The target audiences of this book are researchers in the field of information systems, online learning, and distance education, as well as administrators, directors, and managers of e-learning programs. The overall objective of this book is to help administrators, directors, and managers of e-learning programs understand the potential in measuring as well as studying learners’ perceived value of e-learning systems. Until recently most measures of systems’ effectiveness done in industry looked at the “satisfaction” or users’ perceived satisfaction. However, this book provides the rationale behind the limitations of measuring only learners’ satisfaction in the attempt to uncover the true system effectiveness in the context of e-learning systems. Therefore, the main theory and framework behind this book talk about the limited sight most current measures in industry of system effectiveness have. Grounded in information systems’ user satisfaction theory and in the context of this book, satisfaction is defined as the perceived performance level users find at a post-experience point of time with e-learning systems. The limitation surrounding the fact that learners’ satisfaction is the “surrogate” measure to uncover the system effectiveness. As a result, most current
measures of system effectiveness follow the notion that if two systems are compared and the users’ satisfaction for one of the system is significantly higher than the other, that system is more effective for users. However, this book argues that aside from users’ satisfaction there is a second dimension to system effectiveness that was largely ignored in prior literature and measures. That dimension is the users’ perceived value of the system characteristics. Grounded in value theory and in the context of this book, value is defined as an enduring core belief about the level of importance users attribute to the e-learning system. By measuring both users’ perceived value and users’ perceived satisfaction, practitioners will be able to compare systems based on the multiplication of the two measures, which will provide a more accurate picture of the system effectiveness. Consequently, this book will propose a more robust measure by combining users’ perceived value and users’ perceived satisfaction in the context of e-learning systems in order to provide practitioners a better measure and to uncover the true effectiveness of such systems.

The framework proposed in this book is specifically in the context of e-learning systems. However, such framework is very well applicable for other types of systems. Some examples for other types of systems that may benefit from implementing the propose framework are enterprise resource planning (ERP), decision support systems (DSS), expert systems (ES), executive information systems (EIS), knowledge management systems (KMS), airline and travel reservation systems to name a few. Clearly, additional research will be needed to develop similar instruments and provide validity for such measures in the context of other systems. Additional information about this same issue will be provided in the “recommendations for future research” section of Chapter VIII, p.227.

Organized of the Book

The book is organized into eight chapters. The first chapter presents an introduction to the book by building the argument for the significance of value as a key construct in the assessment and measurement of e-learning effectiveness. Moreover, it provides the research questions guiding this book and rationale for studying the value construct.

Chapter II presents a comprehensive review of the theoretical foundation underlying the value theory used in this book. Clarifications and detail descrip-
tions are provided on the differences between values, beliefs, attitudes and behavior. Additionally, this chapter builds the foundation behind the need for value assessment as a major indicator of e-learning effectiveness.

The third chapter discusses the rationale and importance for studying value in the context of e-learning systems. Additionally, it provides definitions of the key concepts discussed in this book, such as value, satisfaction, and effectiveness. The main streams of research in which this book is grounded, namely value theory, information satisfaction theory, and information effectiveness are also described. Supporting literature from the fields of psychology, information systems, education, marketing, and related studies are drawn upon. In particular, Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) theory, List of Values (LOV) theory, value of information systems, User Information Satisfaction (UIS) theory, End-User Computing Satisfaction (EUCS) theory, IS effectiveness theory, technology mediated learning (TML) theory, and management education literature. Review of appropriate statistical techniques is provided as the conceptual theories guiding the development and validation of the Learners’ Value Index of Satisfaction (LeVIS).

Chapter IV presents the proposed overall conceptual model and strategy based upon the foundation presented in Chapters II and III. In order to develop conceptual models, extensions from the relevant literature are used along with research questions proposed in Chapter I. Additionally, the development of e-learning system’s dimensions and e-learning system’s characteristics are proposed based on the comprehensive literature reviewed in the previous two chapters.

Chapter V discusses the value-satisfaction grid of e-learning systems as the first tool to assess learners’ perceived effectiveness of such systems. The rationale behind the value-satisfaction grid of e-learning systems as a building block in the development of the other two tools, mainly LeVIS and the effectiveness grid, is also provided.

Chapter VI discusses LeVIS as the second tool to augment the value-satisfaction grid in providing additional measures for the true assessment of e-learning systems’ effectiveness. The chapter also elaborates on the use of both tools: value-satisfaction grid and LeVIS together. The chapter elaborates on the combination of the two tools to create the effectiveness grids as the ultimate measurement that provides administrators, directors, and managers, guidance on the system’s dimensions and characteristics that requires additional resources or ones that are a waste and may be discarded. Chapter VI provides detail information on the development and rationale of the LeVIS tool, effectiveness curves as well as the effectiveness grids.
Chapter VII describes the case study used to validate the framework and the tools proposed in this book. The research methodology employed in this case study along with validity and reliability measures is also reviewed. In order to address the complexity of the phenomenon on hand, a three-phase research approach was taken. The first phase explores the phenomenon utilizing qualitative research methods. The data collection and data analysis procedures of phase one are discussed in this chapter. A review of survey instrument development is presented and is drawn from multiple validated instruments. The second phase covers a pilot study that used the proposed instrument. Chapter VII also includes a review of the administration and response procedures to the survey instrument, as well as the review of the quantitative data analysis procedures employed in this phase. The third phase of the case study includes the procedures of revisions and modifications needed as a result of the pilot study; followed by the administration and responses to the main study, as well as the quantitative data analysis procedures employed in the full study. Furthermore, Chapter VII includes a review of the proposed validity and reliability measures including internal validity, external validity, instrument validation, and instrument reliability. Additionally, the chapter provides the research findings along with the qualitative results gained during phase one as well as the results of the pilot and main quantitative analyses gained during phases two and three.

Chapter VIII presents the summary of results by reviewing the implications of the case study results in the context of the book and the validity it provides for the framework proposed. Additionally, it provides a “cookbook” approach for practitioners who wish to implement the framework proposed in this book in their own e-learning program. Chapter VIII concludes with the discussion of the contribution of this book, implications for research, study limitations, and recommendations for future research.

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