"Relationships Between Marketing & Sales: The Role of Power and Influence"[1]

Gaining a better understanding of marketing's cross-functional relationships (CFRs) has considerable importance for both academics and practitioners. The purpose of this paper is to explore the nature of one of the least understood of marketing's CFRs viz., that with sales. Focusing on the key outcome variable of relationship effectiveness, we develop and test a model to provide insights into the factors which either increase or decrease the effectiveness of the marketing/sales working relationship. Our proposed model hypothesizes that the power of the marketing department and the stakeholding of the marketing manager, affect perceived relationship effectiveness through the mediating variables of interdependence, influence strategies, manifest influence, and interpersonal trust.

Introduction

Barely a decade ago, issues of marketing organization were peripheral to scholarly visions of marketing's future (Day 1997). Today however, these issues are high on the research agenda, and evidence of their importance can be seen in the large and rapidly growing body of literature examining CFRs and integration between marketing and other functional units (e.g., Fisher, Maltz, and Jaworski 1997; Workman, Homburg, and Gruner 1998). To date, the bulk of this research has focused on the CFR between Marketing and R&D, and has been driven largely by an interest in new product development and innovation in general. This is understandable, given the importance of innovation within modern organizations and the central role of marketing in driving these processes. Likewise, other scholars have noted marketing's key strategic position within organizations and the need for marketers to manage a wide range of important CFRs (Hutt 1995).

Surprisingly, one key CFR remains relatively unexplored in the academic literature, i.e., the working relationship between the sister functions of sales and marketing. Accordingly, the purpose of our research is to begin to fill this gap in the literature and, as suggested by Ruekert and Walker (1987), we focus on dyadic interactions between the marketing manager and the sales manager because individual employees are the most appropriate starting point to examine CFRs. Drawing on theoretical perspectives of organizational and social exchange theories, we develop and test a model of relationship effectiveness. In total, six explanatory constructs

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emerged from this literature search. These six constructs are: *interpersonal trust*, *manifest influence*, *influence strategies*, *departmental power*, *stakeholding*, and *total interdependence*.

Our paper is structured as follows. First, we review the theoretical foundations of our research and then develop a structural integrated model. Next, we describe the methodology and present our preliminary findings.

Theoretical Foundations

Essentially, our research uses an *interaction approach* to explain the relational outcome of perceived relationship effectiveness. This approach, which has been used in much of the research on relational outcomes, draws on exchange theories and game theory and focuses on understanding how constructs such as power, influence, trust, and cooperation, predict satisfaction, performance, and relationship continuity in buyer-seller, channel, and supplier contexts (e.g., Anderson and Narus 1990; Morgan and Hunt 1994; Moorman, Deshpandé, and Zaltman 1993). Though our research draws mainly from this interaction approach, we also build on the more recent work of Smith and Barclay (1999) who combined the interaction approach with the *structural-contingency approach*. In short, this latter approach suggests that relational outcomes can be explained by the organizational, structural, and environmental characteristics facing the parties (e.g., Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). As noted by Smith and Barclay (1999), an important variable identified by this literature is interdependence. Accordingly, we draw from both approaches to examine power, influence, interpersonal trust, and interdependence in the same working relationship model.

Model Development

As shown in Figure 1, two exogenous variables (power of the marketing department, and stakeholding) and four endogenous variables (total interdependence, influence strategies, interpersonal trust, and manifest influence) are linked to explain perceived relationship effectiveness. As part of this research, the six hypotheses denoted in Figure 1 will be developed and tested using data collected from firms in both the UK and Australia. In order to clarify the focus of our research, we start by examining the focal outcome variable of perceived relationship effectiveness and then develop our research hypotheses.

The dependent variable of *perceived relationship effectiveness* was chosen because: (a) previous studies of effective working relationships have also focused on subjective outcomes (Anderson and Narus 1990); and (b) objective measures of effectiveness, such as sales volume, may not accurately reflect the quality of a relationship due to confounding factors such as long sales cycles.

