THE INTERNATIONAL IPSERA WORKSHOP ON CUSTOMER ATTRACTIVENESS, SUPPLIER SATISFACTION AND CUSTOMER VALUE

25-26 November 2010
University of Twente, Enschede, the Netherlands

The New Frontier in B to B Relationship Marketing: the construction of a "countervailing power" by the suppliers from key global customers.

Sylvie Lacoste

Advancia-Negocia
8 Avenue de la Porte de Champerret, 75017 Paris
Tel. 01 44 09 31 00 – 06 66 25 15 41

sylvie.lacoste@profecogest.com

The New Frontier in B to B Relationship Marketing: the construction of a "countervailing power" by the suppliers from global key customers.

Abstract

Purpose: The aim of our research is to study how suppliers set up a "countervailing power" in their relationship with key accounts, in a specific industrial Business-to-Business environment.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A longitudinal qualitative study is used to study in-depth the case of several dyads (corrugated suppliers/ FMCG key accounts).

Findings: we show how suppliers build a "countervailing power" based on the key account's relationship strategy, as it transfers part of its "expertise" and "referent" power (French and Raven, 1959) to the supplier.

Research limitations: This research is a first step to investigate power distribution at the relational end of the relationship continuum, but is contingent to the purchased product (corrugated packaging) – further research should investigate whether the "quasi vertical integration" mechanism we analyze, can apply to other industrial sectors.

Originality/Value: Little research has been carried out, as of today, to explore how the submissive party (the supplier of standard products) can offset the power of the powerful party (the global key account). Our study shows how the key account is active in creating its supplier's "countervailing power".

Introduction and objectives

Stevenson (1980) has defined the equivalent of “key customers or accounts” with three classification criteria: centralized purchasing, combined with multiple centres of production or delivery, and a large volume of purchases. This comprehensive definition establishes the importance of the volume of purchases represented by such customers as a key point of customer-supplier relationship, because it is the lever of this relationship (a SME centralizes its purchases, but involved volume is low). Today, some key accounts are called 'global' (Yip and Bink, 2007), because on the one hand, their sales or purchase transactions are made globally, and secondly, their international turnover, which often include a high level of purchases, is comparable to the GDP of some countries (the retailer Wal Mart have a turnover equal to the GDP of Norway and represent alone 10% of the US imports from China).
Vis-à-vis their suppliers, these companies are global "key accounts"[1] as they can represent a significant share of their sales, but most important, they have a strong level of power (French and Raven, 1959; Hunt and Nevin, 1974).
The objective of this study is to question the strategies of countervailing power set up by some suppliers of these global accounts, based on a longitudinal study, as we collected data from 1995 to 2009 from two global key accounts in the food industry and three of their corrugated packaging suppliers. We will first conduct a brief review of literature on power and build on the relationship marketing paradigm to study customer-supplier relationship, then we will present our study and findings before discussing the theoretical and managerial implications and future research directions.

1.The concept of power and its application to global key accounts.

The study of power can be found, not exclusively, but with a high level of interest, in the channel management literature (El-Ansary and Stern, 1972, Hunt and Nevin, 1974, Wilkinson 1974, 1979, Gaski, 1984, 1986). Although most of these studies apply to the dyad, or even triad, dealer / distributor (/ client), Gaski and Nevin (1985: 140) acknowledge that such studies may be easily transposed to other interactions, including the customer – supplier one.
Many definitions have been given to the word "power". Dahl (1957: 203) wrote: “A has power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.”

[1] Although the key accounts referred to in this research are global, as they are MNCs, we will simply mention them as « key accounts ».

This definition was expanded by Emerson who commented that: “The power of actor A over actor B is the amount of resistance on the part of B which can be potentially overcome by A.” (Emerson, 1962, p.32).

