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**Internal Relationships of Supply Management
– Learning from Key Account Management –**

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Abstract

Learning from sales organisations, the paper presents the idea of internal key account management (KAM) for supply management organisations. KAM describes a concept to manage internal customer relationships and to foster internal customer orientation in supply management, directed to supply management's most important internal customers (internal key customers). For the improvement of supply management's intra-organisational network of relationships, KAM prioritises and adapts present relationships to internal key customers.

The paper proposes a conceptual model reflecting the manifold options supply management has when deciding on the implementation of an internal key account management model. KAM is conceptualised based upon the work of the IMP-Group (e.g. Anderson, Håkansson and Johanson 1994; Håkansson 1982; Håkansson and Snehota 1995) and existing KAM conceptualisations (Homburg, Workman and Jensen 2002; Jensen 2004; Workman, Homburg and Jensen 2003) in terms of actors performing activities and employing resources.

The implementation of KAM in supply management is an extensive investment in internal customer relationships. Therefore, the proof of KAM performance effects is required to justify the proposed concept. For that reason, the paper elaborates KAM performance effects in two dimensions. On the one hand, KAM should improve relationships with internal key customers. On the other hand, the improved relationships with internal key customers should have positive influence on supply management's performance to make the KAM implementation worthwhile.

1. Introduction

The need for development of purchasing to strategic supply management has been well documented in literature (e.g. Baily et al. 2005; Burt, Dobler and Starling 2003; Kaufmann 2002; Quayle 2006). As challenges like hyper-competition, mass-customisation, continuous technology leaps and globalisation of markets arose, the role of purchasing for the enterprise changed. This came along with an enrichment of its responsibilities and resulted in the notion of supply management. Supply management can be defined as a unit for the holistic and integrative planning, steering and monitoring of the internal and external value chain (Jahns 2005a, p. 350). Its potentials exceed price reduction and economies of scale. By managing sourcing processes holistically supply management can contribute to the achievement of corporate advantages in several ways (Arnold and Kasulke 2003; Burt, Dobler and Starling 2003; Chapman et al. 1998; Kaufmann 2002).

Following Arnold (1997), besides scale effects, e.g. through volume bundling, supply management can achieve 'economies of information' and 'economies of process'. 'Economies of information' can be realised if valuable purchasing information that are only available in a few or even one department of the enterprise are made available for all units. It is expected that such sharing of purchasing information about suppliers, new technologies, market developments, internal users and past spending behaviour, can avoid redundancies, reduce transaction costs of the collaborating units and increase objectivity in decision making processes. It allows the participating units to rationally decide and to align their actions with larger company goals. Furthermore, 'economies of

process' can be achieved if state-of-the-art purchasing process knowledge is made existent in all steps of the procurement process and in all parts of the company. This, for instance, can be established by uniform purchasing procedures, implementing 'best-practice-processes' across the corporation, and enhancing coordination of interdepartmental processes.

So far, supply management research focussed primarily on company's external business-to-business relationships with suppliers (e.g. Belz and Mühlmeier 2001; Mühlmeier and Belz 2003; Stölzle and Heusler 2002) whereas in this paper we highlight the importance of supply management's internal network of interdepartmental relationships with internal customers as the requisitioning departments (e.g. R&D, marketing, production). We transfer sales management's key account management concept to the internal customer-supplier relationships of supply management. The objective of this paper is to find answers to the following questions: (a) "Which design elements exist for the implementation of key account management in the supply management unit?" and (b) Which performance effects can be expected through the implementation of key account management in the intra-organisational context of supply management?"

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, the relevance of internal customer relationships for supply management is explored. The third section describes the proposed intra-organisational concept of key account management in supply management. The fourth section then introduces a theoretical framework for the concept and proposes a research model for further empirical study of the effects that a KAM implementation might have on relationships with internal key customers and on supply management's performance.

2. Supply management's network of internal customer relationships

To cope with the evolving necessity to drive the generation of corporate advantages and new tasks like the overall coordination of the external and internal value chain, various relationships need to be managed by supply management as a cross-functional activity (Cavinato and Kauffman 2000, p. 130-134; Jahns 2005b, p. 65-66). Besides manifest relationships with suppliers, supply management needs to manage its intra-organisational network of relations (Fig. 1). Such intra-organisational relations, on the one hand, regard the collaboration with internal customers and the service for company's top management. On the other hand, intra-organisational relations regard the collaboration between supply management's own departments and workforce. In fact, the complexity and quantity structure within the internal relationship network can by far exceed those of external supply chain relationships that supply management needs to manage.