Effect of The Marketing Manager's Manifest Influence

Consistent with recent research by Dawes, Lee, and Dowling (1998), we define manifest influence in terms of the actual effect that a marketing manager had on a specific project in terms of changing the opinions and behaviours of other members of the decision-making unit. The influence construct is included in our research because Ruekert and Walker (1987) argue that influence is likely to be an important co-ordinating dimension in CFRs, and because Homburg, Workman, and Krohmer (1999) suggest that much more empirical research is required in order to understand

marketing's influence on decision-making within the firm. A feature of our research is that it focuses on a specific project carried out by a cross-functional team which includes at least one person each from sales and marketing, along with a varying number of people from other departments. Needless to say, in such a decision-making group, where often there is internal competition (Conrad 1990), people from the different functional areas are likely to be jockeying for positions of power in order to further the interests of themselves and their department.

Perceived relationship effectiveness. Though there may well be some conflicts of interests between the "sister" functions of sales and marketing, we argue that, on balance, in teams where the marketing manager is more effective in being able to change the opinions and behaviours of other members of the team, the sales manager will perceive their dyadic relationship to be more effective. In such instances, due to their increased manifest influence, marketing managers are likely to be able to obtain a greater part of the available resources, which they may share with the sales manager. If this sharing of resources happens, which is highly likely due to the need to build coalitions in cross-functional teams (Conrad 1990), it seems reasonable to expect the sales manager to think that his/her relationship with the marketing manager is effective. But why should a marketing manager share more of these resources with the sales manager as opposed to other members of the cross-functional team? Part of the answer to this question is due to the likelihood that the persons in the marketing/sales dyad will have higher domain similarity[1] as compared to the persons in the other marketing dyads (e.g., marketing/finance) in the cross-functional team. Ruekert and Walker (1987) argue that the amount of resource flows between marketing people and those in other functional areas is positively related to the degree of domain similarity between them. Formally, we express the relationship between the marketing manager's manifest influence and perceived relationship effectiveness in our first hypothesis.

> H_1: As the manifest influence of the marketing manager increases, the perceived effectiveness of the sales/marketing manager relationship will increase.

Effects of Interpersonal Trust

We include this variable because a variety of studies in marketing (e.g., Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpandé 1992) and in organization behaviour suggest that this social psychological factor is likely to be important in determining relationship effectiveness. In contrast to previous studies in marketing, we follow McAllister (1995) who drew upon literature in both sociology and social pyschology and showed empirically that interpersonal trust has both cognitive and affective dimensions. *Cognition-based trust* (CBT) derives from a person's rational bases for trusting another person, e.g., previous occasions in which the other person has been competent, reliable, and dependable in performing tasks which affected the other person. In contrast, *affect-based trust* (ABT) is typified by emotional bonds between individuals, in which one party exhibits genuine concern and care for the welfare of the other person (Lewis and Wiegert 1985).

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[1] Domain similarity refers to the degree to which two different individuals or departments share the same goals, skills, or tasks (Ruekert and Walker, 1987, p. 6).

Perceived relationship effectiveness. The direct effects of CBT and ABT on the perceived effectiveness of the working relationship between two managers are not well understood. McAllister (1995, p. 32) for example noted that "existing research contains little on how trust affects performance outcomes." However, he argues that trusting peers are likely to assess each other's performance more favourably due to the beneficial effects of the behavioural consequences of trust e.g., control-based monitoring, individual citizenship behaviour, and defensive behaviour. A study by Smith and Barclay (1997) examined the effects of trusting behaviours (e.g., investment of resources and effort into the working relationship) on perceived task performance and their findings generally support the proposition that greater trust is associated with greater perceived "task performance", a construct which is conceptually similar to our dependent variable of "perceived relationship effectiveness." Accordingly, we hypothesise:

> $H_{2a:}$ As the sales manager's CBT in the marketing manager increases, the perceived effectiveness of their working relationship will increase.

> $H_{2b:}$ As the sales manager's ABT in the marketing manager increases, the perceived effectiveness of their working relationship will increase.