However, power is not a static concept and a firm only has power over another in a specific context and at a specific time. Beetham (1991) wrote: " The awareness of their impotence outside the relationship can itself be sufficient to keep the dependent party submissive to the wishes of the superior, without any threats needing to be made." Power is thus defined with one actor who "suffers" under it and who has the "perception" of the other actor’s power (French and Raven, 1959). In this context these two researchers have defined five types of power:

1. The power associated with "expertise" is the power that is acquired by the possession of knowledge, specific expertise.
2. The power associated with the position of "referent": power is achieved as the submissive party identifies oneself to the values of the dominant party.
3. The "legitimate" power: authority is recognized as "legitimate".
4. The power of "reward": the power is obtained because the dominant party is in position to "reward" the submissive party, who is interested in getting the “reward”.
5. The power under constraint: this form of power exists when the dominant party may launch "punitive" actions against the other party.

Gaski (1984) also defined another form of power, we can consider as a sixth form: the power of "manipulation" (i.e. to constraint the other party through its environment).

Thus, the forms of power 1 to 4 can be defined as non-coercive forms of power, while the the forms 5 and 6 are coercive forms of power (See figure 1).

Figure 1 to be inserted about here

Some forms of power, we have just described, apply particularly to the power held by the buyer of the key account.

Cox (2001) analyzed the supply situations which give power to the buyer, that we can classify and link to the different forms of power described by French and Raven (1959) in Figure 2:

Figure 2 to be inserted about here

The very definition of the key account (see supra) provides the customer with “referent” and “reward” forms of power.
The “referent” power is often linked to its position of "leader" in its market: working with this leader can be for the supplier an "asset" that will allow the supplying firm to work with other customers on the same market. The power of “reward” is linked to the turnover that the key account may give to the supplier: if the key customer obtains the desired sales conditions, it can increase the supplier’s share of wallet and grant him a “preferred supplier” status.
The relationship between power and size of the account has been highlighted by some researchers (Little, 1970; Porter, 1980) and empirically validated by Berthon et al. (2003), who showed that the more important the buyer was, the more he could control the decisions over its distributor or supplier.
Cox (2001) defines the customer-supplier relationship from two variables: how they work together and share the created value. This second point is extremely important because the appropriation of value is often a source of conflict that may arise between the customer and its supplier. Cox is referring to the work of Porter (1980, 2008) on the five competitive forces and the power of customers and suppliers, which is proportional to the resources (value) available to them.
When both the supplier and key customer struggle for value appropriation, relationships become adversarial. If the key account wants to take the largest share of the value, the customer enters into conflict with its supplier using its coercive power.
This is typically when the coercive power of the key account is high that it is able to demand the greater share of value, as it will use or threaten to use this coercive power only if it estimates that the value assigned is not enough or may be more important (Walter et al., 2001). This coercive power will mean demands for lower prices, with the possible use of tenders and reverse auctions (Ivens and Pardo, 2005).
Kumar (2005) states that, if the customer has power, but the supplier too, and it is, then, a complete interdependence, punitive actions will not be enforced.
According to Frazier and Rody (1991: 55), suppliers will dedicate more time and attention to their largest customers, hence key accounts. Consequently, when the latters are in position of power, they lean on their non coercive power, because they do not need to use their coercive one: they get the cooperation they want from their suppliers without using constraint, as their "refer" or "reward" power is enough to motivate their suppliers.

Whatever the bases of power, coercive or non coercive, the supplier implements strategies of "countervailing power" (Galbraith, 1956) and collaboration becomes a tool to create this "countervailing power" based on both firms' interdependence (Filser and Paché, 2008). By establishing a specific relationship marketing, the supplier will seek to establish that countervailing power.

2. Relationship marketing, as the basis of supplier's countervailing power.

The concept of relationship marketing has developed around a first time dimension, which emphasizes the length of the relationship, then a second one more social, based on social or emotional interactions between actors. For example, Sheth (1994) defines it as "understanding, explaining and managing an ongoing and collaborative business relationship between suppliers and customers", before connecting the development of relationship marketing with the mutual creation of value (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2000:9): " engaging in cooperative and collaborative activities (…) to create or enhance mutual economic value at reduced cost".

Many researchers, whose research is related to relationship marketing, stress this marketing strategy, emphasizing the aspect of "win-win" situation (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Hakansson and Snehota, 1995; Gummesson, 1997; Trent, 2005).

The paradigm of relationship marketing is primarily based on the concept of "mutuality" in the creation and appropriation of value (Christopher, 2000).