While there is ample research output on internal relationships of Marketing with other business functions (e.g. Fisher, Maltz and Jaworski 1997; e.g. Gupta, Raj and Wilemon 1986; Kahn and Mentzer 1998), there is a lack of literature on supply management's internal relationships (e.g. Narasimhan and Das 2001; Nijssen, Biemans and de Kort 2002; Wildemann 2005).

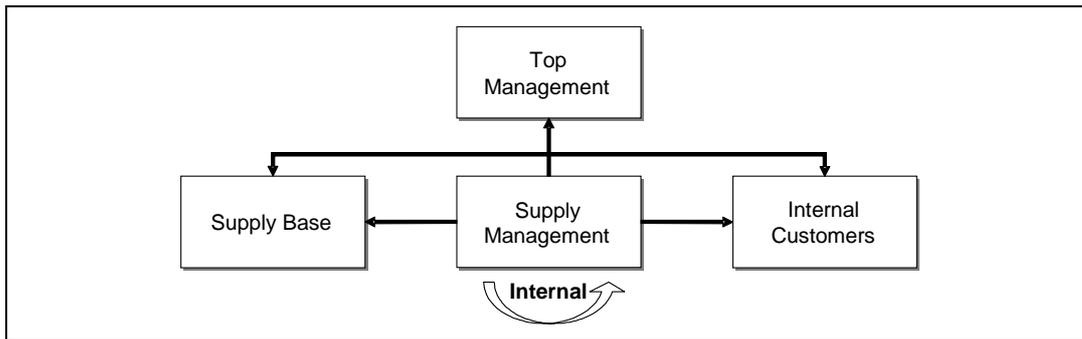


Fig. 1: Supply Management Relationships

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) found that differentiation, as the segmentation of an organization into specialized functions, is usually reflected in differences in orientation and objectives. This in turn leads to problems in achieving interdepartmental collaboration which is important, not only but especially for supply management as an integrating function. Interfunctional interaction is motivated by the desire to achieve both the broad common objectives of the corporation or business unit as well as specific functional objectives and individual goals. So to say, the specific functions in the company seek to interact with each other to achieve goals that are both assigned and chosen (Ruekert and Walker 1987, p. 2). The goals of different functional areas and their personnel are seldom aligned (Anderson 1981). Thus, interfunctional collaboration is driven by common goals but is also a source of conflict due to differences in individual objectives (Ruekert and Walker 1987, p. 2).

Indeed, in practice there are several conflicts concerning the internal relationships of supply management observable (e.g. Versteeg 1999, p. 16). One of the key conflicts of objectives between supply management and internal customers is the conscious or unconscious attempt of internal customers to involve supply management as late as possible in their sourcing decisions. This attempt is based on the fact that in early phases of sourcing projects often technical interests are predominant. In this phase supply management with its economical focus might be considered a harasser (Jahns 2005b, p. 213). It is often observable that internal customers strive for autonomy and tend to focus individual goals. Supply management's role, on the other hand, is to focus cross-functional synergies and to ensure best rates and security of supply for the whole enterprise. In some cases, i.e. company wide cost cutting programs, supply management's activities are quite unpopular for internal customers since they might result in budget cuts. In certain instances internal customers or even complete business units try not to involve supply management in their sourcing projects at all. In the case of deficient collaboration possible synergies remain unexploited because only in close collaboration with internal customers supply management can realise them in an optimum way (Cavinato and Kauffman 2000; Rozemeijer 2000).

In order to overcome such conflicts in the collaboration supply management must actively work on its relationships within the company. "To achieve cost savings, new product development, and other key company-wide goals, purchasing and supply must work closely with strategic business units (SBUs) and other functional units" (Carter and Monczka 2005, p. 9). Only based on an effective network of internal relationships, supply management can gain enterprise-wide influence on decision making processes and is consequently able to manage the internal and external value chain.

In this context, supply management's acceptance by its internal customers and their willingness to collaborate are crucial for supply management's success.

“Purchasing, after all, is a function which interacts with other functions in an expertise. It does not function in isolation“ (Baily and Farmer 1990). Therefore, it is of utmost importance for supply management to invest in its relationships with internal customers.

3. KAM in Supply Management

A possible concept to overcome the described shortcomings and to improve the internal network of relationships is the implementation of key account management (KAM) in the supply management organisation. This approach is derived from sales organisations' key account management (Belz and Senn 1994; Götz 1995; Hilty 2004; Jensen 2004; Kleinaltenkamp and Rieker 1997; Shapiro and Moriarty 1984a; Splett-Henning 2004) and transferred to supply management's internal customer relationships. Applying the concept, supply management prioritises its internal customer relationships and focuses its own resources on internal key customers as those internal customers that supply management considers the most important ones from a strategic perspective (Millman and Wilson 1995). Just like in external sales relations, KAM in supply management is a special kind of treatment of the identified key customers (Barrett 1986). In this context, KAM can be considered a lateral linkage device (Carroad and Carroad 1982; Olson, Walker and Ruckert 1995) which helps to improve cross-functional coordination, reduce conflict, and improve cross-functional integration between supply management and its internal key customers (Maltz and Kohli 2000). It manages the relationships with them and coordinates supply management's activities for them.

