Homburg and Fürst, 2005, Frow et al., 2015). Customers balance effort (quantity, quality, diversity) against expected outcomes (value) and signal perceptions through valence. Thus, feedback emerges as a co-created strategic asset, jointly shaped by customers and suppliers (Grönroos, 2011, Payne et al., 2008). From our dataset we established six distinct feedback asset characteristics summarized in table 3.6.

Table 3.6: Summary of the identified constructs – RBV feedback asset attributes, customer view. Source: Authors.

Construct	Definition	Illustrative quote
Feedback Value	The perceived benefits customers expect from giving feedback. Customers provide feedback when they anticipate constructive outcomes - better service delivery, product innovation, compliance support, or stronger alignment with their strategic needs.	Customer 6: *"They need our feedback because they can calculate and they can also improve the shipping time. Probably they can easily correct the missing product. We think it is as important as us, so as important as them."*
Feedback Depths	Feedback depth refers to the level of detail, granularity, and contextual richness that customers embed in their input to suppliers. It captures how far customers go beyond surface-level comments to provide in-depth insights, explanations, and evidence that can be mobilized as a strategic resource.	Customer 1: *"...even though you provide pictures, evidence when they see, for example, in reality, I know sometimes it helps them much more. Maybe that one would be a good idea, for example, to have more often visit the places of the person responsible in order to get that feedback more clarified."*
Feedback Quantity	Feedback quantity refers to the amount or volume of feedback information that customers generate about a supplier over time.	Customer 3: *"…we have quarterly, half a year and yearly overview of the products and of the suppliers as well."*
Feedback Quality	The accuracy, relevance, actionability and constructiveness of customer input.	Customer 6*:"... If we have a product what is selling fast and the customer is really like, we give a feedback to calculate. So probably the next order is bigger than the previous one of this type of product"*
Feedback Sharedness	Feedback sharedness refers to the degree to which customer-provided feedback is mutually acknowledged, circulated, and acted upon within the supplier organization.	Customer 3: *"We just have sent … 1,000 units of one product, as in purchasing order, and we get… 10. They told us that they supplied us the whole order. ... I really could just check the data with the purchasing order number, with the data that the order number, the quantity and the received…"*
Feedback Diversity	From a customer point of view, feedback diversity refers to the range and heterogeneity of evaluative input that buyers provide to suppliers. It captures the breadth of perspectives, formats, and content in customer feedback	Customer 3: *"And we have different categories when we are just measuring and have KPIs for the suppliers."*

Feedback value, customer view

Feedback value refers to the strategic usefulness and performance relevance of the information customers hold about a supplier. From a Resource-Based View (RBV), a resource is valuable when it contributes to achieving organizational goals or improving performance outcomes (Barney, 1991). Intangible informational resources - such as performance evaluations, service-level data, or supplier responsiveness metrics - are considered valuable when they help the firm make better decisions, reduce uncertainty, or strengthen its operational effectiveness (Stan et al., 2024). RBV scholarship emphasizes that resources become valuable when they directly support the firm's ability to meet objectives or enhance performance (Barney, 1991). In the context of customer–

supplier relationships, feedback value emerges when the information customers generate captures performance dimensions that matter most for their operations. As Customer 3 explained, "*So it is the most important KPI for [company] at the moment. This is the service level of the supplier… we are just measuring what percentage of this order was supplied by the supplier.*" This illustrates that feedback value is tied to the strategic importance of the metric: when a KPI such as service level directly affects continuity of supply, operational reliability, or internal performance reporting, the feedback associated with it becomes a high-value informational asset.

In the context of customer–supplier relationships, feedback value emerges when the information customers generate captures performance dimensions that matter most for their operations. As Customer 3 explained, "*So it is the most important KPI for [company] at the moment. This is the service level of the supplier… we are just measuring what percentage of this order was supplied by the supplier.*" This illustrates that feedback value is tied to the strategic importance of the metric: when a KPI such as service level directly affects continuity of supply, operational reliability, or internal performance reporting, the feedback associated with it becomes a high-value informational asset.

Thus, feedback value reflects the degree to which feedback information aligns with organizational priorities, influences supplier management decisions, and contributes to achieving performance outcomes - making it a valuable intangible resource in RBV terms (Stan et al., 2024).

Feedback depth, customer view

Feedback depth refers to the level of detail, granularity, and analytical richness contained in the feedback that customers generate about a supplier (Romule et al., 2020). Deep feedback goes beyond surface-level evaluations and includes specific information about what changed, how it changed, and why it matters, covering dimensions such as price adjustments, design modifications, product performance, or quality issues (Romule et al., 2020). As one customer (Customer 1) explained, „ (feedback) … *for any changes or regarding price, regarding design or anything that is related to product or the quality*," illustrating that depth emerges when feedback captures multiple layers of product- and process-related information.

From a Resource-Based View (RBV), depth enhances the strategic value of feedback because intangible informational resources become more valuable when they are rich, detailed, and analytically meaningful (Grant, 1996). RBV scholarship emphasizes that intangible resources, such as knowledge, information, and evaluative insights, contribute to competitive advantage when they provide fine-grained understanding that supports better decisions, reduces uncertainty, and strengthens operational effectiveness (Stan et al., 2024).

Feedback quantity, customer view

Feedback quantity refers to the amount or volume of feedback information that customers generate about a supplier over time. A higher quantity of feedback expands the informational base available for evaluating supplier performance, identifying trends, and supporting managerial decisions (Lo et al., 2025). Quantity is often structured through regular reporting cycles - such as quarterly, semi-annual, or annual reviews - that accumulate observations across multiple products, transactions, and performance dimensions. As Customer 3 described, "*But normally, we have quarterly, half a year and yearly overview of the products and of the suppliers as well*," illustrating how systematic, repeated feedback cycles increase the volume of available information.

From a Resource-Based View (RBV), the quantity of feedback contributes to the strength of the informational resource base because organizations benefit from larger pools of performance data, which enhance their ability to detect patterns, reduce uncertainty, and make more informed decisions (Lo et al., 2025). RBV scholarship emphasizes that intangible resources - such as information and knowledge - gain strategic value when they are accumulated over time and provide a richer foundation for organizational action. In supplier management research, performance assessment frameworks similarly highlight the importance of regular, repeated data collection across multiple periods to ensure reliable evaluation and continuous improvement (Romule et al., 2020).

Feedback quality, customer view

Feedback quality refers to the accuracy, relevance, actionability and constructiveness of the information customers provide about a supplier's products or services. High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and directly connected to operational or commercial decisions. It enables suppliers to understand not only what is happening in the market but also why it is happening and how they should respond. Customer 6 illustrates this general form of high-quality feedback when noting that strong product demand triggers actionable adjustments: "*Yeah, if we have a product what is selling fast and the customer* *is really like, we give a feedback to calculate. So probably the next order is bigger than the previous one of this type of product*." Here, feedback quality lies in its relevance (linked to real sales performance) and decision-usefulness (informing order quantities).

Feedback quality also increases when customers possess unique expertise that allows them to evaluate products in ways others cannot. Customer 5 describes such a case: "*And since there are some special doctors here in our medical center, which are the only doctors for this kind of operation or medical procedure, they often ask us to test those new devices*." This illustrates specialized, high-expertise feedback, which is particularly valuable because it provides insights that are otherwise inaccessible and directly informs supplier development decisions.

Supplier management research reinforces this conceptualization: high-quality feedback must be accurate, relevant, and actionable, enabling suppliers to improve performance and make informed decisions (Krause, 1997). Supplier evaluation frameworks emphasize that meaningful assessment depends on qualitative and quantitative information that reflects real performance, supports decision-making, and guides improvement actions (Kaya Samut and Erdoğan, 2019). High-quality feedback therefore functions as a strategically important intangible resource, strengthening the supplier's ability to adjust production, improve product design, and enhance operational effectiveness (Krause, 1997).

Feedback sharedness, customer view

Feedback sharedness refers to the degree to which feedback information is openly exchanged, mutually accessible, and jointly interpreted between customers and suppliers. High sharedness means that both parties have access to the same performance data, understand how it is measured, and use it collaboratively to guide decisions and improvements. Low sharedness occurs when information is fragmented, withheld, or inconsistently communicated, leading to mismatched expectations and operational inefficiencies (Baah et al., 2022).

Customer 3 illustrates low sharedness when describing a situation where the supplier claimed to have delivered the full order, while the customer received only a fraction: "*We just have sent ... 1,000 units of one product ... and we get… 10. They told us that they supplied us the whole order. ... I really could just check the data with the purchasing* *order number, with the data that the order number, the quantity and the received…*" Here, the absence of shared, verified information creates confusion and undermines trust.

In contrast, Customer 3 also describes a situation where the supplier actively seeks shared understanding of performance measurement: "*And in the case they would like to know deeply how we are measuring this and how can they just stay at this level and just get the awards again and so on*." This reflects an attempt to build mutual visibility, where both sides align on metrics, evaluation criteria, and improvement expectations.

Supplier management research strongly supports this conceptualization. Information sharing is shown to be a critical driver of collaboration, visibility, and performance, enabling partners to synchronize operations, reduce misunderstandings, and jointly improve outcomes (Baah et al., 2022). When performance information is shared, suppliers can better adjust production, maintain service levels, and align with customer expectations. Sharedness therefore functions as a strategically important intangible resource: it enhances relational transparency, reduces uncertainty, and strengthens the supplier's ability to respond effectively (Yang et al., 2022).

Feedback diversity, customer view

Feedback diversity refers to the variety of information types, sources, and methods that customers provide to suppliers - ranging from qualitative insights (e.g., photos, explanations, contextual narratives) to quantitative evidence (e.g., sales reports, performance metrics). High diversity means that feedback is not limited to a single data form but instead combines multiple informational modalities that together create a richer, more multidimensional understanding of product performance. Customer 1 illustrates this clearly: "*So we send to them photos and of course, we have to give to them reasons that that support had the increase in sales. We have to send to them a sales report, for example, during that period of time where you supported us, it had a positive effect in having more sales.*" Here, the customer provides visual evidence, contextual explanations, and quantitative sales data, demonstrating how diverse feedback enables suppliers to validate outcomes, understand causal mechanisms, and make better-informed decisions.

Supplier management research reinforces this conceptualization. Effective supplier evaluation requires a mix of qualitative and quantitative information, because qualitative inputs (e.g., photos, narratives, contextual explanations) capture nuance and real-world conditions, while quantitative data (e.g., sales figures, performance metrics) provide objective, comparable evidence (Ho et al., 2010). Combining these forms of information creates a more comprehensive and actionable assessment of supplier performance, supporting strategic decision-making and continuous improvement (Ho et al., 2010). Diverse feedback therefore functions as a strategically valuable intangible resource: it broadens the informational base, enhances diagnostic accuracy, and strengthens the supplier's ability to refine products, adjust marketing or operational strategies, and respond effectively to customer needs (Yang et al., 2022).

Interconnections between the RBV feedback asset characteristics, customer view

Understanding the six feedback asset characteristics through the customer lens reveals that these dimensions rarely operate in isolation. Instead, they form an interconnected system of intangible resources that jointly shape how suppliers learn, adapt, and create value. Feedback value, depth, quality, quantity, sharedness and diversity reinforce one another: richer information enhances accuracy, shared understanding strengthens responsiveness, and diverse inputs broaden the supplier's capacity to diagnose and improve performance. Examining these interconnections from the customer perspective highlights how feedback becomes a strategically significant resource bundle within the RBV, enabling suppliers to build more adaptive, relational, and performance-enhancing capabilities (Barney, 1991). The interconnections described in the next sections come directly from the patterns we observed in the customer data, ensuring that the analysis reflects what actually happens in practice; these connections are describing antecedents of the feedback value.

C7 Feedback DIVERSITY influences feedback VALUE

Feedback diversity enhances feedback value by providing suppliers with multiple, complementary forms of evidence that deepen their understanding of market realities. Customer 1 illustrates this when explaining that the supplier receives photos, contextual explanations, and sales reports to demonstrate how promotional support translated into increased shelf competitiveness and higher sales. These diverse inputs - visual proof, narrative reasoning, and quantitative performance data - allow the supplier to verify outcomes from different angles, making the feedback more credible and actionable. Customer 1 further notes that in-person visits by supplier representatives can "*clarify much more the picture*," because seeing the retail environment firsthand provides insights that photos or reports alone cannot. Together, these varied information channels enrich the supplier's interpretation of performance, increasing the diagnostic value of the feedback and enabling more informed strategic and operational responses. These empirical findings align with information richness theory, which argues that performance improves when organizations rely on varied and richer forms of information to reduce ambiguity and enhance understanding (Daft and Lengel, 1986).

C8 Feedback SHAREDNESS influences feedback VALUE

Feedback sharedness enhances feedback value by ensuring that customers and suppliers work from the same understanding of market conditions. Customer 1 illustrates this when describing situations where the supplier insisted on launching products that the customer already knew would not sell: *"Of course, sometimes even though we knew that that product would not be sold in our market in order to respect ... their opinion, we tried. But soon they saw it that ... product ... was not good in sales..."* Here, the absence of shared market insight meant that the customer's initial feedback had little value, because the supplier did not yet recognize or accept the underlying market reality. Only once the sales results were shared and jointly acknowledged did the feedback become meaningful and actionable. This demonstrates that without sharedness, even accurate feedback loses strategic value; with shared understanding, feedback becomes a more powerful intangible resource that supports better decisions and prevents costly misalignment. This dynamic reflects Li et al.'s (2006) finding that information only becomes valuable when it is shared and jointly understood, reinforcing that feedback sharedness is essential for transforming customer insights into actionable, high-value guidance for suppliers.

C9 Feedback QUALITY influences feedback VALUE

Feedback quality is a prerequisite for feedback value: when the information provided is inaccurate or based on a flawed measurement system, its value for the customer collapses, even if the topic is relevant**.** Customer 3 explicitly highlights this when reflecting on negative feedback cases: *"The negative one is very interesting, because the negative examples would be that the measurement system is bad. It was very interesting because we could show them all of the details."* Here, the problem is not the negativity of the feedback but its poor quality and misalignment with the customer's own, more accurate data. Because their internal Excel-based records contradicted the supplier's measurement, the feedback could not be trusted or used, forcing both parties to synchronize their systems before any learning or improvement was possible. This illustrates that without accurate, aligned measurement, feedback cannot function as a valuable resource, regardless of its intent. This pattern aligns with established findings that information only becomes valuable when it is accurate, reliable, and based on sound measurement systems, a relationship well-documented in the information quality literature (Wang and Strong, 1996).