However, what the academic community seems to consider as a norm (Emberson and Storey, 2006), is not empirically demonstrated: the distribution of value is not always fair. In fact, power is the variable that will determine the distribution of created value between the customer and the supplier (Cox, 2001).

In this struggle, the key customer has, by its nature (see supra), an advantage over its suppliers.

Some researchers have realized that the issue was not so much equity in the relationship, but the satisfaction both parties derive, and which is not reciprocal. Wagner et al. (2010: 1) recognize that "the customer perceives value creation as positive only if it appropriates a larger share of that" and if "value creation is a win-win scenario, the appropriation of value means that a greater share for one of the players decreases the remainder of the other "(2010: 2).

The objective of the supplier is generally built into two steps: the first one is to work with the key account to create the most value possible, "pie-expanding" (Jap, 1999), and then trying to retain some share of this value, "pie-sharing" (Jap, 2001). To reach this, the supplier will first provides the key account with relational benefits that will enable it to create value and achieve the status of preferred supplier (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). From this anchor, it will try to overthrow the power play in its favour. The end of the continuum of relationship marketing, as described by Anderson and Narus (2004: 396) is no longer an end in itself with achieving the ultimate form of collaboration, but the starting point for creating the countervailing power of the supplier, as shown by the results of our research. In this, the management of a global key account can be considered as “the new frontier of relationship marketing”, as the title of an article from Yip and Madsen (1996) has it.

3. The construction of a "countervailing power" by the supplier

Some researchers, particularly in procurement, became interested in analyzing situations where the supplier was in a position of power. Bensaou (1999) argues that the products must be complex, with a proprietary technology, few suppliers of large size and a concentrated market. This analysis is confirmed by Caniels and Gelderman (2007), who, according to a study based on the quadrants of Kraljic (1983), show, that in the context of the supply of strategic products, the supplier may be in a position of power. Although they call these results "provocative" because they go against conventional wisdom by stating that a supplier can dominate in a partnership that is satisfactory to both parties (Caniels and Gelderman, 2007: 227).

These researchers remain in relatively specific contexts while Cox (2001), who believes in a more general approach, finds the supplier can get all the levers of power if he builds high barriers to entry and blocks market entry to its competitors. However, he does not explain how the supplier can create this "monopolistic competition" (Chamberlin, 1933).

Filser and Paché (2008) try to analyze this supplier’s countervailing power through its collaborative efforts, but only in industrial suppliers / retailers relationships, with specific tools such as shared IM (Inventory Management) and ECR (Efficient Consumer Response).

We will broaden the research field to vertical relationships between industrial manufacturers and non-strategic, yet quasi-commodity products (corrugated packaging), which in the study of Anderson and Narus (1991) appear as products, which are closest to the pure transactional exchange. Nevertheless, we will demonstrate how such product suppliers build a countervailing power with their key customers through a collaborative approach.

4. Research methodology

To measure the reality of organizations, Mintzberg (1979: 586) advises against testing, and questionnaires and insists on collecting field data. By following his recommendations, our research builds on two case studies, represented by two multinational companies in the food sector and three of their packaging suppliers (corrugated packaging), we monitored the relationships between 1995 and 2009.
Our informants were

- ⇨ In procurement (decision makers on the strategic level and product line purchasers);
- ⇨ Users or influencers (within the buying centre of the key accounts);
- ⇨ Members of the management team from the supplying firms (General Managers in charge of key account teams).

We adopted the method of mixed interviews as described by Romelaer (2005: 114), which begins with a focused semi-structured interview and ends following the interview guide. This method leads the researcher to let the informant speak spontaneously after launching the theme of the interview with a short sentence, then only guide the interview, when necessary, with reformulations. There is little directivity from the researcher, which allows to collect data of which the researcher would not have thought while remaining within the scope of research.
We have then opted for a thematic coding, followed by a finer work of analysis and coding to further conceptualization. Our codes are not derived from our theoretical approach, but set mainly in vivo, from the material to be analyzed.

4.1. Description of first case

This French group is a leader in its industry. Its turnover in 2009 amounted to nearly 15 billion euros and it employs over 80,000 people worldwide. It generates more than 40% of its turnover outside Europe.