Depending on the strategic direction, various selection criteria can be used for the identification of internal key customers (Ivens 2003a). Possible selection criteria are their volume of business, savings potentials, existing critical relationships, complexity of related material groups and projects, etc.

Supply management's key account managers analyse the needs of their internal customers, support them in demand forecasting and planning and provide intensive consulting on procurement questions. They generate synergies, act as the 'advocates' of internal key customers and represent their interests within the supply management organisation. Internal key account managers communicate the strengths of supply management and the opportunities of close interaction and collaboration to their internal key customers (Götz 1995, p. 300-314; Müllner 2002; Sidow 2002).

Herewith, KAM aims to ensure early involvement into key customer's decision making processes by enhancing supply management's acceptance by internal customers and improving the overall relationship quality. The objectives of the concept are not only directed to improved collaboration with internal customers, though. KAM also influences the relationships within supply management. Here, the concept can help to enhance internal customer orientation. According to findings in Relationship Marketing this has positive influence on the unit's, as well as the company's overall success (Bruhn 2001). Furthermore, KAM helps to coordinate the supply management workforce, for instance by overlaying a merely material group oriented supply management organisation with integrating key account managers.

In practice there are also manifold relationships between internal customers and suppliers. Because of the earlier described tendency of internal customers to involve purchasing as late as possible, these relationships can hold various risks (Jahns 2005b, p. 67). In this regard KAM permits an earlier exertion of influence by extending the degree of interdepartmental integration and herewith helps to achieve a higher level of

information as well as closer collaboration with internal key customers (cp. Kahn and Mentzer 1998).

Apparently, KAM in supply management is a concept with multiple objectives and design options. In the next section we elaborate a research model, concretising supply management's KAM design options and its performance effects on relationships with internal key customers and overall supply management performance.

4. Theoretical Framework and Research Model

There are ample theoretical explanations available for the analysis of external business-to-business relationships. An 'internally-oriented' (intrafirm) theoretical explanation for relationships however seems to be lacking (Sousa and De Castro 2006, p. 22)

Our paper is based on the constructs of the IMP Interaction Approach (Håkansson 1982) and the IMP Network Approach (Håkansson and Snehota 1995).

Even though the IMP approaches have been developed to analyse external business relations on industrial markets, their assumptions can be transferred to internal relationships (e.g. Neuhaus 1996; Santema and Reunis 2004). Supply Management's internal relations can be described as company-internal customer-supplier relations (Neuhaus 1996) with supply management as the internal supplier and the requisitioning departments as internal customers. Internal customer-supplier relations can be referred to as one type of business relations which are characterised as interaction processes, involving personal contacts, guided by economic goals and a long-term-orientation and in this way implying an investive component (Diller 1994, p. 1). For supply management and other personnel to do their jobs, there must be interactions in terms of exchanges of money, materials, information, technical expertise, and other resources. Each member of the system is dependent on the performance of others, both for the accomplishment of tasks that serve as inputs or preconditions for their own specialised functions and for the ultimate attainment of common goals (Ruekert and Walker 1987, p. 2).

With regard to IMP research, relationships are considered to emerge in the course of time out of interaction episodes (Håkansson 1982). Relationships can be understood as resources: "[Relationships] are one of the most valuable resources that a company possesses" (Håkansson 1987, p. 10). Developments of relationships can be seen as investment processes, because the development takes time and resources, involves long-term commitment and creates assets that can be used by the actors in the future" (Mattsson 1987, p. 236). Hence, by the implementation of a key account management concept, supply management invests in relationships with internal key customers and adapts them for optimum realisation of collaboration potentials (Hennig-Thurau and Bornemann 2001; Ojasalo 2002). Herewith, KAM facilitates the development of interaction routines, as a coordinating mechanism, in the collaboration with internal customers. Supply management's resources get tailored to its internal key customers. This can maximise the benefits of the relationships (Ford 1980, p. 340).

Supply management's investment in a KAM concept, however, only makes sense if this positively affects supply management performance. In other words, the investment must be economically justified (Sengupta, Krapfel and Pusateri 2000, p. 253) and it is therefore of great interest to prove that the investment is worthwhile.