Feedback values (SET)

Feedback in B2B relationships can be understood as a form of social exchange in which customers contribute information, evaluations, and expectations with the assumption that these inputs will generate meaningful returns, reflecting the core logic of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964b, Homans, 1958). Drawing on this theoretical foundation, feedback is not viewed as a neutral administrative task but as a strategic exchange shaped by expectations of reciprocity, mutual benefit, and balanced responsiveness (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). From this perspective, customers engage in feedback because they anticipate that their contributions will be acknowledged, reciprocated, and integrated into the ongoing relationship, consistent with SET's emphasis on exchange norms and relational obligations (Molm, 2003). Accordingly, this chapter examines the distinct value types that customers associate with providing feedback, highlighting how these SET-based value dimensions shape their motivations and experiences as feedback providers within supplier relationships. A summary of these value types is presented in Table 3.7.

Economic value, customer view

Economic value in providing feedback reflects customers' expectation that their input will translate into tangible financial and operational gains, such as cost savings, improved margins, or protection against revenue loss (Blau, 1964b, Homans, 1958). Customers describe feedback as a mechanism for ensuring that commercial agreements, pricing structures, and service levels continue to support their business performance - for example, one customer explains that feedback is essential "*to see if the previous agreement was working or if we can do anything better*" (Customer 4).

Table 3.7: Summary of the identified constructs – SET values, customer view. Source: Authors.

Construct	Definition	Illustrative quote
Economic Value	Tangible benefits like cost savings, increased revenue, or ROI from the feedback activity	Customer 4: *„This is connected also with the feedbacks we are talking about if the previous agreement was working or if we can do anything better.”* Customer 1: *„We just inform them that the most harmful for us and also for our supplier is the drop of the sales, for example”*
Relational Value	The customer's perception that providing feedback strengthens trust, mutual understanding, and the overall quality of the relationship with the supplier.	Customer 4: *„Well, definitely we prefer suppliers who are taking care about us.”* Customer 2: *„Yes, of course. It is positive because if a supplier is asking for a feedback, of course, he's customer-driven. That means he cares about our attitude as well. He cares more about us like we are the customers.”*
Informational Value	The customer's perception that providing feedback generates useful knowledge - about product availability, operational issues, or performance gaps - that helps both parties make better decisions and correct problems quickly.	Customer 6: *„Sometimes the factory, they do not have a stock and they need to wait when the factory can make a product because sometimes. But it's not usually maybe one month, one time, two times.”*
Social Value	The customer's perception that providing feedback enhances their social standing, recognition, and influence within the supplier relationship, reinforcing the sense that their voice carries weight and is publicly acknowledged.	Customer 2:”*I think if suppliers handles our feedback, usually it matters more for our, let's say, purchasers, for the people. Because in that case, if I'm a purchaser and I'm giving the feedback and someone is giving me some feedback, to my feedback, in my opinion, it makes an impression that my opinion matters.”*
Reciprocal Value	The customer's expectation that providing feedback will trigger mutual responsiveness, where cooperative behavior from one side is met with corresponding effort, benefits, or improvements from the other.	Customer 5:”*Yes, of course. It's not unusual that we make our relationship friendly like, which means if the supplier gives me good and fast feedback, that means that he has a good value for me because he's fast. And the next time I would need something, he would be the first one I would ask because I know he's fast, because I have feeling he's here for me.”*

Economic value also emerges when suppliers respond to feedback in ways that directly enhance sales outcomes or reduce costs. As one customer notes, after sharing feedback during a product launch, the supplier “*managed it in a positive way… gave us some extra discount and we upgraded the price*,” contributing to a month where they “*probably doubled the sales*” (Customer 6). Beyond pricing, customers emphasize functional aspects, such as logistics reliability, packaging quality, or reaction time, as economically consequential, because operational failures (e.g., missing boxes or damaged cartons) create downstream financial risks. As another customer (Customer 2) puts it, they rely on objective parameters like invoice terms, participation in activities, or reaction time to evaluate whether the partnership supports their economic goals. In this sense, economic value is not limited to direct monetary gains; it also includes functional performance improvements that prevent losses, reduce inefficiencies, and sustain the commercial viability of the relationship.

Relational value, customer view

Relational value captures the extent to which customers view feedback as a mechanism for deepening trust, strengthening collaboration, and fostering a sense of mutual care in the supplier relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). Customers consistently describe feedback as meaningful when it signals that the supplier genuinely "*takes care about us*" (Customer 4) and demonstrates a customer-driven attitude. When suppliers actively request and respond to feedback, customers interpret this as evidence that "he cares more about us like we are the customers" (Customer 2), reinforcing the feeling of being valued partners rather than transactional buyers. Feedback also supports relational maintenance by enabling both sides to identify and correct mistakes quickly, which customers see as essential for sustaining a long-term partnership: *"it's great value… it maintains and continues the relationship… all of us can rectify mistakes"* (Customer 6). Across interviews, customers emphasize that open discussion, negotiation, and joint problem-solving are central to "*good business*," and feedback serves as the relational glue that keeps these interactions constructive and aligned.

Informational value, customer view

Informational value captures how customers use feedback exchanges to obtain and share critical information that improves transparency, coordination, and decision-making in the supplier relationship (Mohr and Spekman, 1994). Customers emphasize that feedback often reveals operational realities, such as stock shortages or production delays that directly affect their planning: *"Sometimes the factory does not have stock and they need to wait… maybe one month"* (Customer 6). This information helps customers adjust expectations and manage their own downstream commitments. At the same time, feedback provides a structured channel for identifying errors or inefficiencies on both sides, enabling rapid correction and continuous improvement. As one customer explains, feedback *"helps us identify our mistakes and correct it immediately"* (Customer 6), while also allowing the supplier to recognize and resolve their own issues. In this sense, informational value is not only about receiving information but also about co-creating shared understanding that supports smoother operations and strengthens the overall relationship (Mohr and Spekman, 1994, Grönroos and Voima, 2013, Anderson and Narus, 1990).

Social value, customer view

Social value captures how feedback activities elevate the customer's social standing and reinforce their sense of influence in the supplier relationship (Blau, 1964b, Homans, 1958). Customers describe feedback as meaningful when it signals that their opinions matter and are taken seriously by the supplier. As one purchaser explains, when suppliers respond to feedback, "*it makes an impression that my opinion matters*" (Customer 2), strengthening their personal legitimacy and authority within the interaction. This social dimension becomes even more pronounced when feedback is linked to formal recognition mechanisms such as awards. Customers interpret winning a category as a visible marker of competence and status, which motivates them to engage more deeply: "*when someone has the winner of the category… they would like to know deeply how we are measuring this and how can they just stay at this level and get the awards again*" (Customer 3). The award functions as a symbolic resource that places the customer in a position of power - prompting suppliers to be more proactive, attentive, and flexible during negotiations. In this sense, social value arises not only from being heard but from being publicly recognized, which amplifies the customer's influence and strengthens their role in shaping the ongoing relationship, aligning with Gwinner et al (1998) who show that recognition and relational appreciation enhance customers' sense of status and influence within the supplier relationship.

Reciprocal value, customer view

Reciprocal value reflects customers' belief that feedback should initiate a cycle of mutual responsiveness, where their effort is met with corresponding action or benefits from the supplier (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005, Blau, 1964b, Homans, 1958). Customers describe feedback as a way to motivate cooperation, explaining that *"we would like to just make them interested or just make them benefits or give them benefits if they are cooperating with us and it is measured by us as well"* (Customer 3). Reciprocity becomes visible when suppliers respond quickly or proactively, reinforcing a sense of balanced exchange. As one customer notes, "*if the supplier gives me good and fast feedback… the* *next time I would need something, he would be the first one I would ask because I know he's fast, because I have feeling, he's here for me*" (Customer 5). Customers also highlight situations where suppliers match their engagement with commercial flexibility, such as adjusting pricing or supporting sales efforts: "*they also want to improve the sales for us… they give us some extra discount and we upgrade the price and we talk over the pricing*" (Customer 6). In this way, reciprocal value emerges when feedback leads to visible, reciprocal actions that reinforce cooperation and strengthen the ongoing relationship (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Feedback related value sub constructs and the beneficiaries, customer view

Based on our dataset, the customer-perceived value of feedback spans a broad set of performance and capability outcomes, distributed across both supplier and customer benefits, consistent with Social Exchange Theory's distinction between immediate instrumental returns and longer-term relational gains (Blau, 1964b, Molm, 2003), summarized in table 3.8. On the performance side, economic value is experienced as a supplier-centric benefit, as feedback helps suppliers optimize their commercial and operational performance, while customers gain through business growth and functional improvements that arise from joint value creation, reflecting the relational performance mechanisms described by Dyer and Singh (1998) and Morgan and Hunt (1994). Relational value also contributes to performance by strengthening cooperation on both sides, while its capability dimension deepens care and trust for customers, reinforcing the relational infrastructure that supports long-term collaboration (Palmatier et al., 2006, Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Informational value operates across both domains: suppliers benefit from outside-in knowledge that helps them refine offerings and processes, while customers gain both outside-in and inside-out knowledge that improves decision-making and operational clarity, aligning with established research on market-driven knowledge flows (Frau et al., 2020, Day, 1994, Kohli et al., 1993). Social Value enhances capability for both parties by fostering recognition, celebration, and reputation building, signaling mutual appreciation and reinforcing the perceived quality of the relationship (Gwinner et al., 1998, Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). Finally, Reciprocal value bridges performance and capability through obligations and mutual objectives: suppliers experience a sense of responsibility to act on feedback, while customers perceive alignment around shared goals that strengthens relational commitment, consistent with reciprocity norms central to Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005, Molm, 2003). Together, these value types illustrate how customers view feedback as a multidimensional exchange mechanism that simultaneously drives operational performance and builds long-term relational capabilities for both sides.

Table 3.8: Summary of the identified subconstructs according to the beneficiary– SET values, customer view. Source: Authors.

Feedback related values	Supplier Benefit		Customer Benefit	
	Performance	**Capability**	**Performance**	**Capability**
Economic Value	Supplier Centric Value Joint Benefit		Customer business growth Functional value Joint Benefit	
Relational Value	Cooperation		Cooperation Care and Trust	
Informational Value		Outside in knowledge		Outside in knowledge Inside out knowledge
Social Value		Recognition and Celebration Reputation and Image enhancement		Recognition and Celebration Reputation and Image enhancement
Reciprocal Value	Obligation	Mutual objectives		Mutual objectives

Recognized SET values of feedback according to company size and maturity, customer view

Across the six cases, a clear pattern of maturity emerged in how companies recognize and generate different SET values during the feedback process. As summarized in Table 3.9, four maturity groups can be distinguished, ranging from low to very high. The low-maturity cases (Case 1 and Case 6) described their feedback practices as purely operational, characterized by informal, ad-hoc, and reactive communication. Case 2 and Case 4 represent a medium level of maturity: although their processes were not formally structured, they referenced KPIs and displayed elements of emerging procedural organization. Case 5 reflects a high level of maturity, where feedback processes were formalized, more systematic, and accompanied by a degree of bureaucratic structure. Case 3 stands out as very high maturity, combining strong digitalization with flexibility toward suppliers and incorporating awards and positive motivational mechanisms into the feedback process.

Within our dataset, maturity appears linked to company size, and this shapes which SET values are recognized and created during feedback exchanges. Smaller companies primarily generate economic and relational value, with direct operational and functional improvements. Medium-sized companies, supported by more structured processes, begin to generate informational value as well. Large companies demonstrate the highest maturity, recognizing and creating economic, relational, and informational value, while also exhibiting social value as an additional outcome for the feedback provider.

Table 3.9: Respondent characteristics and recognized values– SET values, customer view. Source: Authors.

Maturity level	Cases	Characteristics	Recognized SET Values	Size
Low	1, 6	Informal, reactive, operational	Economic, Relational	small, medium
Medium	2,4	KPI-driven, structured but not formalized	Economic, Relational, Informational	medium, large
High	5	Complex, bureaucratic, multi-step	Economic, Relational, Informational, Social	large
Very High	3	Formal KPIs, awards, digitalization, tailored systems		

Prior research shows that larger firms tend to develop more formalized processes, greater information-processing capacity, and more advanced relational capabilities (Galbraith, 1973, Homburg et al., 2000, Dyer and Singh, 1998). These characteristics enable them to recognize a broader set of value types in inter-organizational exchanges, consistent with our finding that company size is associated with higher maturity and more diverse SET value recognition.

Interconnections between the social exchange theory related values, customer view

Across all six cases, the findings reveal that feedback in B2B medical-device supply chains is not a linear, transactional exchange but a multidimensional value-creation mechanism shaped by the interplay of economic, relational, informational, social, and reciprocal value types (Rustholkarhu et al., 2021, Pathak et al., 2022). The cross-case analysis demonstrates that these values rarely appear in isolation; instead, they form reinforcing loops that shape how customers perceive the usefulness and impact of feedback processes.

C10 ECONOMIC Value influences RELATIONAL Value / RELATIONAL Value influences ECONOMIC Value.

In our dataset the mutual reinforcement between economic and relational value is the dominant pattern. Customers repeatedly described how economic adjustments by suppliers strengthened the relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). For example, in Case 1, the customer emphasized that suppliers "*do their best in order to support you… they change it*" (Customer 1). Similarly, in Case 6, reciprocal economic support was explicitly linked to relational closeness: "*They give us some extra discount and we upgrade the price… they want to improve our sales*" (Customer 6). Conversely, strong relationships motivated customers to increase economic engagement. In Case 4, the respondent stated: "*If we have a good feedback and we are satisfied… we try to sell more of these products*" (Customer 4). Customer 2 echoed this dynamic: "*We develop our business cooperation more often with the companies that are closely to us and can communicate with us*". These patterns indicate that economic and relational value form a self-reinforcing cycle, where improvements in one domain spill over into the other (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

C11 INFORMATIONAL Value influences ECONOMIC Value.

Informational value emerged as a central mechanism linking operational realities to commercial performance. Customers frequently described how market insights, competitor comparisons, and product-level data directly influenced economic decisions (Kohli et al., 1993). Customer 1 explained: "*Different markets… require different products… in our market the main article that is sold is honey… in other countries… they sell food supplements*". This information directly shaped product selection and pricing discussions. Similarly, economic pressure triggered deeper information exchange. When sales declined, the same customer noted: "*If sales are dropping… we send pictures, proofs from the shelf*" (Customer 1). Customer 3 reinforced this pattern at a more structured level: "*We are just measuring… the service level of the supplier… what percentage of this order was supplied*". These examples show that informational value is not merely supportive - it is a primary driver of economic outcomes (Kohli et al., 1993).

C12 INFORMATIONAL Value influences RELATIONAL Value

The findings also reveal interdependence between informational and relational value. Information exchange often strengthened relational ties (Anderson and Narus, 1990). In Case 1, the customer described how suppliers actively sought information: "*They ask from us: can we see pictures? Where are you positioning that product?*" (Customer 1). This behavior was interpreted as engagement and cooperation. Customer 5 showed a similar dynamic in the context of medical device testing: "*The supplier comes directly to the department… they go together through pros and cons*". Conversely, relational closeness facilitated more open information sharing. In Case 4, the respondent emphasized the importance of personal interaction: "*We prefer to see each other eye to* *eye… we talk about what can be improved*" (Customer 4). Customer 6 described long-term familiarity enabling smoother communication: "*We have known each other for 17 years… it is like chatting in a formal way*". Together, these findings show that information exchange is not purely technical; it is a relational practice embedded in ongoing cooperation (Anderson and Narus, 1990).