Since the late 1990s, this large account has changed its purchasing strategy following three progressive phases. The first phase until the early 2000s was strictly focused on cost reduction, with a purchasing process based on achieving most competitive prices and heavy use of transactional tools (tenders, reversed auctions). The second phase was the logical continuation of the first one, with a shortlist of suppliers to build a supplier segmentation that covers the spectrum from “standard” to “preferred” suppliers that is being consolidated with the third phase which started in 2006. This third phase is now based on the search for value through the pursuit of lower costs (the concept of TCO, Total Cost Ownership) and innovation provided by suppliers.

Since 2006, this group has established strategic partnerships with a dozen suppliers (their goal is to reach 20 strategic partnerships). Suppliers, who can now provide the key account with an exclusive innovation that is able to create a competitive barrier with its competitors, enjoy a status of "partners".

The three stages of evolution of purchases we have just described are not only sequential, they continue to overlap with each other and allowed to gradually build a segmentation of suppliers from a purely economic criteria to achieve a relationship of interdependence between the supplier and the key account.

This key account, which was long considered to build adversarial relationships with its suppliers, has now chosen to select a few suppliers to develop partnership relations in order to help enhance the value of its brands to create a firewall around these competitive brands. This change occurred with a level of strategic alignment at the top of the business (coordination between the three vice-presidents purchasing, marketing and R & D). Even if the relationship with suppliers has evolved over time from a transactional relationship (standard suppliers and challengers) to a more collaborative relationship, the pressure over the competitiveness of the supplier offers remain present: the relational approach is never complete, as it is embedded in the search for price competitiveness.

4.2. Description of the second case

This group of foreign origin is a leader in its industry. Its turnover in 2009 amounted to over 80 billion euros and it employs about 300,000 people around the world. It generates over 60% of its turnover outside Europe.

This key account, known for seeking consensual relationships with suppliers, has nevertheless developed its procurement strategy. It has evolved from a purely relational partnership at national level (since the mid-1990s), partnership contracts with tacit renewal during five years, without any call for competition for the duration of the contract, to a top-down approach with a selective partnership at European level (since 2003).

A geographic dimension first divides purchases. The strategic purchases are made at European level, where a Supplier Relationship Management programme is also enforced to select and develop the relationship with suppliers. Purchases are purely operational at local level, where they deal with purely local projects. The geographical dimension and the supplier segmentation overlay each other. It is based on a pyramid approach that is moving from a supplier relationship based on prices and costs (low-cost suppliers or challengers) to a relationship of quasi-integration (“preferred” or “strategic” suppliers). Suppliers according to their capabilities and resources are encouraged to move towards a “preferred” supplier status, whereas few of them manage to reach the ultimate status of "strategic" supplier (only two or three suppliers per product categories).

Each "business" (Business Unit) manages its suppliers according to the same segmentation, but in terms of marketing strategy and purchased product, the weight can be placed on preferred suppliers and one strategic partner or standard suppliers (search for products 'low-cost'). Some products, because of their positioning as a commodity, do not justify the introduction of partners.

In 2008, competitors’ watch with suppliers have been set to analyse and compare the value of competing end products.

4.3. Description suppliers

Suppliers are companies that produce and sell corrugated packaging. Two are multinational groups (A and B), the hird (C) is a midsize company with a high level of activity centred on France. All three are or have been suppliers for each of the two studied key accounts on the period of the study.

5. Study Results

Our study suggests that suppliers have adapted themselves to, more than they have anticipated, the evolution of the purchasing strategy of the two studied key accounts.