In the following, we elaborate the effects of a KAM concept in supply management in two dimensions. The first dimension of ‘KAM-Effects’ deals with the successes on the level of internal key customers. It reflects the idea of KAM to improve relationships with internal key customers and supply management’s effects in the individual collaboration with them. The second dimension of ‘Supply Management Performance’ shall measure supply management’s overall performance. A causal chain from relationship success to business success is hypothesised according to Relationship Marketing (e.g. Bruhn 2001, p. 57-59) and research on market and customer orientation (e.g. Narver and Slater 1990, p. 20-35).

The research model presented in this section consists of four layers: (a) The KAM-Configuration, as a first layer, describes the structure and the design elements of the concept. (b) The KAM-Effects regarding the relationships with internal key customers are described in the second layer. (c) The third layer analyses the effects on supply management performance. (d) Situational factors form the fourth layer of the conceptual model. Here, environmental factors which influence the relationships and their outcomes are examined.

Figure 2 provides an overview of our conceptual model:

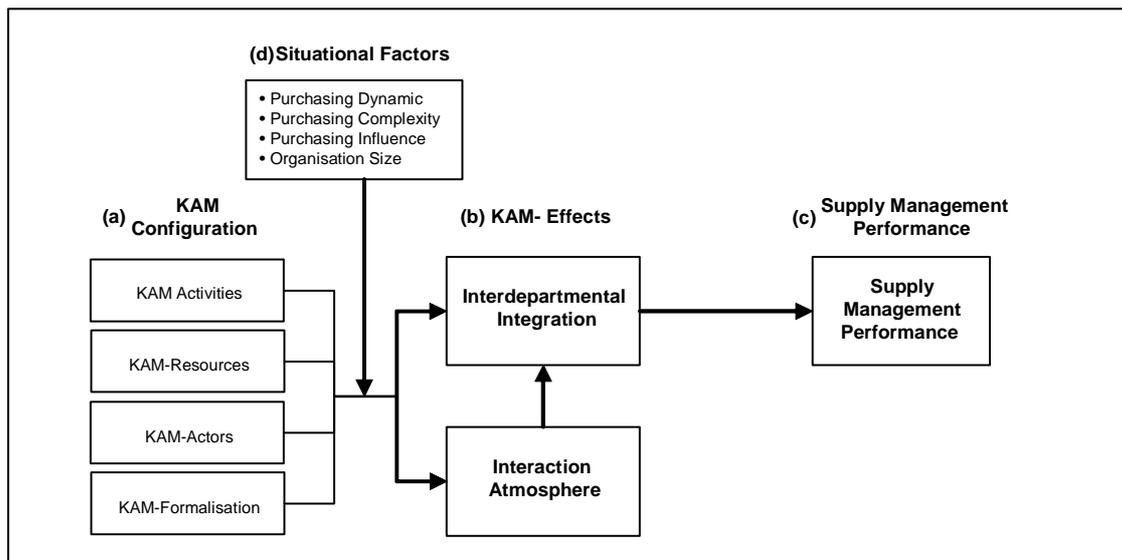


Fig. 2: KAM Configuration and Effect Relations

(1) KAM Effects and Supply Management Performance

KAM literature points out that the implementation of KAM improves relationships and the relationship climate (Biesel 2002; Birkinshaw, Toulan and Arnold 2001; Brielmaier 1998, p. 82-122; Ivens 2003b; Montgomery and Yip 2000; Montgomery, Yip and Villalonga 1998; Sidow 2002, p. 52; Stevenson 1981). Question is now which constructs can measure how good relationships are. The interaction atmosphere as an element of the IMP Interaction Approach can be regarded as the overall state of a relationship (Ford, McDowell and Tomkins 1996) and might be a suitable approach. The interaction atmosphere is determined by coactions of individual interaction episodes as well as characteristics of actors and the interaction environment. It can be described in terms of the power-dependence relationship which exists between the

actors, the state of conflict or cooperation and overall closeness or distance of the relationship as well as by the actor's mutual expectations (Håkansson 1982, p. 21-23). In later studies, variables like the degree of mutual understanding, trust, commitment and satisfaction were added to the definition of interaction atmosphere (Sutton-Brady 2000; Wilson 1995). The atmosphere is developed in the course of a relationship but also influences the relationship directly (Cunningham 2001, p. 328). Even though, the interaction atmosphere is a construct developed in the scope of external buyer-seller relations on industrial markets we believe it can provide useful insights if applied to internal buyer-seller relations. The described atmosphere's elements, i.e. state of conflict/cooperation, power, closeness, trust, commitment, satisfaction and mutual understanding, are relevant for internal relations as well and have been well applied in interdepartmental conflict research (e.g. Bennett and Savani 2004; Dewsnap and Jobber 2000; Dewsnap and Jobber 2002; Pondy 1967; Rodríguez, Pérez and Trespalacios Gutiérrez 2007).