C13 SOCIAL Value influences ECONOMIC and RELATIONAL Value

Social values: recognition, appreciation, and symbolic status, played a subtle but powerful role in shaping relational and economic behavior (Gwinner et al., 1998). Customer 2 highlighted the emotional impact of being acknowledged: "*It makes an impression that my opinion matters*". Customer 3 demonstrated how social value motivates suppliers: "*They were very surprised to get the award… they want to improve to get it again*". Customer 5 showed how social value influences relational closeness: "*If the supplier gives me good and fast feedback… I feel he's here for me*". These examples show that social value acts as a motivational mechanism that strengthens relational commitment and encourages economic improvement (Gwinner et al., 1998).

C14 RECIPROCAL Value influences ECONOMIC Value

Reciprocal value, the expectation that actions will be met with actions, emerged as the mechanism that converts feedback into tangible outcomes (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). In Case 1, reciprocal support was directly linked to economic improvement: "*They give us additional support… it had a positive effect in having more sales*" (Customer 1). Customer 6 echoed this dynamic: "*They give us extra discount… we doubled the sales*". Economic pressure often triggered reciprocal behavior. Customer 1 notes: "*If sales drop… they check for any solution to support us*". Reciprocity also strengthened relationships. In Case 4, the customer described how responsive suppliers are prioritized: "*We prefer suppliers who are taking care about us*" (Customer 4). Another case showed how relational closeness encourages reciprocal behavior: "*We would like to give them benefits if they are cooperating*" (Customer 3). These findings confirm that reciprocity is the behavioral engine through which feedback generates value (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Overall, the findings show that feedback processes generate value through interdependent value dynamics, not isolated categories (Payne et al., 2008, Grönroos and Voima, 2013).

Economic, relational, informational, social, and reciprocal value types form a network of reinforcing loops, explaining why customers perceive feedback as essential for both operational performance and long-term partnership quality (Grönroos and Voima, 2013, Payne et al., 2008). Feedback is therefore not a one-off transaction but a strategic, multi-value exchange system that shapes cooperation, performance, and mutual benefit over time (Ballantyne, 2004).

Interconnections between capabilities, strategic assets and values

This research examines the feedback process from the feedback provider's perspective, identifying the principal constructs associated with both the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Exchange Theory (SET) within the B2B medical device and pharmaceutical trading sector in Eastern Europe. Building on this dual theoretical foundation, the study investigates how these constructs interact, with particular attention to relationships that cut across the boundaries of the two frameworks. Drawing on a robust qualitative dataset, the analysis systematically maps these cross-framework interconnections, revealing how they jointly shape the dynamics of feedback provision in practice.

C15 ACT ON Feedback response dynamic capability influences ECONOMIC Value

While prior research has emphasized the economic value created when suppliers respond effectively to customer feedback (Palmatier et al., 2006, Morgan and Hunt, 1994), the interviews reveal an additional mechanism: the economic value generated by how feedback providers react to the supplier's reaction. When suppliers respond poorly, customers actively adjust their purchasing behavior, prioritizing partners who minimize operational friction. This dynamic is illustrated by one respondent who described a supplier's failure to acknowledge a cancellation request: "*So he didn't reply and he delivered still the goods which we didn't want or needed, and we tried to cancel it. So sometimes it's easier, sometimes it's impossible. And of course, we are trying to work in a special way with companies where there isn't a problem*." (Customer 4). This reaction from the feedback provider, shifting business toward more reliable suppliers, creates economic value by reducing waste, avoiding unnecessary inventory, and reallocating demand to partners who support smoother operations. Thus, the provider's reaction to the receiver's reaction becomes an economic optimization mechanism in its own right, shaping future purchasing decisions and influencing the distribution of business across suppliers. While prior research has established that supplier responsiveness influences economic outcomes (Homburg and Fürst, 2005, Cannon and Homburg, 2001), and that buyers reallocate business based on supplier performance (Forker and Stannack, 2000), the present study identifies a previously unarticulated linkage between these elements. Specifically, the findings show that feedback providers actively react to the supplier's reaction, and this second-order reaction becomes an economic optimization mechanism in its own right. This two-step reaction chain - provider reacting to receiver's reaction - has not been theorized in existing RBV or SET literature and therefore represents a nuanced but meaningful theoretical contribution.

C16 GENERATE Feedback dynamic capability influences INFORMATIONAL Value

RBV highlights the importance of information-generating routines for competitive advantage (Barney, 1991, Teece, 2007). Interviewees described feedback generation as a structured, evidence-based process that produces actionable knowledge. For example: "*We send pictures of competitors' prices… this is the proof we give to producers*." (Customer 1). Another stated: "*Collecting feedback is about data… you can analyze them and think about what is important*." (Customer 2). These practices transform raw market signals into structured information, directly creating informational value. While the literature recognizes information sharing as a relational mechanism (Mohr and Spekman, 1994), the explicit framing of feedback generation as a data-production capability appears to be a novel empirical contribution.

C17 DETECT Feedback need dynamic capability influences INFORMATIONAL Value

Dynamic capabilities theory emphasizes sensing as a precursor to value creation (Teece, 2007). Interviewees demonstrated strong sensing behaviors: "*If sales are dropping… then it must be the price*." (Customer 1). Another explained: "*If KPIs fall below threshold, we give feedback*." (Customer 2). These examples show that customers detect anomalies - sales drops, stock outs, KPI deviations - and convert them into feedback signals. This detection process generates informational value by revealing hidden problems or market shifts. While sensing is well-established in theory (Teece, 2007), the interviews show that feedback need detection is often triggered by frontline operational metrics, which is a more granular mechanism than typically described. This appears to be a novel empirical insight.

C18 ADAPT Feedback dynamic capability influences ECONOMIC Value

Within the RBV perspective, the capability to adapt feedback enables firms to modify routines, processes, and communication patterns in response to supplier constraints or failures (Teece et al., 1997). This adaptive behavior is economically consequential because it determines whether the buyer can maintain operational continuity, avoid supply disruptions, and redirect resources toward more viable collaboration pathways (Cannon and Homburg, 2001). Customer 3 illustrates this mechanism clearly when describing the need to change course when a supplier cannot fulfill orders: "*We are a full-line wholesalers. We cannot do that. We are not ordering from them. We really would like to be better just to making these processes better with them. But then we are just having a new goal, a new aim to improve, to have projects for, for example, together.*" Instead of absorbing the loss, the buyer adapts the feedback process by initiating new routines and requiring additional information flows: "*In this case, we have to start a new process that they are just publishing or sharing new information with us. It means that they have to build a new phase of working daily routine and it's always a new work.*" This adaptive capability creates economic value by preventing operational breakdowns, reallocating purchasing volume toward more reliable processes, and stimulating joint improvement projects that enhance long-term efficiency. Thus, adapting feedback is not merely a communicative adjustment but an economically motivated capability that safeguards continuity and optimizes resource allocation. While prior research has shown that dynamic capabilities enable firms to reconfigure routines in response to environmental changes (Teece et al., 1997, Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000), and SET literature has established that adaptive behaviors influence economic outcomes (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), the explicit link between adapting feedback processes and economic value creation has not been articulated. This study identifies a previously unexamined mechanism whereby buyers adapt their feedback routines, by initiating new processes, requiring additional information flows, or redirecting collaboration efforts, to prevent operational disruption and safeguard economic performance. This represents a nuanced but meaningful extension of both RBV and SET by showing that feedback adaptation itself functions as an economic optimization capability.

C19 DOCUMENT Feedback dynamic capability influences INFORMATIONAL Value

Documentation routines create durable knowledge assets, consistent with RBV's emphasis on knowledge repositories (Grant, 1996). Interviewees described extensive documentation practices: "*We have an Excel form… we keep records*." (Customer 1). Another noted: "*We archive all testing reports for tenders… we must keep them for five years*." (Customer 5). These practices transform feedback into institutional memory, enabling traceability and informed decision-making. While documentation is widely discussed in quality management literature, its role as a feedback-to-knowledge conversion mechanism appears to be a novel empirical insight.

C20 DOCUMENT Feedback dynamic capability influences ECONOMIC Value

Within the RBV perspective, the capability to document feedback operates as a critical organizational routine that safeguards regulatory compliance and thereby generates economic value (Grant, 1996, Teece, 2007, Dyer and Singh, 1998, Pavlou and El Sawy, 2011). Dynamic capabilities research emphasizes that firms create value not only by acquiring information but by systematically storing, structuring, and preserving it in ways that support operational continuity and reduce risk (Grant, 1996). This mechanism is particularly salient in regulated industries, where documentation is legally mandated and non-compliance carries direct financial consequences. As Customer 5 explained: "*Maybe that would be, but otherwise, since we have to make a lot of administration, because this is some parts of the law, I have to archive everything. Maybe it could simplify it, but it's not because the protocol says I have to do this, this and then archive it for I don't know, five years. So on regarding the process, I don't see how it could be simplified*." By documenting feedback, firms ensure traceability, audit readiness, and adherence to legal protocols, each of which protects against fines, delays, and market access risks. Thus, the documentation capability creates economic value by reducing regulatory exposure and maintaining operational legitimacy.

While prior research has recognized documentation as part of knowledge management routines (Grant, 1996), the explicit link between feedback documentation and regulatory-driven economic value has not been articulated in RBV or SET literature. This study identifies a previously unexamined mechanism whereby documentation of feedback functions as a compliance-generating capability, transforming legal obligations into a source of economic protection and value creation.

C21 Feedback DIVERSITY Asset characteristics influences ECONOMIC Value

From an RBV asset-based perspective, feedback diversity expands the range and richness of information available to the supplier, enhancing their ability to interpret operational realities and make economically valuable adjustments (Daft and Lengel, 1986). Diverse feedback formats, such as written evidence, photographs, and in-person observations, provide complementary insights that reduce ambiguity and improve diagnostic accuracy. Customer 1 illustrates this mechanism by noting that "*even though you provide pictures, evidence… when they see, for example, in reality, I know sometimes it helps them much more,"* and further suggesting that *"maybe it would be a good idea… to have more often visit the places… in order to get that feedback more clarified.*" This diversity of feedback inputs creates economic value by enabling suppliers to diagnose problems more accurately, reduce misalignment costs, and implement more effective corrective actions. In SET terms, richer and more varied feedback lowers uncertainty, strengthens relational understanding, and improves the efficiency of joint problem-solving, ultimately contributing to smoother operations and reduced transaction costs. While prior research acknowledges that information richness and multimodal communication enhance understanding in buyer–supplier relationships (Mohr and Spekman, 1994, Daft and Lengel, 1986), neither RBV nor SET has explicitly conceptualized feedback diversity as a strategic asset that generates economic value. This study introduces a novel mechanism by showing that diverse feedback formats function as complementary informational assets that reduce ambiguity, strengthen diagnostic accuracy, and improve joint problem-solving efficiency. By demonstrating that varied feedback modalities enhance the supplier's interpretive capacity and lower relational uncertainty, the findings extend RBV's asset-based view and SET's economic value logic, revealing that feedback diversity itself constitutes a previously unarticulated source of economic value in inter-organizational exchanges.

C22 Feedback DIVERSITY Asset characteristics influences RECIPROCAL Value

As the informational value of feedback increases, so does the willingness of the supplier to reciprocate through cooperation, responsiveness, and resource provision. From an

RBV perspective, high-value feedback (rich in evidence, justification, and performance insight) constitutes a strategically useful informational asset that enhances the supplier's ability to evaluate outcomes and make informed decisions (Grant, 1996, Teece, 2007). This elevated value triggers reciprocal behaviors consistent with SET, as partners respond to valuable inputs with greater engagement and support (Blau, 1964b, Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Customer 1 illustrates this dynamic clearly: "*So we send to them photos and of course, we have to give to them reasons that that support had the increase in sales. We have to send to them a sales report… it had a positive effect in having more sales.*" The buyer's provision of high-value, evidence-based feedback prompts the supplier to reciprocate with tangible resources and cooperation: "*They send to us the displays, we send to them pictures. It helps also that helps to have more sales*." In this exchange, valuable feedback functions as a relational currency, strengthening trust, motivating supplier responsiveness, and generating reciprocal value through improved support, resource allocation, and joint performance gains. While prior research has acknowledged that high-quality information exchange strengthens relational outcomes (Mohr and Nevin, 1990, Mohr and Sohi, 1995, Anderson and Narus, 1990, Jap and Ganesan, 2000), to our knowledge, neither RBV nor SET has systematically examined feedback value as a driver of reciprocal behavior. This study introduces a novel mechanism by showing that the more valuable the feedback is as an informational asset, the stronger the supplier's motivation to reciprocate with cooperation and resources - revealing feedback value itself as a previously unarticulated source of reciprocal value in inter-organizational exchanges.

C23 Feedback Quality Asset characteristics influences RELATIONAL Value

Economic value strengthens relational value (C10), and this link is further reinforced by the quality of feedback exchanged between partners. High-quality feedback enhances credibility and trust, consistent with communication-quality research (Mohr and Nevin, 1990). Interviewees repeatedly emphasized the importance of evidence-based communication: "*We always have written feedback; pictures, comments, proofs*." (Customer 1). Another respondent highlighted the power of verifiable data: "*We show them exact SAP data… they cannot deny it*." (Customer 3). Such high-quality feedback reduces ambiguity, prevents unnecessary conflict, and strengthens relational bonds. Customer 3 described a situation in which the supplier initially displayed a negative attitude toward both the feedback and the cooperation itself, until confronted with precise, verifiable evidence: "*One of them just told me, 'Okay, you have to show me that we don't* *have this activity with you….' I really could just check the data with the purchasing order number*." While existing theory recognizes the importance of communication quality, the interviews reveal a more specific nuance: evidence-rich, verifiable feedback acts as a relational stabilizer, restoring trust and cooperation when tensions arise, a mechanism that is not widely discussed in the literature.

Discussion

This chapter interprets the findings through the three theoretical lenses applied in the analysis, Resource-Based View (RBV) Dynamic Capabilities and Assets, and Social Exchange Theory (SET). By moving beyond the descriptive presentation of results, the discussion examines how connections between constructs align with, extend, or challenge existing academic knowledge. Table 3.10 and 3.11 summarize those connections that are fully supported by prior literature and those that are indirectly supported.

Table 3.10: Identified connections between constructs supported by prior literature. Source: Authors.