On the basis of theory and emprical findings, our structural model also specifies a link from CBT to ABT. For example, Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna (1985) found that the development of affect in close relationships needs to be founded upon an existing cognitive base. Hence in CFRs, some level of CBT may be required for ABT to develop because a manager must first deem that their peers meet a baseline level of reliability and dependability before they will invest more in a relationship to the point that ABT may emerge (McAllister 1995). As such, we predict:

> H_{2c}: As the sales manager's CBT in the marketing manager increases, the level of ABT in the marketing manager will increase.

Effects of the Influence Strategies used by the Marketing Manager
In order to more fully understand how manifest influence acts as an informal co-ordinating mechanism in CFRs, two influence strategies of *threats* and *legalistic pleas* are included as predictor variables in our model.

The threats type of influence strategy relates to instances when the source communicates to the target that he/she will apply negative sanctions if the target does not perform the desired action (Frazier and Summers 1984). Research in organizational communication (Yukl, Falbe, and Youn 1992) indicates that the threats (or pressure) strategy is used most often when an initial influence attempt has failed and is generally viewed as being an inappropriate form of influence behaviour since target resentment about the source's use of coercion is likely to result. In addition, Fisher, Maltz, and Jaworski (1997), in their research on marketing's CFRs with engineering, argue that coercive influence attempts are by their very essence confrontational, and as a result, can lead to negative psychological and psychosocial outcomes. Together, these two studies provide us with some support to speculate that when a marketing manager uses this coercive influence strategy it will reduce ABT, CBT, and perceived relationship effectiveness.

In contrast, the use of the legalistic pleas influence strategy involves efforts to verify the legitimacy of a request and the source's authority or right to make it. According to Yukl (1990), this tactic is most appropriate for a request that is unusual and of doubtful legitimacy to the target person. Moreover, this influence strategy is needed most in lateral (as opposed to upward or downward) communications because ambiguity about authority relationships and task responsibilities is greatest in this direction (Yukl and Tracey 1992). However, since we can find no theoretical justification to link this influence strategy to either dimension of interpersonal trust or to perceived relationship effectiveness, we do not specify paths to these outcomes.

Manifest influence. In this section, since research on the effects of the threats strategy and the legalistic pleas strategy on manifest influence is sparse, we are forced to rely mainly on the buying center research of Venkatesh, Kohli, and Zaltman (1995) to justify our hypotheses. But since one their key findings was unexpected and somewhat contradictory, we have no strong justification. Specifically, Venkatesh, Kohli, and Zaltman (1995) hypothesized that the use these hard coercive strategies would lead to increased manifest influence. Though they found that the use of the threats strategy did result in increased manifest influence, they found that the use of legalistic pleas had the opposite effect i.e., its use led to reduced manifest influence. This finding was surprising because, on the basis of prior research (e.g., Yukl and Tracey 1992), it was expected that the use of legalistic pleas would not only have a positive effect on manifest influence, but its effect would be stronger than that of the threats strategy. Unfortunately, no explanation for this unexpected finding was provided. However, since the study by Venkatesh, Kohli, and Zaltman (1995) is the only one which has specifically examined the use of these two influence strategies in a CFR setting, we use their empirical evidence as the basis for hypothesizing that the threats strategy will lead to increased manifest influence, while the use of legalistic pleas will lead to reduced manifest influence. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

H_{3a}: Greater use of threats by a marketing manager will lead to: (1) reduced CBT, and (2) reduced ABT.

H_{3b}: Greater use of threats by a marketing manager will lead to greater manifest influence.

H_{3c}: Greater use of threats by a marketing manager will lead to reduced perceived effectiveness of the sales/marketing manager relationship.

H_{3d}: Greater use of legalistic pleas by a marketing manager will lead to reduced manifest influence.