Research on interdepartmental relationships (e.g. Kahn 1998; Kahn 2001; Kahn and Mentzer 1998; Mollenkopf, Gibson and Ozanne 2000; e.g. Rinehart, Cooper and Wagenheim 1989; Voorhees et al. 1988) often stresses the importance of interdepartmental integration which shall bring departments together into a cohesive organisation. Especially for supply management, close collaboration with other functions in the company and early involvement in their purchasing related decision making processes seems to be of high importance (e.g. Carduck 1999, p. 28; e.g. Leenders and Henderson 1981; Narasimhan and Das 2001; Wildemann 2005).

Kahn (1998; 2001) and Kahn and Mentzer (1996; 1998) propose a composite view on the construct "interdepartmental integration", using the dimensions 'interaction' and 'collaboration'. Interaction is considered a communication approach. It puts emphasis on the exchange of information between departments, i.e. meetings, phone calls and emails (Griffin and Hauser 1992; Ruekert and Walker 1987). However, in certain interdepartmental situations, communication alone will not ensure successful interdepartmental relationships (Kahn and Mentzer 1996). It is therefore necessary to encourage collaboration between departments in order to achieve interdepartmental integration. Collaboration as the second dimension of interdepartmental integration can be characterized as an affective, volitional, shared process (Kahn and Mentzer 1998; Sriram, Krapfel and Spekman 1992) and the willingness of departments to work together. This view emphasises team work, having a common vision, sharing resources, and achieving common goals (Kahn and Mentzer 1996; Souder 1987). Literature supports a direct, positive relationship between interaction and performance success (e.g. Griffin and Hauser 1992; Maltz and Kohli 1996) as well as between collaboration and performance success (e.g. Lawrence and Lorsch 1967; Souder 1987).

It has been observed that in highly integrated business-to-business relationships actors adapt themselves to one another in terms of structure, technology, administration, knowledge and culture (Han 1992a; Han 1992b). Also in interdepartmental relationships the departments can invest in their relationships with one another, i.e. by adapting collaboration procedures and processes or by just sending more time for their collaboration partners. Since the implementation of KAM is a relationship-specific adaptation in supply management per se, for our purpose the achievement of adaptations on the internal customers' side is of prime interest in the scope of measuring KAM-Effects. For our research we broaden the described concept of interdepartmental integration and add the 'achievement of internal customer adaptations' as a third

dimension. Also with regard to the IMP Group's ARA Model a distinction of such three dimensions of involvement that effect outcomes of relationships is proposed: coordination of activities, adaptations of resources, and interaction among individuals (Gadde and Snehota 2000, p. 309-10). It is referred to the degree of involvement in the three dimensions as activity links, resource ties and actor bonds. The existence of strong links, ties and bonds describes the degree of involvement of the companies in a relationship (Gadde and Snehota 2000, p. 309-10). Interdepartmental integration as the degree of coordination/collaboration, interaction and the achievement of internal customer adaptations is therefore defined as the second element of KAM-Effects.

The next performance dimension shall measure the impact of KAM on supply management's performance. So far, no standardised measures for supply management performance could become widely accepted (e.g. Kaufmann 2001, p. 273). The performance definition of this paper is based on the approach of Scannel et al. (2000) which uses the dimensions cost, quality, time and flexibility. We add supply management's "contribution to innovations" as a fifth dimension of supply management performance.

Based on the described understanding of KAM-Effects and supply management performance we formulate the following propositions:

Proposition 1: The 'Interaction Atmosphere' has a positive influence on 'Interdepartmental Integration'.

Proposition 2: The degree of 'Interdepartmental Integration' has positive influence on supply management performance.

- *P2a: The degree of 'Interdepartmental Integration' has positive influence on 'Supply Cost'.*
- *P2b: The degree of 'Interdepartmental Integration' has positive influence on 'Supply Quality'.*
- *P2c: The degree of 'Interdepartmental Integration' has positive influence on 'Supply Time'.*
- *P2d: The degree of 'Interdepartmental Integration' has positive influence on 'Supply Flexibility'.*
- *P2e: The degree of 'Interdepartmental Integration' has positive influence on supply management's 'Contribution to Innovations'.*

(2) KAM Configuration

Just as key account management (Belz and Senn 1994; Götz 1995; Hilty 2004; Jensen 2004; Kleinaltenkamp and Rieker 1997; Shapiro and Moriarty 1984a; Splett-Henning 2004), internal KAM in supply management is a multilayer concept with a wide range of possible configurational designs.