Identified connections, Customer view	Direct theoretical support
C7 Feedback DIVERSITY influences feedback VALUE	Information richness theory: performance improves when organizations rely on varied and richer forms of information to reduce ambiguity and enhance understanding (Daft and Lengel, 1986)
C8 Feedback SHAREDNESS influences feedback VALUE	Information only becomes valuable when it is shared and jointly understood (Li et al., 2006)
C9 Feedback QUALITY influences feedback VALUE	Information only becomes valuable when it is accurate, reliable, and based on sound measurement systems, a relationship well-documented in the information quality literature (Wang and Strong, 1996).
C10 ECONOMIC Value influences RELATIONAL Value / RELATIONAL Value influences ECONOMIC Value.	Economic and relational value form a self-reinforcing cycle, where improvements in one domain spill over into the other (Morgan and Hunt, 1994)
C11 INFORMATIONAL Value influences ECONOMIC Value.	Informational value is not merely supportive - it is a primary driver of economic outcomes (Kohli et al., 1993)
C12 INFORMATIONAL Value influences RELATIONAL Value	Information exchange is not purely technical - it is a relational practice embedded in ongoing cooperation (Anderson and Narus, 1990).
C13 SOCIAL Value influences ECONOMIC and RELATIONAL Value	Social value acts as a motivational mechanism that strengthens relational commitment and encourages economic improvement (Gwinner et al., 1998)
C14 RECIPROCAL Value influences ECONOMIC Value	Reciprocity is the behavioral engine through which feedback generates value (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).
Company size influences maturity level and the complexity of values recognized during feedback process	Larger firms typically exhibit more formalized processes, higher information-processing capacity, and stronger relational capabilities (Galbraith, 1973, Homburg et al., 2000, Dyer and Singh, 1998).

Re-establishing links that are already known in the literature is academically valuable because it demonstrates the robustness, transferability, and contextual validity of established theories within the medical device/pharma trading sector - an empirical setting that remains under-examined. Confirming existing relationships also strengthens the credibility of the analytical approach and provides a stable foundation for identifying where the data diverge from theoretical expectations.

A second group of connections is not directly addressed in prior research but can be inferred indirectly from adjacent theoretical arguments. These findings contribute by bridging conceptual gaps, showing how established constructs behave in a context where they have not been explicitly studied. Such indirect alignment indicates that the mechanisms observed in this study are theoretically plausible yet empirically under-documented, thereby offering opportunities for refinement and extension of RBV and SET.

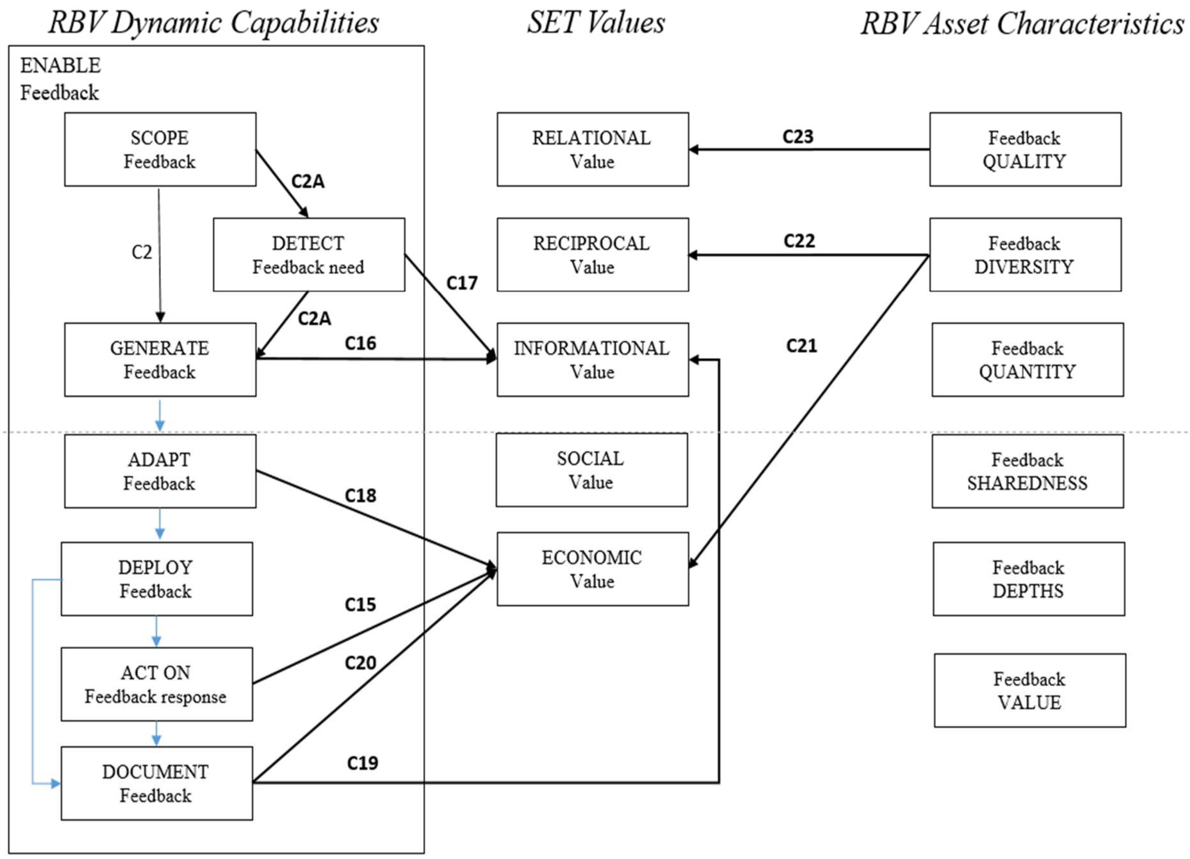
Table 3.11: Identified connections between constructs supported indirectly by prior literature. Source: Authors.

Identified connection, Customer view	Indirect theoretical support
C1 SCOPE Feedback dynamic capability influences GENERATE Feedback dynamic capability	Dynamic-capabilities research highlights the role of selective attention mechanisms and filtering routines that determine which signals become inputs for subsequent organizational action, suggesting that scoping shapes what is ultimately produced or communicated (Carvalho, 2023)
C3 ENABLE Feedback dynamic capability influences GENERATE Feedback dynamic capability	Dynamic-capabilities research emphasizes that organizational actions depend on the availability and competence of human actors, who serve as carriers of routines and enablers of information flows (Salvato, 2021)
C4 ADAPT Feedback dynamic capability influences ENABLE Feedback dynamic capability	Organizational information-processing theory (Galbraith, 1973) further argues that communication effectiveness depends on the fit between message complexity and the receiver's interpretive capacity, implying that adaptation directly influences whether communication can be enabled at all (Daft and Lengel, 1986)
C5 SCOPE Feedback dynamic capability influences ENABLE Feedback dynamic capability	Organizational information-processing theory further suggests that scoping decisions increase information load and therefore require corresponding increases in processing capacity, such as reporting teams or data-handling routines(Galbraith, 1974).
C6 DOCUMENT Feedback dynamic capability influences ACT ON Feedback reaction dynamic capability.	Documented records of supplier behavior support managerial decisions such as selection, prioritization, and escalation (Krause, 1997, Choi and Hartley, 1996). Written records also enable learning by comparing expected and actual responses (Huber, 1991), and management control research shows that documentation turns dispersed observations into formal evaluative information guiding corrective action (Simons, 1994).

Finally, several connections appear to be novel, particularly those related to dynamic capabilities on the customer side of the B2B feedback process. Existing literature rarely examines how B2B customers, or feedback providers, mobilize capabilities to generate, structure, and deliver feedback (Bilro et al., 2023, Molnár et al., 2024). Moreover, the study reveals cross-framework linkages between RBV and SET that are seldom explored together. These insights suggest that feedback processes are simultaneously resource-based and relational, and that their value emerges from the interplay between capability deployment and reciprocal exchange.

Together, these three categories of findings, confirmed, indirectly supported, and novel, form the basis for the theoretical contributions developed in the remainder of this chapter. The proposition numbering aligns with the sequence used in the findings chapter and the summary of our propositions is visualized in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Proposed connections between RBV dynamic capabilities, asset characteristics, and SET values, customer view. Source: Authors



Detect feedback need RBV dynamic capability influences generate feedback RBV dynamic capability

Our findings indicate a clear linkage between customers' ability to detect issues and their ability to generate feedback. Although this relationship has not been explicitly theorized in prior B2B feedback research, several theoretical perspectives provide indirect support. Dynamic capabilities scholarship conceptualizes sensing activities as the triggers that surface anomalies or performance gaps and initiate subsequent organizational responses

(Carvalho, 2023). Routine dynamics research similarly emphasizes that detection work supplies the cues and materials that feed into downstream routines, including the creation of formal outputs (Salvato, 2021).

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that the "detect–generate" linkage is theoretically coherent even if under-articulated in existing literature. Our study therefore extends current understanding by demonstrating that, in B2B feedback processes, detection is a foundational mechanism that shapes and activates feedback generation, rather than a separate or peripheral activity.

Proposition C2. The stronger a customer's capability to detect feedback-relevant issues, the more effectively it can generate structured and evidence-based feedback.

Detect feedback need RBV dynamic capability is a mediator between scope feedback and generate feedback RBV dynamic capabilities

Our findings indicate that detection feedback acts as a mediating mechanism between how customers scope feedback and how they ultimately generate it. While scoping defines which performance areas or cooperation parameters are considered relevant, these priorities only translate into action when customers detect concrete deviations or signals within those predefined domains. Scoping therefore establishes the boundaries of attention, but detection identifies the specific instances that warrant response.

This suggests that feedback generation is not driven by scoping alone; rather, it emerges from the interaction between scoped priorities and detected issues, which together shape the content, urgency, and structure of the feedback produced. This mediating role aligns with broader theoretical accounts in dynamic capabilities and routine dynamics, where initial framing activities guide attention, but subsequent detection work determines when and how responses are activated.

Proposition C2A (Mediation). Detection of feedback-relevant issues mediates the relationship between feedback scoping and feedback generation, such that scoped priorities influence the content and form of generated feedback primarily through the issues identified during detection activities.

Act on feedback response RBV dynamic capability influences economic value of the feedback

Prior research has shown that effective supplier responses to customer feedback create economic value by improving performance, reducing costs, and strengthening exchange relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, Palmatier et al., 2006). Our findings extend this understanding by identifying an additional mechanism: the economic value generated by how feedback providers react to the supplier's reaction**.** When suppliers respond inadequately, customers adjust their purchasing behavior, reallocating business toward partners who minimize operational friction. This second-order reaction - customers acting on the supplier's response - functions as an economic optimization mechanism, reducing waste, avoiding unnecessary inventory, and directing demand to more reliable suppliers.

While prior studies acknowledge that supplier responsiveness affects economic outcomes (Cannon and Homburg, 2001, Homburg and Fürst, 2005) and that buyers shift business based on supplier performance (Forker and Stannack, 2000), the linkage between these two streams has not been articulated. Our findings show that customers do not simply evaluate supplier responses; they act on them, and this action produces tangible economic consequences. This two-step reaction chain - provider reacting to receiver's reaction - is not theorized in RBV or SET, making it a nuanced but meaningful contribution to understanding how economic value emerges in B2B feedback processes.

Proposition C15. The more effectively customers act on suppliers' feedback responses, the greater the economic value they realize through reduced operational friction and optimized purchasing decisions.

Generate feedback RBV dynamic capability influences informational value

RBV emphasizes the strategic importance of routines that generate and transform information into organizational advantage (Barney, 1991). Our findings extend this view by showing that feedback generation itself functions as an information-production capability. Through structured, evidence-based practices, customers convert raw market signals into organized, analyzable knowledge, thereby directly creating informational value.

While prior research recognizes information sharing as a relational mechanism in buyer–supplier interactions (Mohr and Spekman, 1994), the explicit conceptualization of feedback generation as a data-production routine has not been articulated in existing literature. This framing represents a novel contribution, positioning feedback generation not merely as communication but as a capability that systematically produces actionable information.

Proposition C16. The more effectively customers generate structured, evidence-based feedback, the greater the informational value created for both parties.

Detect feedback need RBV dynamic capability influences informational value

Dynamic capabilities theory positions sensing as the initial mechanism through which organizations identify changes, anomalies, or emerging issues that can lead to value creation (Teece, 2007). Our findings extend this perspective by showing that feedback-need detection itself generates informational value. By identifying deviations in performance, operations, or market conditions, customers surface issues that would otherwise remain hidden, thereby producing actionable insights for both parties.

While sensing is well established in the literature, our results reveal a more granular mechanism**:** detection in B2B feedback processes is frequently triggered by frontline operational metrics such as sales patterns, stock levels, or KPI thresholds. This operationally grounded form of sensing has not been explicitly discussed in prior research and therefore represents a novel empirical insight into how informational value emerges in customer–supplier relationships.

Proposition C17. The more effectively customers detect feedback-relevant issues, the greater the informational value created through the identification of hidden problems and emerging market signals.

Adapt feedback RBV dynamic capability influences economic value

Within the RBV perspective, the capability to adapt feedback enables firms to modify routines, processes, and communication patterns in response to supplier constraints or failures (Teece et al., 1997). Our findings show that this adaptive behavior is economically consequential because it allows buyers to maintain operational continuity, avoid supply disruptions, and redirect resources toward more viable collaboration pathways - mechanisms consistent with prior work on purchasing reallocation and performance optimization (Cannon and Homburg, 2001).

While dynamic capabilities research has long established that firms reconfigure routines in response to environmental changes (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000, Teece et al., 1997), and SET literature links adaptive behaviors to economic outcomes (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), the explicit connection between adapting feedback processes and economic value creation has not been articulated**.** Our study identifies a previously unexamined mechanism: buyers adapt their feedback routines - by initiating new processes, requiring additional information flows, or redirecting collaboration efforts, to prevent operational disruption and safeguard economic performance.

This insight extends both RBV and SET by showing that feedback adaptation functions as an economic optimization capability, not merely a communicative adjustment.

Proposition C18. The more effectively customers adapt their feedback processes in response to supplier constraints or failures, the greater the economic value realized through continuity protection and optimized resource allocation.

Document feedback RBV dynamic capability influences informational value

Documentation routines create durable knowledge assets, aligning with RBV's emphasis on organizational knowledge repositories (Grant, 1996). Our findings show that documenting feedback transforms episodic signals into institutional memory, enabling traceability, comparison over time, and more informed decision-making.

While documentation is well established in quality management and control systems research, its explicit role as a mechanism that converts feedback into organizational knowledge has not been articulated in prior literature. This represents a novel empirical insight, positioning documentation not merely as administrative record-keeping but as a capability that directly generates informational value.

Proposition C19. **The more effectively customers document feedback, the greater the informational value created through enhanced traceability, organizational learning, and knowledge retention.**

Document feedback RBV dynamic capability influences economic value

From an RBV perspective, the capability to document feedback functions as a routine that safeguards regulatory compliance and thereby protects economic performance (Grant, 1996, Teece, 2007). Dynamic capabilities research emphasizes that value is created not only through acquiring information but through systematically storing and preserving it in ways that reduce operational and regulatory risk. This is especially important in regulated industries, where documentation ensures traceability, audit readiness, and adherence to legal protocols - each of which prevents fines, delays, and market-access disruptions.