Moreover, we posit that the increased use of legalistic pleas is likely to lead to marketing managers using threats more often. Support for this view is provided by Venkatesh, Kohli, and Zaltman (1995) who unexpectedly found that the use of legalistic pleas led to decreased and not increased manifest influence. In other words, the use of legalistic pleas is counterproductive. So it seems likely that marketing managers who increasingly use legalistic pleas become aware that this strategy is not effective in increasing their influence. As a result, it seems reasonable to speculate that they are more likely to use the threats strategy even though its use is associated with negative psychosocial outcomes. Hence, we hypothesize:

H_{3e}: Increased use of legalistic pleas will lead to greater use of threats.

Effects of Total Interdependence

Total interdependence. In line with the majority of the CFR literature, we define the sales manager's dependence on the marketing manager in terms of how much he/she needs to maintain a relationship with the marketing manager in order for him/her to achieve his/her goals and responsibilities (Fisher, Maltz, and Jaworski 1997). According to Ruekert and Walker (1987), interdependence is the key internal variable affecting marketing's interaction with other functional areas.

Manifest influence. Ruekert and Walker's (1987) cross-functional interaction theory posits that the amount of influence exercised by a member of one functional area over a member of another, depends partly on their relative resource dependence. For example, if a marketing manager tightly controls market research information about the re-launch of an existing product, we would expect the sales manager to be dependent on the marketing manager and that the marketing manager would have significant influence over sales decisions. In an empirical test of this part of their theory, Ruekert and Walker (1987) found good support for the proposition that as the dependence of another functional area on marketing increased, the greater was the level of marketing's influence on the decisions and operations of that other functional area. Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

> H_{4a}: Greater total interdependence between a sales manager and a marketing manager will lead to the marketing manager having greater manifest influence.

Cognition-based trust and *affect-based trust*. Our basic premise is that we expect that greater total interdependence between a sales manager and a marketing manager will lead to the sales manager having a greater amount of CBT in the marketing manager. We argue this because CBT is founded on a manager's rationally based reasons for trusting another manager over work-related matters. Interdependent managers are therefore most likely to develop CBT in each other as the work-reliability of another manager is demonstrated through their actions. However, we can find no reason to speculate that interdependence will be related to ABT. ABT by definition concerns emotional bonds between individuals rather than the rational, instrumental, and work-related bonds typical of CBT. Hence, interdependent managers must first develop CBT in other managers, which may then lead to ABT (McAllister 1995). Accordingly, we believe that there is no logical direct link between interdependence and affect in another manager.

Moreover, we draw from the interfirm level of research, as opposed to the more appropriate interpersonal level, because this is the only research that we could locate that has addressed the relationship between total interdependence and trust. Specifically, in their research on dealer attitudes, Kumar, Scheer, and Steenkamp (1995) posited that increased total interdependence in the channel relationship would lead to increased trust. Their underlying logic being that as total interdependence intensifies, it becomes increasingly dangerous for either channel partner to engage in opportunistic behaviour, negative tactics, or coercion, because they have too much to lose. In such situations, due to self-interest, each partner has a strong motivation to build, maintain, and reinforce their relationship. Though Kumar, Scheer, and Steenkamp (1995) argue that high interdependence by itself will not directly create trust, they suggest that it is likely to lead to an intrachannel environment in which trust can be cultivated and flourish because of the convergence of the partners' interests.

More recently, another interorganizational study (Smith and Barclay 1999) provides further and more direct empirical evidence to show that greater interdependence between two selling partners leads to greater mutual trust in their working relationships. So, using these two studies as the basis of our justification, it is hypothesized that:

H_{4b}: Greater total interdependence between a sales manager and a marketing manager will lead to greater CBT.

Perceived relationship effectiveness. Finally, we expect total interdependence to positively affect perceived relationship effectiveness. The justification for this assertion is based on the work of Smith and Barclay's (1999) research on selling partners where they found strong support for the hypothesis that greater interdependence led to greater perceived relationship effectiveness. Part of the reasoning behind this viewpoint was that interdependence is thought to increase group cohesion, commitment, and other positive group outcomes. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

H_{4c}: Greater total interdependence between a sales manager and a marketing manager will lead to greater perceived relationship effectiveness.