For a better understanding of KAM it can be distinguished between KAM configuration dimensions and KAM configuration variables. This is based on the dimensional analysis approach (e.g. Kromrey 2006, p. 115-122) and has been well applied to existing conceptualisations of sales-oriented key account management (Homburg, Workman and Jensen 2002; Jensen 2004; Workman, Homburg and Jensen 2003). Based on a

literature review, the first step is to define configuration dimensions which shall help to get a rough understanding of a concept and serve for higher-ranking structuring. In the next step a more detailed conceptual model is created. Thereby, the defined configuration dimensions will be supplemented with one or more configuration variables (Fitzek 2002, p. 5).

In the scope of a profound KAM literature review, Jensen (2004, p. 44) elaborates that literature on key account management can basically be divided in three categories. The first category examines the question of who is dealing with key accounts (e.g. Belz and Senn 1994; Colletti and Tubridy 1987; Senn 1996; Shapiro and Moriarty 1984a; Stevenson 1981). Literature of the second category analyses which activities are done for key accounts (e.g. Brielmaier 1998; Montgomery and Yip 2000; Müllner 2002; Senn 1996, p. 58-62; Shapiro and Moriarty 1984b; Zupancic 2001, p. 83-87). The third category is dealing with the question of with whom activities for key accounts are performed (e.g. Götz 1995; Rieker 1995; Shapiro and Moriarty 1984b; Yip and Madsen 1996).

This triad of research questions is consistent to the ARA layers 'Actors', 'Resources' und 'Activities' of the Industrial Network Model (Håkansson and Snehota 1995) and was used for Jensen's (2004, p. 44) KAM conceptionalisation. For our conceptionalisation we use this approach and transfer it to internal KAM in supply management.

The first KAM dimensions are therefore defined as:

- (a) '*KAM-Activities*', as the activities performed for internal key customers
- (b) '*KAM-Resources*', as the employed resources within supply management (e.g. material group or supplier management experts), *and*
- (c) '*KAM-Actors*', as the actors in supply management working for internal key customers

Additionally, Jensen (2004, p. 62-63) shows that the formalisation of a key account management program is a further configuration dimension because KAM does not necessarily require that dedicated key account managers are assigned or that a formal key account management program is implemented (Workman, Homburg and Jensen 2003, p. 7).

The dimension (d) 'KAM- Formalisation' is therefore also added to the KAM conceptionalisation of this paper.

Configuration variables of KAM-Activities:

In general, KAM-Activities differ from ordinary supply management activities since they are not performed in the same way for average internal customers (e.g. Shapiro and Moriarty 1980, p. 5).

With regard to the IMP Interaction Approach KAM-Activities can be understood as part of the interaction process. Object of the interaction process in the IMP Approach is the exchange of products, services, information, social exchange (e.g. Support, Appreciation) or financial exchange (Håkansson 1982, p. 16-17). The embodiment of these exchange objects has direct influence on the further course of the interaction relationship. Since KAM-Activities differ from activities for average internal customers they can be seen as the result of adaptations of the exchange elements or the exchange process. For example, the exchanged information, activities and services or the social

behaviour can be adapted especially for the interaction partner. KAM-Activities can therefore be understood as specific investments and as commitment to the relationship. Referring to the IMP Approach they can influence the relationship output and modify the overall relationship (Ford 1980, p. 340; Håkansson 1982; Johanson and Mattsson 1987).

In the context of KAM, at first, it must be explored what kind of activities supply management performs for its internal key customers. Marketing literature on KAM (e.g. Brielmaier 1998; Montgomery and Yip 2000; Müllner 2002; Senn 1996, p. 58-62; Shapiro and Moriarty 1984b; Zupancic 2001, p. 83-87), Relationship Marketing literature (e.g. Bruhn 2001, p. 145; e.g. Heide and John 1990) and Industrial Marketing literature (e.g. Hallén, Johanson and Seyed-Mohamed 1991) propose typical activities that can be performed for customers. Many times activities like marketing and sales activities, conflict management, internal coordination and special services are proposed. In eleven structured expert interviews we have discussed, completed and adapted the identified activities to the context of internal KAM in the area of supply management. The results are 33 specific KAM-Activities that can be performed for supply management's internal key customers.

The identified activities are categorised according to the earlier presented supply management relationships with internal customers, the supply base, company's top management and internal relationships of supply management (see figure 1). They can be defined as (a) Customer-oriented activities, (b) Supply-base-oriented activities, (c) Internal supply management activities and (d) Corporate activities.

Along with literature we need to rate in what manner KAM-Activities differ from activities for average internal customers. First, there might be activities that are exclusively performed for internal key customers. Further differentiators are the 'intensity' and 'proactivity' of activities (Homburg, Workman and Jensen 2002; Jensen 2004; Workman, Homburg and Jensen 2003). These variables reflect the extent of doing the defined KAM-Activities more intensive or more proactive and anticipatory for internal key customers than for average internal customers. Exclusively performed activities can be incorporated in the configuration variable 'intensity'. The presented activity options can therefore be defined as the two composite factors 'Intensity of KAM-Activities' and 'Proactivity of KAM-Activities'.