While documentation is recognized in knowledge-management literature, the explicit link between feedback documentation and regulatory-driven economic value has not been articulated. Our findings show that documenting feedback operates as a compliance-generating capability, transforming legal obligations into a mechanism for economic protection.

Proposition C20. The more effectively customers document feedback, the greater the economic value realized through regulatory compliance and reduced risk exposure.

Feedback diversity RBV asset influences economic value

From an RBV perspective, feedback diversity functions as a complementary informational asset that enhances suppliers' ability to diagnose issues and make economically valuable adjustments (Daft and Lengel, 1986). Varied formats (written, visual, and in-person) reduce ambiguity, strengthen interpretation, and lower misalignment costs.

In SET terms, richer feedback reduces uncertainty and improves joint problem solving, contributing to lower transaction costs. Although prior work recognizes the value of information richness, neither RBV nor SET has conceptualized feedback diversity as a strategic asset that generates economic value. Our findings introduce this mechanism by showing that diverse feedback inputs enhance diagnostic accuracy and relational efficiency.

Proposition C21. Greater diversity of feedback formats increases economic value by improving diagnostic accuracy and reducing uncertainty.

Feedback diversity RBV asset influences reciprocal value

Feedback diversity increases the informational value of what customers provide, and this richer, evidence-based input functions as a strategic informational asset from an RBV perspective (Grant, 1996, Teece, 2007). High-value feedback enhances the supplier's ability to evaluate performance and, consistent with SET, motivates reciprocal behaviors such as cooperation, responsiveness, and resource provision (Blau, 1964b, Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Although prior research links high-quality information exchange to stronger relational outcomes, neither RBV nor SET has explicitly conceptualized feedback diversity as a driver of reciprocity. Our findings introduce this mechanism by showing that diverse, high-value feedback acts as a relational currency that strengthens trust and elicits supplier support.

Proposition C22. Greater diversity in feedback formats increases reciprocal value by motivating stronger supplier cooperation and resource provision.

Feedback quality RBV asset influences relational value

High-quality, evidence-based feedback enhances credibility and trust, consistent with communication quality research (Mohr and Nevin, 1990). By reducing ambiguity and preventing unnecessary conflict, high-quality feedback acts as a relational stabilizer, strengthening cooperation and restoring trust when tensions arise.

While prior work highlights the importance of communication quality (Mohr and Spekman, 1994, Mohr and Sohi, 1995, Morgan and Hunt, 1994), our findings introduce a more specific nuance: verifiable, evidence-rich feedback functions as a relational asset that reinforces relational value beyond its informational or economic effects.

Proposition C23. Higher feedback quality increases relational value by enhancing credibility, reducing ambiguity, and stabilizing cooperation.

Managerial contribution

This study offers actionable insights for managers seeking to improve supplier collaboration, operational efficiency, and value creation through structured feedback processes. By unpacking the dynamic capabilities and asset characteristics that shape feedback exchange, we identify several levers that managers can use to strengthen inter-organizational relationships and optimize performance outcomes.

Managers should recognize that feedback is not a one-off message but a multi-stage capability involving scoping, detecting, generating, adapting, deploying, and documenting. Each stage contributes differently to value creation. Scoping and detecting feedback needs help focus attention on relevant performance areas and surface actionable issues. Generating and adapting feedback enables structured, evidence-based communication and responsive adjustment to supplier constraints. Documenting feedback ensures traceability, compliance, and institutional learning. By investing in routines that support each stage, firms can build a robust feedback capability that enhances both informational and economic value.

Detection is a critical mediating mechanism between scoped priorities and feedback generation. Managers should ensure that frontline teams are equipped to identify deviations, such as KPI drops, stock outs, or pricing anomalies, and translate these into feedback signals. This operationally grounded sensing capability enables timely and targeted responses, improving diagnostic accuracy and reducing misalignment costs.

High-quality, evidence-rich feedback enhances credibility and trust, especially in tense or ambiguous situations. Diverse formats (photos, reports, in-person observations) provide complementary insights that improve supplier interpretation and responsiveness. Managers should encourage teams to vary feedback modalities and ensure that communications are backed by verifiable data. This strengthens relational bonds and motivates reciprocal resource provision from suppliers.

When suppliers fail to meet expectations, adaptive feedback routines allow buyers to redirect collaboration efforts, initiate new processes, and maintain operational continuity. Managers should treat feedback adaptation as a strategic capability, one that not only prevents disruption but also stimulates joint improvement projects. This is especially important in dynamic or regulated environments where flexibility and compliance are critical.

In industries with strict compliance requirements, feedback documentation is not just administrative overhead; it is a source of economic protection. Archiving feedback, testing reports, and performance records ensures audit readiness and reduces exposure to fines or delays. Managers should formalize documentation routines and treat them as part of the firm’s knowledge infrastructure.

The informational value of feedback directly influences supplier willingness to reciprocate. When customers provide high-value, structured feedback, suppliers are more likely to respond with displays, support, and cooperation. Managers should view feedback as a relational currency and train teams to communicate in ways that elicit reciprocal value.

Limitations

This study offers novel theoretical and empirical insights, yet several limitations constrain the scope and generalizability of the findings. First, the research is based on six cases, which, while sufficient for theory building, limits the breadth of variation captured across industries, geographies, and organizational structures. Second, all cases are drawn from Central and Eastern Europe, a region with distinct market dynamics, regulatory environments, and relational norms. These contextual features may influence how feedback capabilities are enacted and how value is perceived, potentially limiting transferability to other regions.

Third, the study focuses exclusively on the medical device and pharmaceutical distribution sector, a highly regulated domain where documentation, compliance, and traceability play an unusually prominent role. As a result, some mechanisms, particularly those related to documentation and regulatory-driven economic value, may manifest differently in less regulated industries.

Fourth, the research captures the buyer perspective only, which means supplier-side interpretations, constraints, and strategic considerations remain unexamined in this study. Including both sides of the dyad could reveal additional dynamics or challenge some of the assumptions embedded in the current model.

A further limitation concerns language. Although all interviews were conducted in English, neither the interviewer nor the respondents were native speakers. This may have introduced subtle misunderstandings, reduced linguistic nuance, or constrained respondents' ability to articulate experiences as freely or precisely as they might have in their native language. While efforts were made to clarify meanings during the interviews, language remains a potential source of interpretive bias.

Finally, the qualitative design relies on self-reported practices, which may be subject to recall bias, selective framing, or social desirability effects. Although triangulation and probing were used to mitigate these risks, observational or longitudinal data would strengthen causal claims.

These limitations do not undermine the contributions of the study but highlight opportunities for future research to test, refine, and extend the proposed framework across broader contexts.

CROSS-STUDY COMPARISON: DUAL PERSPECTIVES ON B2B FEEDBACK

Our first study, the SLR, examined the existing literature through the lens of influencing factors and consequences within a co-creation process. Approximately 93% of the reviewed studies were situated in B2C contexts and were predominantly quantitative. Social Exchange Theory (SET) served as the dominant theoretical foundation. Antecedents, mediators, and moderators were typically grouped into personal/individual, relational, process-related, or product-related categories, while outcomes clustered around brand-level effects, value-proposition outcomes, and process-related consequences. However, these insights largely reflect B2C dynamics (Molnár et al., 2024).

Following the SLR suggestion to deepen understanding of feedback in B2B settings, we conducted a qualitative exploration on both sides, supplier and customer, of the feedback process. Using a hybrid coding logic, we applied Resource-Based View (RBV) theory (Wernerfelt, 1984) to conceptualize feedback as a strategic asset and dynamic capabilities as the mechanisms through which firms leverage it. SET (Blau, 1964a), which is well-established in the feedback literature (Molnár et al., 2024), was used to map the value dimensions attributed to feedback. Although the two qualitative studies were not conducted with dyadic customer–supplier pairs, their shared industry and geographical context allows for a meaningful comparison of the findings across both sides.

Dual perspectives on feedback asset characteristics

Study 2 analyzed qualitative input from representatives of seven supplier companies, all positioned as feedback receivers. Study 3 mirrored this approach with six customer representatives acting as feedback providers. In a regulated healthcare B2B market in Eastern Europe, we found that suppliers conceptualize feedback as a set of assets that can be mobilized as strategic resources. These assets include value, depth, quantity, and quality. Additional characteristics, such as whether feedback is mutually shared between parties (feedback sharedness), the diversity of feedback, and its level of tacitness also emerged as important. While these characteristics are known in the literature, we identified an additional asset dimension: authenticity, drawn from psychology, referring to the extent to which feedback is truthful and aligned with the provider's intended identity. Respondents emphasized that not all feedback is honest, and our dataset was rich enough to develop a taxonomy of authenticity, ranging from genuine feedback to strategic misrepresentation.

When examining customers as feedback providers, we identified the feedback asset characteristics. These characteristics largely mirrored those we identified on the supplier side (Table 4.1). However, in the customer dataset we found no references to feedback tacitness or feedback authenticity, suggesting that these dimensions are more salient for feedback receivers than for feedback providers.

Table 4.1: Asset characteristics of the feedback by appearance at suppliers and customers. Source: Author.

Asset characteristics	Supplier (feedback receiver)	Customer (feedback provider)
Feedback Value	X	X
Feedback Depth	X	X
Feedback Quantity	X	X
Feedback Quality	X	X
Feedback Sharedness	X	X
Feedback Diversity	X	X
Feedback Tacitness	X	
Feedback Authenticity	X	

Tacit elements of feedback are typically visible to the receiver and not to the provider. This asymmetry reflects a well-established insight in knowledge theory (Grant, 1996): individuals are often unaware of the tacit components embedded in their own knowledge, because such knowledge feels natural, self-evident, and effortless to articulate (Polanyi and Sen, 2009). As a result, feedback providers rarely recognize or label their own input as tacit; they focus on conveying content rather than reflecting on the structure or form of their communication. In contrast, feedback receivers must interpret, decode, and contextualize the information, which makes tacitness highly salient to them. This aligns with research showing that the user of knowledge experiences tacitness more acutely than the holder of knowledge, because interpretation requires identifying gaps, ambiguities, and implicit assumptions (Grant, 1996).

Similarly, feedback authenticity emerges as a receiver-side perception rather than a provider-side intention. Communication research shows that authenticity is typically inferred by the audience based on contextual and relational cues, rather than consciously produced by the communicator (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). Feedback providers generally assume their own sincerity due to the well-documented illusion of transparency, whereby individuals believe their intentions are more visible than they actually are

(Gilovich et al., 1998). In contrast, feedback receivers must interpret the motives and credibility behind the message, making authenticity a salient evaluative dimension.

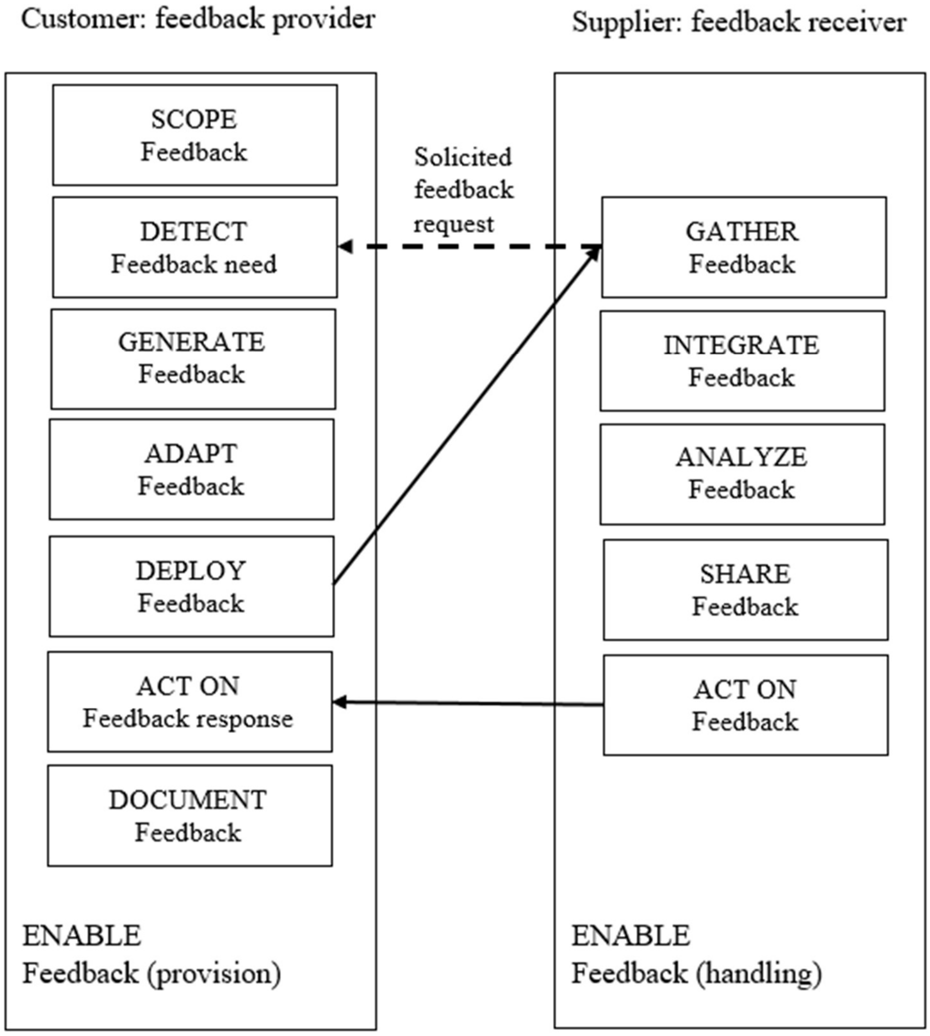
Generally in B2B relationships, those asymmetric behaviors are further reinforced by role expectations: suppliers are trained and motivated to extract meaning from incomplete or ambiguous customer signals, while customers are not trained to meta-cognitively evaluate the nature of their own feedback (Day, 2011). From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, the dependent party typically invests more cognitive effort into understanding the exchange, which increases sensitivity to the implicit aspects of the information received (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Consequently, tacitness and authenticity become conscious concerns for feedback receivers, while remaining largely outside the awareness of feedback providers.

Dual perspectives on dynamic capabilities

Dynamic capabilities differ between feedback-receiving suppliers and feedback-providing customers because each actor occupies a distinct position in the value-creation system, faces different information asymmetries, and performs different learning tasks. As Teece et al. (1997) explain, dynamic capabilities emerge from the specific resource configurations, routines, and environmental demands of the actor. For suppliers, feedback-related capabilities such as gathering, integrating, analyzing, sharing, and acting on information reflect downstream sensing and internal reconfiguration demands: they must interpret different customer signals, translate them into operational adjustments, or coordinate organizational change. Customers, by contrast, operate in an upstream role, where capabilities such as scoping, detecting, generating, adapting, deploying, documenting, and enabling feedback come from their experiential knowledge and the need to articulate usage-based insights.