5.1. From cost reduction to collaborative relationship.

In the early '90s, suppliers of corrugated packaging were entangled in a process of "commodisation" of their products, with a willingness of key accounts to standardise the product to drive prices down by using tenders on an increasingly important scale: purchasing services have gradually structured and organized themselves at the national or European level.
The first supplier, to successfully break this vicious cycle of downward spiral of unprofitability, is the supplier C, who has managed to develop a lower weight paper which enabled him to reduce the final cost of its packaging.
Unfortunately, it failed to protect this competitive advantage and suppliers A and B, soon joined him and it rapidly lost its position of "cost leader”.
These three suppliers have found themselves in fierce competition whereas the strategy of cost domination prevailed (Porter, 1985).
The key account 1 has thus established with supplier A and C an adversarial-type relationship with allocations of wallet share fluctuating according to tenders’ outcome. The relationship could be described as a "transactional sustained" one (Dyer et al. 1998; Palmer, 2007).
The key account 2 has gradually realized that a purely transactional relationship impoverished the quality of the product and a significant proportion of potential knowledge from suppliers remained unused.
They decided, in the mid 90s, in France to launch an innovative process of partnership through which they defined a five year agreement with two supplying “partners” to whom they allocated, respectively, 50% of their corrugated needs with fixed prices and a mechanism indexing the evolution of the cost of raw material. They thus put an end to the transactional relationship and laid the groundwork for a collaborative relationship by introducing also the commitment of each supplier to introduce innovations that would reduce by 12% the amount of corrugated purchases over the five years’ contract.
Key Account 2 to complete this contractual innovation decided to take as suppliers, companies B and C, whereas A, which was their historic partner, lost all business.

5.2. From the collaborative approach to the construction of a “countervailing power”.

Companies B and C had great difficulty to meet the terms of the contract during the first years of the so-called partnership. They were so unprepared for this collaborative approach.

Company B was the one struggling most, as they had to create a dedicated team and hire new staff profiles with strong technical expertise to work not only on the packaging, but also on the packaging lines in the customer's plants to increase productivity.

It soon became obvious to the supplier B that the innovative work on the products would not be enough to reach the threshold of 12% required savings and that they should work on improving customer productivity in its own packaging process as well as on the entire logistics process.

Thus, the collaborative approach has shifted the focus from the supplier's product to the definition and implementation of logistics services. The aim of the suppliers was to move their products out of its identification as a "commodity", offering a range of services, which allowed them to get "anchored" within the key customer. The services were free and unlike the study of Reinartz and Ulaga (2008), supplier B as C did not seek to price them, because they allowed them to build their countervailing power vis-à-vis the key account.

Indeed, by acting as "consultants" in productivity, suppliers increased the value creation by moving their offer from product to service. They could then increase their share of the value without the customer being aware of it. They have, for example, offered more expensive packaging, that allowed the customer to pack more products inside and reduce the overall logistical costs of the customer. The customer, benefiting from a significant reduction in the cost of transportation, was then putting less pressure in negotiating the price of the packaging.

This consulting work has enabled the supplier B to build strong ties with the key customer and gradually to overtake the work of the customer's own technicians. Part of the logistic expertise has been outsourced, in an implicit way, though the packaging supply contracts. The key account has taken part in the construction of the countervailing power from the suppliers by converting them into quasi internalized service centres and forging ties that were not easily "breakable".

5.3. The current features of the supplier "countervailing power".

In the 2000s, organizational learning (Argyris, 1957) spread out the boundaries of the customer-supplier firms, as mergers or recruitment among the three suppliers involved a dissemination of the ability to work on improving the productivity of their key customers.

At the same time key accounts 1 and 2 have been converging their purchasing strategies and their level of procurement requirements vis-à-vis their suppliers. The "countervailing power" of the suppliers is now therefore based on their ability to develop the service and consulting

approach at the European level and to provide a coordinated logistic service offer (Supplier B has partly failed vis-à-vis the account 2 and been replaced by supplier A, who took over his place as incumbent supplier).
Supplier C is presently being acquired by another group that sought to strengthen its European presence and will now be able to play an equal game with suppliers A and B.
The basis of the "countervailing" power of suppliers remains their ability to reduce the costs of their key accounts through product or organizational innovation, but competitive differentiation will be played on the inter-organizational ties that each supplier will be able to build within each key account and the ability to meet the specific needs of the different brands of each key account.