Based on these considerations we formulate the following propositions:

Proposition 3: Performed 'KAM-Activities' have a positive influence on 'KAM-Effects'.

- *P3a: The 'Intensity of KAM-Activities' has a positive influence on the 'Interaction Atmosphere'.*
- *P3b: The 'Intensity of KAM-Activities' has a positive influence on the 'Interdepartmental Integration'.*
- *P3c: The 'Proactivity of KAM-Activities' has a positive influence on the 'Interaction Atmosphere'.*
- *P3d: The 'Proactivity of KAM-Activities' has a positive influence on the 'Interdepartmental Integration'.*

Configuration Variables of KAM-Actors:

According to KAM literature (Homburg, Workman and Jensen 2002; Jensen 2004; Workman, Homburg and Jensen 2003) the next dimension to be considered describes the KAM-Actors as the actors who perform and coordinate KAM-Activities. KAM literature describes various options of the assignment of key account management actors. Those options range from line executives who take care of key accounts besides their line responsibility to fulltime key account managers (Senn 1996). Even fulltime key account management teams are widespread (Senn and Belz 1994; Shapiro and Moriarty 1984a). With regard to actors in interaction processes also the IMP-Group mentions that multiple persons can be involved. In this context Håkansson refers to “several individuals from different functional areas, at different levels in the hierarchy and fulfilling different roles“ (Håkansson 1990, p. 19). Actors are considered to have direct influence on the relationships (Håkansson 1982).

Homburg, Workman and Jensen (Homburg, Workman and Jensen 2002; Jensen 2004; Workman, Homburg and Jensen 2003) use the variables ‘teamwork’ and ‘top management involvement’ as elements of horizontal and vertical participation for their KAM conceptualisation. These configuration variables are transferred to internal KAM and are defined as:

- (a) ‘KAM-Teamwork’, as the degree of team assignment for the coordination of KAM-Activities,
- (b) ‘Top-Management-Involvement’, as the degree of involvement of supply management’s top management in internal key account management

We amend these variables by (3) ‘KAM-Capacity’ as the degree of full-time or part-time assignment of KAM-Actors.

Especially innovation management literature stresses the importance of teamwork (e.g. Gemünden and Salomo 2004). Originally for the efficient design of innovation processes, Witte (1973) refers to the necessity of combination of expert promoters and power promoters in the company (Witte 1973). Expert promoters (e.g. buyers) bring in their expertise into the innovation process, whereas power promoters (e.g. top-management) support the process with their position power (Reiß 1997, p. 104-107). Hauschildt (1993; 1999) advanced the concept by adding a process promoter, who coordinates interfaces, aligns goals, conciliates in case of conflicts and acts as mediator between collaborating functions. Process promoters can be understood as the ‘gear box’ between expert and power promoters (Reiß 1997, p. 104-105). In the context of inter-organisational collaboration Gemünden and Walter (1995) define an additional type of promoters. Relationship promoters facilitate inter-organisational collaboration, manage relationships and help to overcome collaboration problems.

Reflecting this, KAM-Actors especially serve as relationship promoters and process promoters in the supply management ‘selling-centre’. Depending on the degree of top-management involvement, KAM-Actors can also fulfil the role of power promoters.

This leads to following propositions:

Proposition 4: 'KAM Actors' have a positive influence on 'KAM-Effects'.

- *P4a: 'KAM-Team-Work' has a positive influence the 'Interaction Atmosphere'.*
- *P4b: 'KAM-Team-Work' has a positive influence the 'Interdepartmental Integration'.*
- *P4c: 'Top-Management-Involvement' has a positive influence the 'Interdepartmental Integration'.*
- *P4d: 'Top-Management-Involvement' has a positive influence the 'Interaction Atmosphere'.*
- *P4e: The 'KAM-Capacity' has a positive influence the 'Interaction Atmosphere'.*
- *P4f: The 'KAM-Capacity' has a positive influence the 'Interdepartmental Integration'.*

Configuration Variables of KAM-Resources:

In internal KAM multiple functions, like material group specialists, supply management strategists and process experts, contribute to the activities for internal key customers. These functions usually belong to supply management and fulfil the roles of expert promoters. Bistriz et al. (1998, p. 22) determine: "The ability of sales people to wield influence within their own organisation and bring the right resources to bear on their customers' needs is of prime importance". In order to exert influence within their organisation, key account managers in supply management might have special authority on other functions in their unit in order to be able to bring the required resources together that are necessary to fulfil the needs of internal key customer (Spekman and Johnston 1986, p. 522). Therefore, we consider 'KAM-Authority' as an element of the KAM-Resource dimension. It allows internal key account management to access required expert promoters in terms of required KAM-Resources.