This asymmetry aligns with the broader dynamic capabilities literature, which emphasizes that sensing, seizing, and transforming activities manifest differently depending on the actor’s position, incentives, and access to information (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000, Zahra et al., 2006). In summary, supplier and customer feedback capabilities diverge because they are shaped by fundamentally different learning environments, resource bases, and organizational purposes, making their dynamic capability architectures necessarily structurally different.

Figure 4.1: Dynamic capabilities at customers as feedback providers and suppliers as feedback receivers. Source: Author.



Dual perspectives on feedback value

We applied the lens of different values derived from the Social Exchange Theory to both customer and supplier related datasets. We were able to identify economic, relational, informational, social and reciprocal values of feedback for both groups while in the case of feedback receiver suppliers emotional value and fairness value were emerging (Table 4.2.).

Table 4.2: Feedback values by appearance at suppliers and customers. Source: Author.

Feedback Values	Supplier (feedback receiver)	Customer (feedback provider)
Economic	X	X
Relational	X	X
Informational	X	X
Social	X	X
Reciprocal	X	X
Emotional	X	
Fairness	X	

Feedback receivers tend to articulate more types of value. This can be because they bear greater consequences, vulnerability, and emotional–cognitive involvement in the exchange (Blau, 1964b, Molm, 1997, Bies, 1986). Social Exchange Theory emphasizes that actors who depend on others' evaluations experience heightened sensitivity to outcomes, fairness, and relational signals (Blau, 1964b). This is why emotional and fairness-related values emerge primarily for suppliers: as the ones being evaluated, they face identity threats and justice concerns when feedback challenges their competence or integrity (Bies, 1986, Tyler and Blader, 2003). Power asymmetry further amplifies these reactions, as the less powerful party typically experiences stronger affective and procedural responses to judgment and control (Molm, 1997). Moreover, suppliers must act on the feedback, which increases the perceived stakes and the emotional and procedural weight of the interaction, consistent with research showing that responsibility for change intensifies both cognitive load and affective responses (Teece et al., 1997, Zahra et al., 2006). Together, these mechanisms explain why suppliers report richer emotional and fairness-oriented value dimensions than customers.

It is not only that feedback receivers tend to articulate more types of value than feedback providers; we also find that providers primarily recognize economic and relational value in feedback. Their perspective remains largely transactional. However, as organizations grow in size and structural complexity, this narrow view expands: feedback providers become increasingly able to identify social and informational value as well, reflecting more sophisticated coordination needs, broader stakeholder involvement, and more formalized learning processes (Table 3.9).

From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, our two studies on B2B feedback offer a valuable opportunity to examine how each party interprets and evaluates the other side's value in the exchange. Table 4.3 is about the values that suppliers get via the feedback according to themselves and according to customers, while Table 4.4 summarizes the values the customer receives according to suppliers and according to the customers themselves. Feedback-receiving suppliers identify a broad spectrum of value arising from customer feedback. In contrast, feedback-providing customers acknowledge far fewer value types for suppliers; put differently, they do not fully recognize the range of benefits their feedback generates for the other side.

Table 4.3: SET value that feedback provides for the suppliers (feedback receivers). Source: Author.

	According to the:	
	Supplier (feedback receiver) - self	**Customer (feedback provider)**
Economic	Customer Centric Values Business Growth and Optimization Organizational Alignment	Supplier Centric Value Joint Benefit
Relational	Cooperation Trust	Cooperation
Informational	Outside in knowledge Inside out knowledge	Outside in knowledge
Social	Recognition and Celebration Reputation and Image enhancement	Recognition and Celebration Reputation and Image enhancement
Reciprocal	Obligation Mutual Objectives	Mutual objectives
Emotional	Relational Outcomes	
Fairness	Compromise in negotiations Flexibility	

Customers tend to focus primarily on economic and social value, while the trust-based relational, emotional, and fairness-related dimensions remain largely invisible to them. They also do not perceive any obligation to act on the exchange (reciprocal value), nor do they recognize that although they supply outside-in information, their feedback simultaneously triggers important inside-out learning and sense-making processes within the supplier organization. Social exchange is shaped by coercive power and dependency (Molm, 1997); this can explain why customers display more transaction orientation in the feedback process; however, the direct link remains to be proven between lack of dependency and transaction orientation.

Table 4.4: SET value that feedback provides for the customers (feedback providers). Source: Author.

	According to the:	
	Supplier (feedback receiver)	**Customer (feedback provider) - self**
Economic	Customer Centric Values	Customer business growth Functional value Joint Benefit
Relational		Cooperation / Care / Trust
Informational	Outside in knowledge	Outside in knowledge Inside out knowledge
Social		Recognition and Celebration Reputation and Image enhancement
Reciprocal	Mutual objectives	Mutual objectives
Emotional	Expression and Emotional engagement	
Fairness	Compromise in negotiations Flexibility	

When examining the value customers receive during the feedback process, the picture becomes more balanced - though still not fully symmetrical. Both parties attribute economic value to customers, and customers themselves often articulate this dimension in more detail. There is also shared recognition of reciprocal value, particularly in the form of aligned or mutual objectives. Customers see the informational value in both the inside out and outside in knowledge for themselves, while suppliers attribute only the outside - in type for customers. As a recurring phenomenon this can be attributable to the fact that any party sees only the outside aspect of the process at the counterpart. Customers acknowledge that feedback generates relational and social value for them, yet suppliers do not perceive these benefits on the customer side. Conversely, suppliers - positioned as feedback receivers - believe that customers also derive emotional and fairness-related value from the exchange, but these dimensions are not expressed by customers themselves. For this asymmetry there are several explanations in the literature. The level of dependency defines what the parties see as value (Blau, 1964b). Role theory suggests that individuals interpret exchanges according to their functional responsibilities and cognitive schemas (Kahn et al., 1964). Customers' role is to provide feedback, not to reflect on its organizational consequences. Suppliers' role is to act on feedback, which makes them more sensitive to a wider set of value dimensions.

INTEGRATED SUMMARY

Overview of the dissertation purpose and structure

In this dissertation I included three individual and yet connected studies. The overarching aim of this research program is to develop an integrated, multi-level answer to our research question: **How is feedback generated, interpreted, and acted upon in regulated B2B markets, and how do its drivers and processes shape its value-creating consequences?**

By first clarifying the conceptual boundaries of feedback and mapping its antecedents and consequences, the research establishes a theoretical foundation for examining how B2B organizations receive, interpret, and act upon feedback within complex supplier systems. Complementing this internal perspective, the next study also investigates how customers generate, communicate, and strategically use feedback, and how these practices shape co-creation processes and value. Together, the studies seek to illuminate the full feedback cycle, its drivers, organizational processing, and customer-side dynamics, to explain how feedback becomes a strategic resource for both parties in tightly regulated B2B contexts.

Integrated B2B feedback model

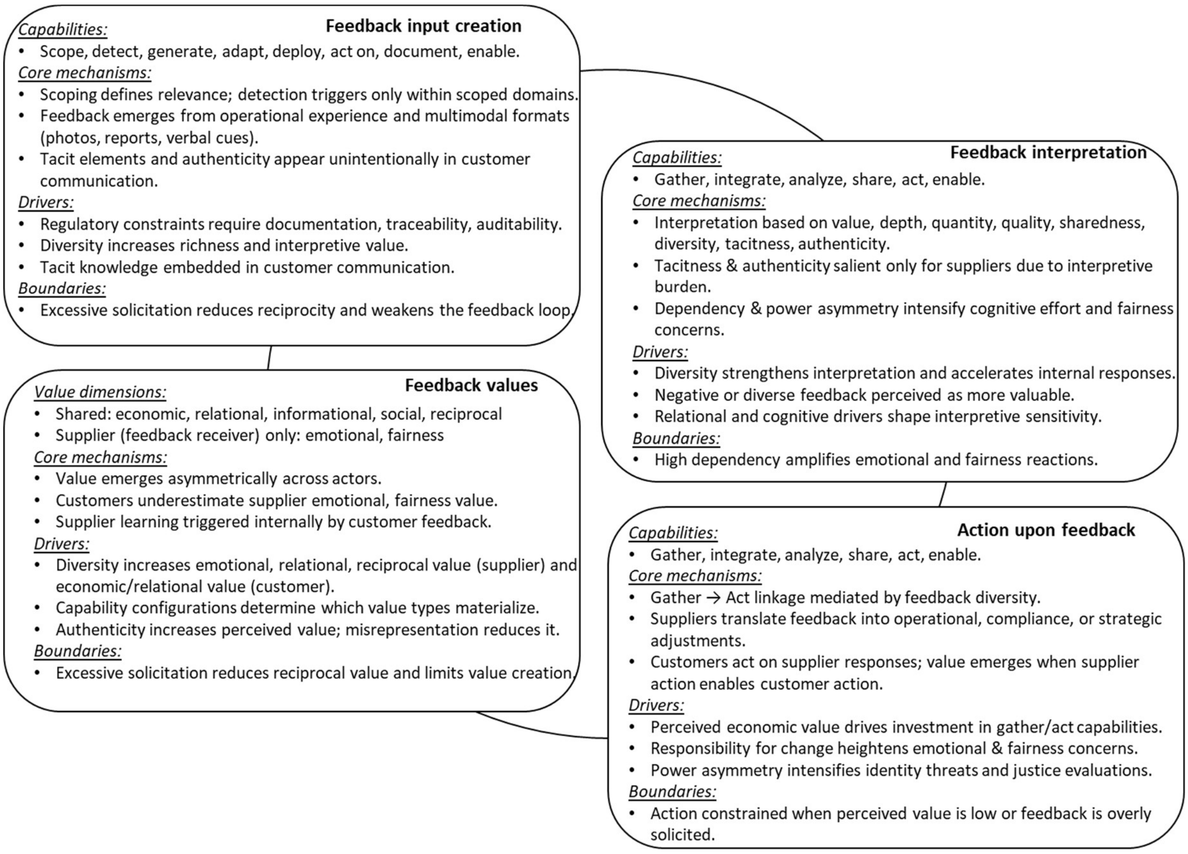
Figure 4.2 presents the proposed B2B feedback process model derived from our analysis. While the broader system includes additional assets, values, and procedural nuances, its core architecture can be distilled into four interconnected stages: creating feedback inputs, interpreting them, triggering actions, and generating value. Each stage is shaped by specific drivers and antecedents, which must also be considered to fully understand how feedback operates in regulated B2B contexts.

Feedback input creation

Feedback input generation in B2B settings emerges from structured, capability-driven routines. Customers rely on a set of dynamic capabilities - scoping, detecting, generating, adapting, deploying, acting on response and documenting - to produce actionable input grounded in operational experience. These capabilities reflect the upstream role customers occupy in the value-creation system, where operational knowledge and usage-based insights form the basis of feedback (Teece et al., 1997, Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000).

Detection functions as a trigger mechanism only after scoping has taken place. Frontline personnel identify deviations - such as KPI drops, stock outs, or pricing anomalies - but our data indicate that these sensing activities become meaningful only when the KPI in question already falls within the provider's defined scope of attention. In other words, scoping precedes detection, and detection operates selectively: customers notice and respond to deviations in those performance areas they have previously deemed relevant. This implies that the urgency and content of feedback are shaped not merely by the presence of deviations, but by whether those deviations occur within the scoped domain of the feedback provider.

Figure 4.2: Integrated B2B feedback model. Source: Author



In addition to generating feedback, the ability to adapt its form and content to the needs and capabilities of the audience is equally essential, as appropriate adaptation enhances comprehension on the receiver's side. Given that this dissertation examines feedback processes in regulated B2B markets, our data indicate that documentation constitutes a critical complementary capability, because regulatory environments require traceability, auditability, and formal record-keeping for feedback to be actionable (McDermott and Kearney, 2025).

Feedback diversity naturally emerges from multimodal communication formats - photos, reports, verbal observations - particularly in regulated environments where evidence is required to justify claims or corrective actions. Diversity enhances the richness of the signal and increases its interpretive value for suppliers.

Tacit elements of feedback are unintentionally embedded in customer communication. Providers rarely recognize tacitness because tacit knowledge feels natural and effortless to articulate (Polanyi and Sen, 2009). This aligns with knowledge theory, which shows that individuals are often unaware of the tacit components embedded in their own knowledge (Grant, 1996). Similarly, authenticity is not consciously produced by the feedback provider, so it becomes a receiver-side perception, rather than a provider-side intention.

Feedback is not generated solely at the initiative of the provider; it can also be solicited by the receiver. However, our data indicate that excessive solicitation weakens the feedback exchange. When suppliers request feedback too frequently, customers become less willing to reciprocate, which in turn dampens the feedback loop and reduces perceived reciprocity within the relationship.

Feedback interpretation

Feedback receivers rely on gather, integrate, analyze, share, act on and enable capabilities to process feedback (Keszey and Korhonen-Sande, 2021). These capabilities reflect downstream sensing and internal reconfiguration demands, consistent with dynamic capabilities theory (Teece et al., 1997, Zahra et al., 2006).

Suppliers evaluate feedback based on its value, depth, quantity, quality, sharedness, diversity, tacitness, and authenticity. Two characteristics - tacitness and authenticity - are salient only for suppliers, not customers. This asymmetry reflects the interpretive burden placed on receivers, who must decode incomplete or ambiguous signals (Grant, 1996, Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). Moreover, interpretation is shaped by dependency and power asymmetry. SET posits that actors who depend on others' evaluations experience heightened sensitivity to outcomes, fairness, and relational signals (Blau, 1964b, Molm, 1997). Suppliers, being evaluated and more dependent, invest greater cognitive effort into decoding feedback, making tacitness and authenticity central concerns.

Beyond authenticity, feedback diversity also shapes how feedback is interpreted and the value that actors attribute to it. Negative or diverse feedback is perceived as more valuable, travels faster, and triggers stronger internal responses. Diversity also mediates the relationship between gather and act capabilities, reinforcing the role of resource characteristics in capability development (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003, Schilke et al., 2018).

Action upon feedback

Acting on feedback is a multi-stage capability involving sensing, analyzing, coordinating, and transforming organizational routines. Suppliers translate feedback into operational adjustments, compliance actions, or strategic reconfigurations.

The gather - act on capability linkage is mediated by feedback diversity. Diverse feedback enhances the ability to translate signals into meaningful action, consistent with RBV logic that resource attributes shape capability formation (Teece et al., 1997).

Our data suggests that it is mainly the perceived economic value that drives action. Higher perceived value increases investment in gathering and acting capabilities, reinforcing the role of value perceptions in capability deployment.

Responsibility for change intensifies emotional and fairness concerns. Suppliers experience identity threats and justice concerns when feedback challenges their competence or integrity (Tyler and Blader, 2003). Power asymmetry amplifies these reactions (Molm, 1997).