Effects of the Marketing Manager's Stakeholding

Stakeholding refers to the stake which an individual has in the final outcome of a decision made by an organizational work unit (Patchen 1974). Accordingly, high stakeholders are those with most at risk in the final decision because they are most likely to be held accountable for the outcome of the decision. This construct is included because research by Dawes, Lee, and Dowling (1998) shows that it is a key determinant of an individual's amount of manifest influence in buying centres, which are DMUs that are very similar in nature to the informal cross-functional groups studied here. Accordingly, we posit that marketing managers who have greater stakeholding in the focal project are likely to be more influential than marketing managers who have less stake in the final outcome of the project. Though no prior research has examined how stakeholding is likely to affect the use of influence strategies, we posit that because of self-interest, marketing managers with greater stakeholding are more likely to use threats and legalistic pleas during the specified project. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H_{5a}: A marketing manager with greater stakeholding is more likely to have greater manifest influence.

H_{5b}: A marketing manager with greater stakeholding is more likely to use the influence strategies of (1) threats and (2) legalistic pleas.

We also posit that marketing managers with greater stakeholding are more likely to have greater dependence on sales managers. Marketing managers with greater stakeholding have more at risk and, therefore, they are more likely to see the benefits of maintaining relationships with sales managers, who can provide the resources that they themselves they lack. Without such resources, marketing managers are unlikely to be able to achieve their goals. Hence:

H_{5c}: A marketing manager with greater stakeholding is more likely to be more dependent on a sales manager.

Effects of Departmental Power

Departmental power refers to the relative importance of a department to an organization in general (Kohli 1989). Evidence provided by Perrow (1970) suggests that an individual's influence in a DMU is related to the power of his or her department in the organization. Accordingly, we argue that marketing managers who belong to powerful marketing departments are more likely to have greater manifest influence as compared to marketing managers who belong to less powerful marketing departments. Additionally, we posit that marketing managers in powerful marketing departments are more likely to use threats and legalistic pleas during the project.

H_{6a}: As the power of the marketing department increases, the marketing manager is likely to have greater manifest influence.

H_{6b}: As the power of the marketing department increases, the marketing manager is more likely to use the influence strategies of (1) threats and (2) legalistic pleas.

Method

Data was collected using an identical pre-tested, self-administered, mail questionnaire in Australia and the UK. The questionnaire was mailed only to sales managers and the overall response rate was 20.3%. The total sample of business-to-business firms is 131. The parameters of the hypothesized model were estimated using AMOS (Arbuckle and Wothke 1999), which is an alternative structural equation modelling (SEM) program to the better known LISREL and EQS. Due to the complexity of the model, observed variables, rather than latent variables, were used to test the model.

Each construct was assessed using multi-item measures and measure refinement was carried out using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). As a result of this analysis, certain items were dropped from some of the measures. The resultant scales all display good measurement properties (e.g., $\alpha = .95$ for relationship effectiveness; $\alpha = .88$ for departmental power). The descriptive statistics and the correlation matrix are shown in Table 1. Preliminary SEM analysis shows good support for a majority of the hypothesized relationships.

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TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics

	Scale Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Power of the Marketing Department	15.32	5.83								
2. Stakeholding of the MM	5.79	3.08	.09							
3. Interdependence[a]	26.25	6.28	.12	.25**						
4. Threats	5.51	3.28	.23**	.24**	.12					
5. Legalistic Pleas	6.44	3.81	.27**	.27**	.10	.74**				
6. Cognition-based Trust	27.00	6.52	-.07	-.09	.20*	-.28**	-.24**			
7. Affect-based Trust	15.68	5.24	-.08	-.00	.17	-.28**	-.27**	.79**		
8. Manifest Influence	14.22	3.36	.23**	.24**	.35**	.31**	.18*	.14	.13	
9. Perceived Relationship Effectiveness	26.80	6.67	-.11	-.10	.23**	-.38**	-.36**	.69**	.69**	.19*

[a]   Denotes a formative indicator.
*   Pearson correlation coefficients significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed test).
**   Pearson correlation coefficients significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed test).

FIGURE 1

Conceptual Model