6. Discussion / Conclusion.

Our study shows first, that to offset the power of key accounts, suppliers need that these key accounts choose to give a relational orientation to the exchange. The marketing researches too often tend to ignore the actions of the customer (Blois, 1996), or the fact that the actions of the customer and supplier are interdependent in B to B (Ford, 2001). The "countervailing power" of the supplier is built on the collaboration and on the asymmetry of this collaboration, when the customer is in power to enforce the relationship rules.
The power of the supplier leans on the power of the key account in a situation to demand relational benefits. This is why we define this power as a "countervailing power", as it is a reaction to the asymmetry of power in favour of the key account and of the way the supplier extends the value share.
The "countervailing power" is related to a new strategic space where into the key account "pushes" the supplier to move to optimize the relational benefits. This leads to a quasi-supplier integration and increases drastically the switching costs for the key account. This concept of quasi-integration has been used by Aoki in his own studies to describe the Japanese inter firm relationships and Houssiaux, towards the end of the '50s to analyse subcontracting relationships. We can here, in this vertical approach, use the definition of Monteverde and Teece (1982), when they explain that "« *Quasi-vertical integration differs from full vertical integration in that the downstream firm still contracts with a supplier for the actual manufacture of the component* », except that today this quasi-vertical integration is based on the strategic differentiation brought by the supplier, which is at the level of services (intangibles) rather than the provided product (tangibles). This leads to the creation of the

“extended” firm, as the competitive advantage of the supplier is integrated to be almost part of the core competence (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989) of the key account. The supplier’s knowledge and expertise has taken over a know-how the key account has given up to focus on its core business. Thus, the key account has transferred part of its “expertise” and “referent” power (see supra) to the supplier, which has built its “countervailing power” from this transfer.

7. Research limitations / Future research.

Like all research, the underlying assumptions of our work do limit the interpretation of our results. More specifically, we chose to consider customer / supplier relationships with large key customers (MNCs) in the industrial sector, benefiting by the effect of their size or reputation from a certain power in their market, called "reward" and "referent" power (French and Raven, 1959) and we chose to study that relationship within the supply of one specific product range: corrugated packaging.

The qualitative nature of our study prevents a major expansion of our results, even if the objective of this study was not to quantify but to explore the creation of a “countervailing power” by the supplier – a perspective which has been under researched in the academic community as power is mostly studied from the perspective of the party that holds it.

Further research would be to broaden the sample of key customers and the type of purchased products to check the validity of our results in multiple industry contexts.

REFERENCES

ANDERSON J. C. and NARUS J. A. (1991), « Partnering as a focussed Marketing strategy », *California Management Review*, 33, p. 95-113.

ANDERSON J. C., NARUS J. A. (2004), *"Business Marketing Management : understanding, creating and delivering value (2nd edition)"*, Upper Saddle River (USA), Pearson Education.

ARGYRIS C. (1957), « *Personality and Organization* », New York: Harper Collins

BEETHAM, D. (1991) « *The Legitimation of Power* ». Macmillan, Basingstoke.

BENSAOU M. (1999), « Portfolios of buyer-seller relationships », *Sloan Management*, 40, 4, p. 35-44.

BERTHON P., PITT L. F., EWING M. T. and BAKKELAND G. (2003), « Norms and power in Marketing relationships : alternative thories and empirical evidence », *Journal of Business Research*, 56, p. 699-709.

BLOIS K. (1996), « Relationship Marketing in organizational markets : when is it appropriate ? », *Journal of Marketing Management*, 12, p. 161-173.

CANIËLS M., GELDERMAN C. (2007) *"Power and interdependence in buyer supplier relationships: A purchasing portfolio approach"* Industrial Marketing Management Vol. 36 pp.219-229

CHAMBERLIN, (1933), *"the theory of monopolistic competition".* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

CHRISTOPHER M. (2000), « The agile supply chain — Competing in volatile markets », *Industrial Marketing Management*, 29, p. 37-44.

COX A. (2001), « The Power Perspective in Procurement and Supply Management », *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, 37, 2, p. 2-4.

DAHL R. (1957), « The concept of power », *Behavioral Science*, 2, juillet, p. 201-215.

DYER J. H., CHO D. S. and CHU W. (1998), « Strategic Supplier Segmentation : the next "best practice" in supply chain management », *California Management Review*, 40, 2, p. 57-77.