Feedback is not only acted upon by the receiver; customers also act on the supplier's response to their feedback. Our data indicate that the value customers perceive does not stem solely from the supplier's corrective action, but rather from the customer's own ability to act upon, integrate, or leverage that supplier action within their operational context. In other words, value emerges when the supplier's response enables the customer to take further action, making customer-side enactment a critical component of the feedback value-creation process.

Feedback drivers

As feedback operates as a strategic asset, its characteristics - value, depth, quality, quantity, diversity, sharedness, tacitness, and authenticity - function as antecedent conditions that shape capability development. These attributes determine whether feedback enables or constrains the emergence of relevant capabilities, and thereby influence the extent and nature of value creation (Grant, 1996, Srivastava et al., 2001).

Beyond asset-based characteristics, several additional drivers shape how feedback unfolds in regulated B2B relationships. While the feedback literature typically discusses antecedents at the individual, relational, and process or product levels (Molnár et al., 2024), our findings allow us to identify two of these categories - relational and process drivers - as central in this context. Relational drivers, such as trust, cooperation, dependency, and power asymmetry, operate as antecedent conditions that influence how feedback is generated, interpreted, and acted upon (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Process drivers, including documentation requirements, regulatory constraints, and operational complexity, structure the routines through which feedback is produced and responded to, particularly in healthcare markets where traceability and compliance are essential. Building on these insights, our data further reveal role-based drivers (Heide, 1994, Ulaga and Eggert, 2006) and cognitive drivers (Nonaka, 1998)**.** Role-based drivers stem from the distinct positions suppliers and customers occupy within the value-creation system, producing different capability architectures and shaping how each actor engages with feedback. Finally, cognitive drivers - tacit knowledge, interpretive effort, and perceived authenticity - affect how feedback signals are understood, prioritized, and translated into organizational action. Taken together, these relational, processual, role-based, and cognitive drivers function as antecedent conditions that shape capability development and condition the pathways through which feedback contributes to value creation.

Feedback values

Feedback generates multiple forms of value in regulated B2B relationships, yet these value consequences emerge asymmetrically across actors. Both suppliers and customers consistently identify economic, relational, informational, social, and reciprocal value, reflecting shared recognition of feedback as a resource that strengthens coordination and mutual adjustment. However, suppliers additionally perceive emotional value and fairness value, rooted in their dependency, vulnerability, and responsibility for implementing change (Blau, 1964b, Molm, 1997). These perceptual asymmetries mean that customers systematically underestimate supplier-side value, particularly emotional and fairness value, and often fail to recognize that their feedback triggers inside-out learning processes within supplier organizations.

Feedback diversity further shapes value creation: diverse inputs enhance emotional, relational, and reciprocal value for suppliers, while simultaneously increasing economic and relational value for customers. Yet value creation is not unlimited; excessive solicitation reduces reciprocal value, revealing boundary conditions in feedback exchange. The extent of value realized also depends on capability configurations. For suppliers, gather, analyze, and act capabilities drive economic, informational, and relational value, whereas for customers, detect, generate, adapt, and document capabilities shape economic, informational, and reciprocal value. Finally, authenticity emerges as a critical value driver: authentic feedback increases perceived value, while strategic misrepresentation diminishes it, underscoring authenticity as an underexplored but consequential asset characteristic (Liu et al., 2015, Kohtamäki et al., 2019).

Summarizing our findings in relation to the overarching research question, we conclude that in regulated B2B markets, feedback operates as a strategic resource whose value is contingent on the processes through which it is generated by customers, interpreted by suppliers, and acted upon through dynamic capabilities shaped by resource characteristics, relational structures, and regulatory constraints. Rather than functioning as a simple message exchanged between actors, feedback constitutes a capability system, a resource configuration, and a value-creation mechanism embedded within complex industrial relationships.

Emergent conceptual insights

The three analytical lenses offered not only a way to categorize feedback phenomena but also an opportunity to examine how these categories connect both within each framework and across them. Our contribution lies in reinforcing several well-established relationships in the literature while also identifying a set of potentially novel links. These new connections are formulated as propositions that warrant further empirical testing.

The first proposition, related to feedback receiver suppliers, concerns the relationship between feedback authenticity and feedback value. This extends existing theory by demonstrating that authenticity, introduced here as an additional asset characteristic, plays a meaningful role in shaping the perceived value of feedback. Authenticity has not been explicitly theorized as a feedback asset in prior B2B research (Liu et al., 2015, Kohtamäki et al., 2019), and our findings suggest it deserves conceptual and empirical attention.

The second proposition identifies a cross-framework connection. Within the Resource-Based View, we conceptualized two dynamic capabilities: gather feedback and act on feedback, and observed a link between them. We propose that this relationship is mediated by feedback diversity, an asset characteristic. The idea that resource characteristics influence capability development is consistent with foundational RBV and dynamic capabilities theory, which argues that resource attributes shape, enable, or constrain capability formation (Teece et al., 1997). Integrative frameworks similarly show that VRIN resource attributes and dynamic capabilities co-evolve (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003, Schilke et al., 2018). Our proposition extends this logic by identifying diversity as a specific mediating resource characteristic in the context of B2B feedback.

Feedback diversity also emerges as a moderator in another cross-framework relationship: the link between perceived economic value and the gather feedback capability. The more economically valuable the feedback is perceived to be, the more firms invest in gathering capabilities. In our dataset, this relationship was shaped by feedback valence, a form of diversity. Negative feedback, in particular, travelled more easily through the system and was often perceived as more valuable by suppliers, reinforcing the moderating role of diversity.

Beyond capabilities, diversity as an asset characteristic also influences the value created through the feedback process. Resource characteristics are known to shape the value a resource can generate (Blau, 1964b) and to influence how resources contribute to value creation (Grant, 1996, Srivastava et al., 2001). Our findings support this logic and extend it to B2B feedback: feedback diversity affects several SET-related value dimensions, including emotional, relational, and reciprocal value.

Finally, we identify a less established link between an asset characteristic and a value outcome: the relationship between feedback quantity and reciprocal value. Interestingly, this relationship appears reversed. Respondents noted that in the case of solicited feedback, increasing the number of requests reduced customers' willingness to reciprocate by responding. This suggests that excessive solicitation may erode perceived reciprocity, highlighting a boundary condition for value creation in feedback processes.

Similarly, our analysis reveals several theoretical avenues to explore from the perspective of customers as feedback providers. We identified two dynamic capabilities specific to this role: scope, the capability to define the boundaries, focus, and depth of the feedback to be given; and detect, the capability to sense when feedback is needed to maintain or improve performance, alignment, or collaboration. We propose that the detect capability influences the generate (feedback-creation) capability, and that scope mediates this relationship.

We also propose that multiple dynamic capabilities shape the value created for feedback providers. Specifically, economic value does not necessarily arise from the supplier's response alone but from the provider's own capability to act on that response. Economic value is further influenced by the provider's adapt and document capabilities. These are relationships that merit empirical testing.

For informational value, we propose that generate, detect, and document capabilities function as key antecedents. These capabilities determine how effectively customers can extract, structure, and leverage information through the feedback process.

Finally, consistent with our supplier-side findings, we observed that feedback diversity, as a resource characteristic, influences several SET-related value dimensions for customers, including economic, reciprocal, and relational value. This phenomenon remains underexplored in the literature, and our results suggest it should be incorporated into future theoretical and empirical work.

Theoretical contributions

This dissertation advances the theoretical and empirical understanding of B2B feedback processes by integrating insights from the Resource-Based View (RBV), Social Exchange Theory (SET), and other organizational theories not yet systematically applied to feedback phenomena. Through a combination of a systematic literature review (SLR) and dual-perspective qualitative studies, the research offers a multi-layered theoretical contribution to marketing, interorganizational relationship theory, and capability development. The integrated findings illuminate how feedback operates as a strategic, relational, and informational mechanism within regulated B2B environments, thereby extending the conceptual boundaries of existing feedback literature. Table 4.5 outlines the key theoretical foundations employed throughout the dissertation.

Table 4.5: Theoretical foundations used across the dissertation. Source: Author

Core theories in existing feedback literature (Study 1)	**Frameworks used in the qualitative studies (Study 2-3)**	**Theoretical perspectives newly surfaced in feedback analysis (Cross-study comparison and Summary)**
• Social Exchange Theory • Customer Citizenship Theory • Stimulus–Organism–Response Framework	• Social Exchange Theory • Resource Based View	• Role Theory • Power Asymmetry • Actor Network Theory • Organizational Information Processing Theory • Knowledge Based View

First, the systematic literature review establishes the theoretical foundations upon which contemporary feedback research rests. By analyzing twenty years of peer-reviewed publications at the intersection of feedback, customer or consumer feedback, co-creation, and branding, the review demonstrates that the phenomenon is predominantly theorized through Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964b), Customer Citizenship Theory (Fowler, 2013), and the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Each of these appeared in at least three of the seventy-three examined studies, indicating their centrality in the field. This mapping provides a theoretically grounded point of departure for extending feedback scholarship beyond its current conceptual anchors.

Second, the qualitative studies enrich this foundation by combining SET with the Resource-Based View (RBV), thereby introducing a dual conceptualization of feedback as both a strategic asset and a dynamic capability. Through the integration of RBV and SET, the dissertation conceptualizes feedback simultaneously as an informational resource and a relational asset. RBV highlights how feedback contributes to capability development, learning, and adaptive decision-making (Barney, 1991, Teece et al., 1997, Helfat and Peteraf, 2003), while SET explains how feedback signals trust, reciprocity, and commitment (Blau, 1964b, Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). This dual framing advances theoretical clarity by demonstrating that feedback strengthens internal capabilities and relational stability at the same time—an insight underdeveloped in prior B2B research.

Third, by conducting two qualitative studies from both the feedback provider (customer) and feedback receiver (supplier) perspectives, using the same theoretical framework, the dissertation identifies asymmetries in how feedback is perceived and valued. These asymmetries manifest in both SET-related relational evaluations and the treatment of feedback as a strategic resource. Asymmetries are well-established phenomena in academic research. Role Theory articulates how organizational actors enact and interpret role-specific expectations within dyadic relationships (Kahn et al., 1964). Power Asymmetry Theory extends this by capturing structural dependence and influence between actors (Emerson, 1962), while Actor-Network Theory provides a broader socio-technical lens on how heterogeneous elements shape relational dynamics (Callon, 1984). Although asymmetry is a known concept in interorganizational research, the SLR revealed that it is not widely discussed in relation to feedback. The dissertation therefore contributes theoretically by demonstrating that asymmetry is a fundamental, yet previously underexplored, characteristic of B2B feedback dynamics.

Fourth, the dissertation identifies two additional theoretical frameworks in connection to feedback: Knowledge-Based View (KBV) (Kogut and Zander, 1992) and Organizational Information Processing Theory (OIPT) (Galbraith, 1973, Daft and Lengel, 1986, Huber, 1991). Examining B2B feedback through the Knowledge-Based View and Organizational Information Processing Theory is novel because these perspectives conceptualize feedback not merely as an evaluative signal but as a knowledge asset and an information-processing demand (Grant, 1996, Kogut and Zander, 1992). KBV positions firms as repositories of heterogeneous knowledge, where the characteristics of incoming knowledge shape value creation and capability development (Nonaka, 1998). OIPT, in turn, explains how organizations cope with uncertainty by acquiring, interpreting, and integrating information (Galbraith, 1974). Despite their relevance, B2B feedback research has rarely applied these theories, which means the knowledge content, processing load, and informational complexity of feedback have remained theoretically underexplored (Molnár et al., 2024). Our approach therefore opens a new avenue by framing feedback as both a strategic knowledge input and an information-processing challenge within supplier-customer relationships.

Fifth, the dissertation contributes methodologically by employing a hybrid inductive-deductive qualitative design (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) that combines inductive coding (Gioia et al., 2013) with theory-driven deductive reasoning grounded in RBV and SET (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). This approach enhances transparency, interpretive rigor, and theoretical coherence (Pratt et al., 2020), demonstrating how qualitative inquiry can generate context-sensitive insights while maintaining strong theoretical alignment. The methodological contribution is particularly relevant for B2B marketing, where calls for richer interpretive research remain ongoing (Easton, 2010).

Sixth, the dissertation extends the conceptual vocabulary of B2B feedback by introducing emergent constructs, authenticity and enablement, into supplier-customer exchanges. Authenticity, previously examined primarily in B2C contexts (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010), is reframed here as a relational asset that enhances credibility and deepens interorganizational trust. Enablement, conceptualized as a dynamic capability (Teece, 2014), is shown to influence how customers are able to generate and how suppliers absorb, interpret, and operationalize feedback. These extensions broaden the theoretical repertoire available for understanding feedback-related phenomena in B2B markets.

Seventh, the findings reveal how feedback-related assets, such as depth, tacitness, and sharedness, interact with relational outcomes including trust, commitment, and reciprocity (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006, Liu et al., 2018). This demonstrates that capabilities and values co-evolve in B2B exchanges. The dissertation thus contributes a more integrated theoretical understanding of how suppliers leverage feedback to simultaneously build capabilities and sustain long-term partnerships.

Taken together, the systematic literature review and the dual-sided qualitative analyses provide a comprehensive theoretical account of how feedback functions in B2B settings. Although the supplier-customer dyads in the qualitative sample were not direct pairs, limiting the possibility of true dyadic case studies, the respondents operated within the same industry and geographical context, strengthening the comparability of their perspectives. The integrated insights reveal feedback as a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by relational norms, strategic resource considerations, knowledge flows, and information-processing demands. By expanding the theoretical landscape beyond SET and related frameworks, the dissertation contributes a richer, more nuanced understanding of B2B feedback and establishes a foundation for future research on feedback-driven capability development and interorganizational relationship dynamics.

Methodological contributions

This dissertation also offers several methodological contributions. By combining a systematic literature review (Tranfield et al., 2003) with two qualitative studies conducted from both sides of the feedback exchange, it introduces a dual-perspective approach to an under-researched phenomenon in B2B contexts. This design enabled the inclusion of both feedback receivers and feedback providers, addressing the common limitation of qualitative research that typically captures only a single viewpoint (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The interviews were analyzed using a hybrid coding strategy (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006), which is well established in qualitative research; however, the introduction of a third-stage coding scheme grounded specifically in constructs from the resource-based view and social exchange theory represents a less frequently applied and more theory-driven methodological innovation. Using these two theoretical lenses in parallel to structure and interpret the data provides a novel pathway for theory building. Furthermore, the cross-framework comparisons and the identification of links across theoretical domains constitute an additional methodological advancement, offering a richer and more integrative way of describing complex organizational phenomena (Miles et al., 2013).

Managerial contributions

This dissertation provides a set of normative, evidence-based recommendations for managers operating in B2B environments, particularly in regulated healthcare markets where customer–supplier interactions are complex, information-rich, and strategically consequential. By conceptualizing feedback as a multidimensional strategic resource and unpacking the dynamic capabilities that govern its exchange, the study offers a comprehensive framework for strengthening interorganizational collaboration and improving performance outcomes.