Further more, different marketing research areas point out how important it is that internal resources collaborate efficiently. Especially literature about team-selling (e.g. Smith and Barclay 1993) and market orientation (e.g. Jaworski and Kohli 1993) but also literature on new product development (e.g. Kahn and Mentzer 1998) comes to the same findings. 'KAM-Team-Spirit' is therefore part of the conceptualisation (Jensen 2004).

Accordingly, the following propositions are defined:

Proposition 5: 'KAM-Resources' have a positive influence on 'KAM-Effects'.

- *P5a: 'KAM-Authority' has a positive influence on the 'Interaction Atmosphere'.*
- *P5b: 'KAM-Authority' has a positive influence on the 'Interdepartmental Integration'.*
- *P5a: 'KAM-Team-Spirit' has a positive influence on 'Interaction Atmosphere'.*
- *P5b: 'KAM-Team-Spirit' has a positive influence on 'Interdepartmental Integration'.*

Configuration Variable of KAM-Formalisation:

Formalisation can be described through the existence of specific rules, delegation of authority, reporting structures, norms, procedures and sanctions, which characterise the processes of an organisation (Hall, Haas and Norman 1967). Formalisation can be counted to the main dimensions of organisation design (Kieser and Walgenbach 2003, p. 77). Common is the distinction between standardisation or programming and formalisation of processes (Pugh et al. 1968). Process instructions are considered as programming or standardisation, the written documentation of it is considered as formalisation. Formalisation can be regarded as part of the coordination instruments (Reiss 2004) and can facilitate the development of routines (Welker 2004, p. 10).

With the KAM concept in mind, we can distinguish two levels of formalisation. Formalisation of the supply management unit's internal collaboration on the one hand (Hall, Haas and Norman 1967) and the formalisation/institutionalisation of the relationships to internal customers on the other hand (Håkansson and Snehota 1995). Referring to the work of the IMP-Group it has been pointed out that routinisation of exchange episodes, over a period of time, leads to "...clear expectations in both parties of the roles or responsibilities of their opposite numbers" (Håkansson 1982, p. 17). The results are various norms of collaboration, habits and standard procedures which all serve the coordination (Halinen 1997, p. 49-50) but can also endanger open and creative communication and conflict resolution.

With KAM-Formalisation as part of the KAM configuration we refer to the formalisation of supply management's internal collaboration. Internal key account management cannot only exist as formalised program; it can also be implemented without fixed documentation of its reporting structures and procedures. The formalisation/institutionalisation of relationships to internal customers is addressed by the interdepartmental integration.

The degree of 'KAM-Formalisation' is defined as single variable of the KAM-Formalisation dimension and is proposed as follows:

Proposition 6: 'KAM-Formalisation' has a positive influence on 'KAM-Effects'.

- *P6a: 'KAM-Formalisation' has a positive influence on the 'Interaction Atmosphere'.*
- *P6b: 'KAM-Formalisation' has a positive influence on 'Interdepartmental Integration'*

(3) Situational factors

No interaction process can be analysed in isolation. Situational factors need to be considered according to the IMP Interaction Approach since they influence the development of business relationships (Håkansson 1982, p. 20-21). Whereas the IMP Interaction Approach examines extra-organisational characteristics, we adopt the concept due to our intra-organisational level of analysis and focus the organisational context (Neuhaus 1996, p. 97). We use the following variables as control variables in our research model. First of all, the 'Purchasing Influence' within the company as a measure of supply management power might impact the relationships between supply management and internal customers. Additionally, the 'Purchasing Complexity', representing the number and variety of purchased goods and the complexity of

purchasing decision processes, could influence supply management's intra-organisational relationships. Also, 'Purchasing Dynamic' as the degree of dynamics and changes in the organisation's demands for purchasing goods might influence the relationships. The final control variable used is the 'Organisation Size'. Since we use the described variables as control variables, no propositions about their effects on the intra-organisational relationships are defined.

5. Outlook

The overall aim of this paper was to highlight the importance of the complex intra-company relationship network that supply management has to manage. The underlying assumption is that supply management's ability to create corporate advantages is highly dependent on the relationships and interdepartmental integration with its internal customers. For further empirical study we have introduced a research model comprising possible design elements of KAM, expected effects to the relationships with internal key customers, as well as measures for supply management's performance.

The model is currently being tested empirically in the scope of a questionnaire-based study. The questionnaire was sent to top procurement managers in large-scale enterprises. The study shall provide insights into the KAM elements' levels of contribution to supply management performance.

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