EL-ANSARY A. I. and STERN L. W. (1972), « Power measurement in the distribution channel », *Journal of Marketing research*, 9, p. 47-52.

EMBERSON Caroline, STOREY John (2006), *"buyer-supplier collaborative relationships : beyond the normative accounts"* Journal of Purchasing & Supply Management Vol. 12 pp.236245

EMERSON R. (1962), « Power-dependence relations », *American Sociological Review*, 27, p. 31-41.

FILSER M. and PACHE G. (2008) *"La dynamique des canaux de distribution"* Revue française de gestion Vol. 182 N° 3 pp.109-133.

FORD D. (2001), « The development of buyer-seller relationships in industrial markets », *European Journal of Marketing*, 14, p. 5-6.

FRAZIER G. L. and RODY R. C. (1991), « The use of influence strategies in interfirm relationships in industrial product channels », *Journal of Marketing*, 55, 1, p. 52-69.

FRENCH J. R. P. and RAVEN B. (1959), « The Bases of Social Power », in *Studies in Social Power*, D. Cartwright (éd.), Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

GALBRAITH J. K. (1956), *American capitalism : the concept of countervailing power,* Boston, MA, Houghton Mifflin.

GASKI J. F. (1984), « The theory of power and conflict in channels of distribution », *Journal of Marketing*, 48, été, p. 9-29.

GASKI J. F. (1986), « Interrelations Among a Channel Entity's Power sources : Impacts of the exercise of reward and coercion on expert, referent, and legitimate power sources », *Journal of Marketing Research*, 22, p. 62-77.

GASKI J. F. and NEVIN J. R. (1985), « The differential effects of exercised and unexercised power sources in a Marketing channel », *Journal of Marketing Research*, 22, p. 130-142.

GUMMESSON E. (1997), « In search of Marketing equilibrium : relationship Marketing versus hypercompetition », *Journal of Marketing Management*, 13, p. 421-430.

HAKANSSON H. and SNEHOTA I. (1995), *Developing Relationships in Business Networks*, London, Routledge.

HAMEL G., DOZ Y. L., PRAHALAD C. K. (1989) *"Collaborate with your competitors - and win"* Harvard Business Review.

HUNT S. D. and NEVIN J. R. (1974), « Power in a Channel of Distribution : Sources and Consequences », *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2, mai, p. 186-193.

IVENS B. S. and PARDO C. (2005), « When a relationship is "transactionalized" : the introduction of reverse auctions in a key account relationship », *The 21st annual IMP Conference*, Rotterdam, Netherlands, p. 1-10.

JAP S. (1999), « *Pie-Expansion Efforts : Collaboration Processes in Buyer-Supplier Relationships* », Journal of Marketing Research, 35, p. 461-475.

JAP S. (2001), *""Pie sharing" in complex collaboration contexts"* Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. XXXV, February, pp.86-99.

KRALJIC P. (1983), « Purchasing must become supply management », *Harvard Business Review*, 61, 5, p. 109-117.

KUMAR N. (2005), « The power of power in supplier – Retailer relationships », *Industrial Marketing Management*, 34, p. 863-866.

LITTLE R. W. (1970), « The Marketing channel : who should lead this extra-corporate enterprise », *Journal of Marketing*, 34, p. 31-38.

MINTZBERG H. (1979), « An emerging strategy of "direct" research », *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24.

MONTEVERDE K. and TEECE D. J. (1982), « Appropriable Rents and Quasi-Vertical Integration », *Journal of Law and Economics*, 25, 2, p. 32-328.

MORGAN R. M. and HUNT S. (1994), « The commitment trust theory of relationship Marketing », *Journal of Marketing*, 58, 3, p. 20-38.

PALMER R. (2007), « The transaction-relational continuum : conceptually elegant but empirically denied », *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 22, 7, p. 439-451.

PORTER M. E. (1980), *Competitive Strategy*, New York, Free Press.

REINARTZ W., ULAGA W. (2008), *"How to Sell Services MORE Profitably"*, Harvard Business Review, vol. 86, n° 5, pp. 90-96.