1. Treat feedback as a strategic knowledge asset

Managers should recognize feedback as a strategic knowledge asset rather than a transactional evaluation mechanism. Its characteristics - such as depth, diversity, sharedness, tacitness, and authenticity - directly influence its strategic value and determine how effectively it can be transformed into learning and performance improvement. This aligns with broader insights on data-driven decision-making, which emphasize that actionable data only generates value when firms possess the technological, organizational, and cultural capacity to absorb and utilize it (McAfee and Brynjolfsson, 2012, Keszey, 2011).

2. Build dynamic capabilities for feedback processing

Effective feedback management requires a multi-stage capability system rather than ad hoc information exchange. Suppliers must develop capabilities to gather, integrate, analyze, share, act on, and enable feedback, while customers must cultivate capabilities to detect when feedback is needed, scope its content, and generate structured input. These dynamic capabilities support organizational learning, strengthen alignment, and enhance responsiveness in regulated and fast-moving environments (Gremyr et al., 2022).

3. Strengthen frontline detection and sensing mechanisms

Detection is a critical mediating mechanism between scoped priorities and feedback generation. Managers should ensure that frontline teams are equipped to identify deviations - such as KPI drops, stock outs, or pricing anomalies - and translate these into timely feedback signals. This operationally grounded sensing capability improves diagnostic accuracy and reduces misalignment costs.

4. Generate evidence-rich, multi-format feedback

High-quality, evidence-rich feedback enhances credibility and trust, particularly in tense or ambiguous situations. Managers should encourage teams to use diverse formats - photos, reports, in-person observations - to provide complementary insights that improve supplier interpretation and responsiveness. Such multimodal feedback strengthens relational bonds and increases the likelihood of reciprocal resource provision.

5. Treat feedback adaptation as a strategic capability

When suppliers fail to meet expectations, adaptive feedback routines allow buyers to redirect collaboration efforts, initiate new processes, and maintain operational continuity. Managers should treat adaptation as a strategic capability that prevents disruption and stimulates joint improvement projects, especially in regulated environments where flexibility and compliance are essential.

6. Formalize documentation routines for compliance and protection

In industries with strict compliance requirements, documentation is not merely administrative overhead but a source of economic protection**.** Archiving feedback, testing reports, and performance records ensures audit readiness and reduces exposure to fines or delays. Managers should formalize documentation routines and treat them as part of the firm's knowledge infrastructure.

7. Use feedback as relational currency

The informational value of feedback directly influences supplier willingness to reciprocate. When customers provide high-value, structured feedback, suppliers are more likely to respond with additional support and cooperation. Managers should therefore view feedback as relational currency and train teams to communicate in ways that elicit reciprocal value.

8. Invest in enabling structures for systematic feedback processing

Effective feedback management requires enabling structures - clear routines, coordination mechanisms, and supportive cultural norms - that make feedback processing systematic rather than episodic. Managers should ensure that organizational conditions support continuous learning and responsiveness.

9. Evaluate feedback using comprehensive asset characteristics

Managers should assess feedback using a comprehensive set of characteristics, including value, depth, quality, quantity, diversity, sharedness, tacitness, and authenticity. The identification of authenticity as a critical yet often overlooked dimension alerts managers to the risks of strategic misrepresentation and highlights the need for mechanisms that encourage honest, credible exchanges.

10. Design feedback processes to cultivate multiple value types

Feedback generates economic, informational, relational, emotional, social, reciprocal, and fairness value. Managers should intentionally design feedback processes that cultivate these value dimensions, for example, by using diverse channels to enhance emotional and relational value or by balancing feedback volumes to strengthen reciprocal engagement.

11. Cultivate diverse feedback streams

Managers should avoid relying on narrow or homogeneous feedback sources. Diverse feedback streams improve sensing accuracy, strengthen relationships, and enhance the likelihood that feedback will translate into meaningful action. This aligns with qualitative research principles emphasizing the importance of multi-perspective data for capturing complex phenomena (Miles et al., 2013).

12. Shape feedback antecedents strategically

Managers can influence feedback antecedents (individual, relational, product-related, and process-related) to control the cost and quality of feedback. For example, firms can select from whom to accept feedback or design mechanisms that encourage feedback providers. Strategic selection of antecedents improves process efficiency and signal reliability.

13. Supplement data value with brand and value-proposition outputs

Feedback influences not only informational value but also brand outputs and value-proposition outcomes. Managers should evaluate feedback holistically, recognizing its potential to shape purchase intention, perceived quality, and broader customer perceptions (Liljedal, 2016).

14. Monitor moderators and mediators of feedback outcomes

Managers must be aware of the moderators and mediators that shape feedback outcomes to avoid misinterpretation and mitigate risks. Understanding these mechanisms enables more accurate reading of feedback signals and more effective intervention design.

15. Ensure solicited feedback falls within the customer's scope

Suppliers who actively solicit feedback must ensure that the parameter they inquire about is within the customer's scope of interest, responsibility, or expertise. Managers should not expect meaningful responses to solicited feedback requests when customers do not engage with or prioritize the parameter in question. Misaligned solicitation wastes relational capital and can erode trust. Ensuring scope alignment improves response quality and strengthens collaboration.

Collectively, these contributions equip managers with a more nuanced understanding of how feedback functions as a strategic resource and how organizational capabilities, communication practices, and relational mechanisms can be designed to unlock its full value in B2B relationships. By adopting a systematic, capability-based, and authenticity-oriented approach to feedback, managers can enhance collaboration, improve operational performance, and generate richer value for both customers and suppliers.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this dissertation. These limitations arise from the systematic literature review and the qualitative studies from both the supplier and customer side as well as from the integrated findings of those studies.

First, although the qualitative studies adopt a dual-perspective design, the supplier and customer respondents do not form matched dyads. This limits the ability to analyze feedback exchanges at the level of specific customer-supplier relationships. Nevertheless, the shared industry and geographical context enhances comparability and provides a coherent basis for cross-group interpretation.

Second, the empirical context is a regulated healthcare B2B market in Eastern Europe. While this context offers rich insights into complex, high-stakes feedback processes (Dubois and Singh, 2009, McDermott and Kearney, 2025), the generalizability of the findings might be limited to other industries or regions with different regulatory pressures, power structures, or cultural norms.

Third, both qualitative studies rely on self-reported accounts, which may introduce recall bias, selective framing, or social desirability effects (Tourangeau and Yan, 2007) - particularly for sensitive constructs such as authenticity, reciprocity, or political filtering of feedback. Although triangulation and probing were used to mitigate these risks, observational or longitudinal data would strengthen causal claims and reduce interpretive bias.

Fourth, all interviews were conducted in English, although neither the interviewer nor the respondents were native speakers. This may have reduced linguistic nuance, constrained expression, or introduced subtle misunderstandings (Molokomme, 2026). While clarifications were sought during interviews, language remains a potential source of interpretive distortion.

Fifth, the qualitative approach, although well suited for uncovering new constructs such as authenticity, does not allow for statistical generalization. The propositions developed in this dissertation therefore require quantitative validation.

Finally, the hybrid coding approach, particularly the third-stage coding based on RBV assets, dynamic capabilities, and SET, reflects a theory-driven interpretive choice. While this approach enabled the identification of novel cross-framework connections, it may also have constrained the emergence of alternative theoretical explanations. Future studies could explore additional frameworks or adopt more inductive approaches to broaden the theoretical landscape.

These limitations do not undermine the contributions of the dissertation; rather, they delineate the scope of the findings and highlight opportunities for future research. Addressing these constraints through dyadic, longitudinal, cross-industry, and mixed-method designs would enable scholars to refine, extend, and empirically validate the theoretical framework developed here.

Agenda for future research

Building on these limitations, we identify several promising avenues for future research. These opportunities can deepen theoretical understanding, broaden contextual applicability, and strengthen empirical validation of the proposed framework. Although each of the three studies includes its own agenda for future research, we summarize here the broader research directions that emerge from the consolidation of the studies and the overarching conclusions.

First, the newly identified asset characteristic, authenticity, warrants further conceptual development and empirical testing. Quantitative studies could examine its antecedents, consequences, and interactions with other resource attributes across different B2B contexts.

Second, the proposed cross-framework relationships between asset characteristics, dynamic capabilities, and SET-based value dimensions offer fertile ground for model testing. Future research could employ structural equation modeling or longitudinal designs to validate the mediating and moderating roles of feedback diversity, scope, and other capability-related constructs. Dyadic or multi-actor designs would be particularly valuable for capturing the reciprocal nature of feedback exchanges and for examining how perceptions evolve over time.

Third, the integration of the Knowledge-Based View (Kogut and Zander, 1992, Grant, 1996) and Organizational Information Processing Theory (Galbraith, 1974) into the study of B2B feedback can open a new theoretical domain. Future studies could explore how feedback contributes to knowledge creation, absorptive capacity (Gremyr et al., 2022), and information-processing fit, or how organizational structures and digital tools shape the flow and interpretation of feedback.

Fourth, a key limitation of the empirical data collection is its industry-specific focus, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research should therefore replicate similar studies in other industries or geographical contexts to enhance external validity.

Finally, as digital platforms, analytics tools, and AI-enabled sensing systems become increasingly embedded in industrial marketing practice (Bag et al., 2021, Rustholkarhu et al., 2022), future research should investigate how these technologies interact with human judgment, relational norms, and dynamic capabilities. Such work would clarify how organizations can design feedback systems that enhance - rather than erode - relational quality and strategic responsiveness.

Final reflections

This dissertation set out to illuminate a phenomenon that is both ubiquitous and under-theorized in B2B markets: the role of feedback in shaping value, learning, and collaboration between customers and suppliers. By integrating insights from a systematic literature review with dual-perspective qualitative studies, the work reveals feedback to be far more than a transactional exchange - it is a strategic knowledge asset, an information-processing challenge, and a socially embedded interaction shaped by asymmetries, values, capabilities, and resource characteristics. The findings underscore the complexity of feedback in real organizational settings while offering new conceptual pathways for understanding how firms can better harness it. Ultimately, this research aims to encourage both scholars and practitioners to view feedback not as a routine obligation but as a powerful mechanism for mutual value creation, organizational learning, and more resilient B2B relationships.

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INCLUDED PUBLICATIONS

Molnár, L.-Keszey, T.-Frau, M. (2024). Developing a Deeper Understanding of Actionable Customer Feedback: A Systematic Literature Review. *Society and Economy*.

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In this dissertation we extended the systematic literature review titled: Developing a deeper understanding of actionable customer feedback: A systematic literature review with one graph visualizing the article selection method.

By the same authors study 2: „The strategic architecture of B2B feedback: a resource based view assets, dynamic capabilities and social exchange theory examination of healthcare market suppliers" and study 3: „Unpacking the B2B feedback process: customer-side insights into resource use and social exchange – qualitative study in the medical trading sector." are intended for journal submission, however the dissertation incorporates an extended and more comprehensive version of the latter manuscript. The author's contribution to all three articles was substantial, and the co-authors' declarations have been obtained as a formal prerequisite for submitting this dissertation.

ANNEXES

Interview guideline for suppliers

Questions to the participants in a supplier role

- *Small talk, general introduction questions*
- *Importance of partner information:*
  - *How important is to get and give information to the B2B business partners?*
- *Information gathering protocol:*
  - *What are the main information sources they have for B2B business intelligence?*
  - *If feedback process in not mentioned than what do they use instead?*
- *Process for received feedback:*
  - *What is the concrete feedback process?*
  - *How do they handle received and given feedback?*
  - *How do they respond to feedback from their clients / suppliers?*
  - *What are the concrete examples when feedback was handled?*
  - *What factors are supporting and what factors are hindering the feedback process and usage?*
  - *What do they think is missing currently from the feedback process?*
- *Process to provide feedback:*
  - *How do they respond to feedback requests?*
- *Organization:*
  - *How do they organize around feedback?*
  - *What roles and responsibilities can be identified?*
  - *What is the reason behind the current organization around feedback process?*
- *Strategic view on feedback:*
  - *What is the general knowledge about feedback and feedback theories among the B2B leaders?*
  - *How important feedback and feedback process to the firm?*
  - *What is the general attitude towards feedback?*
  - *How do they think the importance of feedback handling in B2B environment will change in the future?*
  - *How feedback handling can be linked to business performance?*
  - *In what way feedback handling can be a strategic advantage?*
- *Feedback and brand:*
  - *How general customer satisfaction can change if the firm handles feedback as a dialogue?*
  - *What do they think about companies asking for feedback?*
  - *How feedback process and feedback handling can change their attitude towards the feedback receiver?*
  - *How the feedback handling is changing their brand value?*
  - *In what way feedback handling can influence B2B customer satisfaction?*

Interview guideline for customers

Questions to the participants in a customer role

- *Small talk, general introduction questions*
- *Importance of partner information:*
    - *How important is to get and give information to the B2B business partners?*
- *Process for giving feedback:*
    - *How are they reacting to feedback requests?*
    - *What is the concrete feedback process?*
    - *How do they respond to feedback from their clients / suppliers?*
    - *What are the concrete examples when feedback was given?*
    - *What factors are supporting and what factors are hindering the feedback process and usage?*
    - *What do they think is missing currently from their feedback process?*
    - *What kind of responses they get when the provide feedback?*
    - *How do they evaluate the different responses to their feedback?*
    - *What are the concrete examples when the given supplier (the one we interview as well) asked for feedback? What has happened? How did they feel about it?*
- *Organization:*
    - *How do they organize around feedback?*
    - *What roles and responsibilities can be identified?*
    - *What is the reason behind the current organization around feedback process?*
- *Strategic view on feedback:*
    - *What is the general knowledge about feedback and feedback theories among the B2B leaders?*
    - *How important feedback and feedback process to the firm? Why is it good to provide feedback?*
    - *What is the general attitude towards feedback?*
    - *How do they think the importance of feedback handling in B2B environment will change in the future?*
    - *How feedback handling can be linked to business performance?*
    - *In what way providing feedback can be a strategic advantage?*
- *Feedback and brand:*
    - *How their own customer satisfaction did has changed if the firm handled feedback as a dialogue?*
    - *What do they think about companies asking for feedback?*
    - *How feedback process and feedback handling can change their attitude towards the feedback receiver?*
    - *How the feedback handling of their suppliers can change their attitude towards the supplier brand?*
    - *In what way feedback handling can influence their customer satisfaction?*

Declaration on the use of proofreading support and artificial intelligence tools

This dissertation is written in English what is not the first language of the authors. The following support was used for translation and proofreading and for that only to improve the document's readability, grammar and spelling:

Article: Developing a Deeper Understanding on Actionable Customer Feedback: A Systematic Literature Review was edited for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling and overall style by a qualified native English speaking editor at American Journal Experts (AJE) by the request of the publishing journal.

Other parts of the dissertation was checked, edited by Grammarly, DeepL, Microsoft Word and Microsoft Copilot.

Quotes from the interviuew respondents were not edited in order to preserve the data as it was said, otherwise, the document follows American English rules.