ROMELAER P. (2005), « L'entretien de recherche », in *Management des ressources humaines*, P. Roussel et F. Wacheux (éd.), Bruxelles, De Boeck, p. 101-137.

SHETH J. N. (1994), « The domain of relationship Marketing », *Hand-out at the 2nd Research Conference on Relationship Marketing*, Atlanta, GA, Center of Relationship Marketing, Emory University, 9-11 June.

SHETH J. N. and PARVATIYAR A. (2000), *Handbook of Relationship Marketing*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

STEVENSON T. H. (1980) *"Classifying a Customer as a National Account",* Industrial Marketing Management, Vol. 9, pp.133-136.

TRENT R. J. (2005), « Why relationships matter ? », *Supply Chain Management review*, 11 janvier 2005.

ULAGA W. and EGGERT A. (2006), « *Value-Based Differentiation in Business Relationships : Gaining and Sustaining Key Supplier Status* », Journal of Marketing, 70, p. 119-136

WAGNER S. M., EGGERT A. LINDEMANN E. (2010), « *Creating and Appropriating Value in Collaborative Relationships* », Journal of Business Research, Vol. 63, No 8, August, pp. 840-848.

WALTER A., RITTER T. and GEMÜNDEN H. G. (2001), « Value creation in buyer-supplier relationships : theoretical considerations and empirical results from a supplier's perspective », *Industrial Marketing Management*, 30, 4, p. 365-377.

WILKINSON I. F. (1974), « Researching the Distribution Channels for Consumer and Industrial Goods : The Power Dimension », *Journal of the Market Research Society*, 16, 1, p. 12-32.

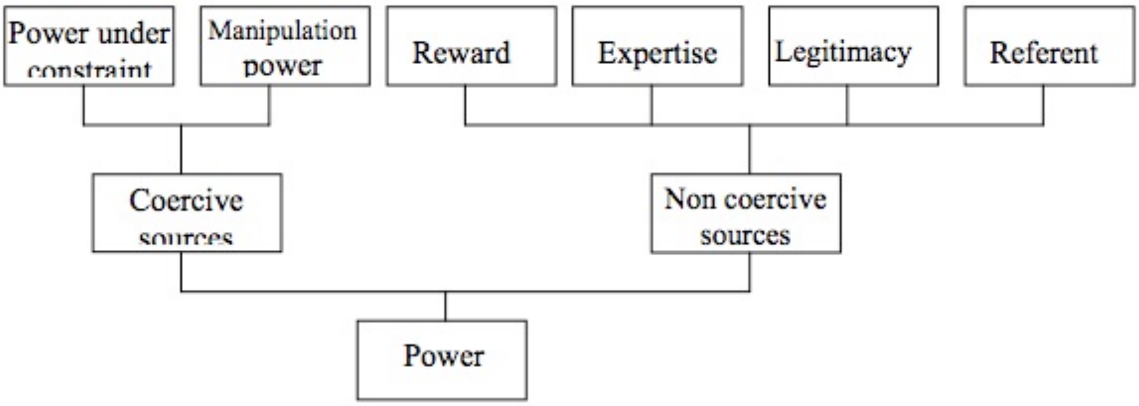
WILKINSON I. F. (1979), « Power and Satisfaction in Channels of Distribution », *Journal of Retailing*, 55, été, p. 79-94.

YIP G. S. and MADSEN T. L. (1996), « Global Account Management : the new frontier in relationship marketing », *International Marketing Review*, 13, 3, p. 24-42.

YIP G.S., BINK Audrey J.M. (2007) *"Managing Global Accounts",* Harvard Business Review, pp.103-112.

FIGURES

Figure 1 Some bases of power



Based on: Hunt and Nevin (1974)

Figure 2 Power classification

"Expertise" power The supplier's offer is standardized The supplier does not have the advantage of asymmetric information over the buyer Costs of information search are low for the key account	"Legitimate" power Few customers / many suppliers The switching costs for the suppliers are high The switching costs for the key account are low
"Referent" power The key account represents a large percentage of the total market for supplier The key account is attractive for the supplier	« Reward » power The vendor is highly dependent on the key account in terms of turnover with few alternatives

Adapted from Cox, 2001