

**Determinant factors of relationship heaviness  
– An empirical investigation**

**Andrea Gelei – Imre Dobos – Judit Nagy**

*Work-in-progress paper*

*Corvinus University of Budapest  
Institute of Business Economics  
Department of Logistics and Supply Chain Management*

*Fővám tér 8.  
1093 Budapest, Hungary  
[andrea.gelei@uni-corvinus.hu](mailto:andrea.gelei@uni-corvinus.hu)  
Phone / fax: +36 1 482 5424*

**Abstract**

The focal question of our research is how heavy Hungarian business relationships are, and what specific characteristics this relationships have. Business relationship heaviness is one of the most important relationship features because substantially influences the stability of the relationship itself. We argue that the level of buyer – supplier relationship heaviness is generated by activity ties, social bonds and resource links and influenced by the complexity of the exchange object relevant for a specific relationship. The paper presents the results of a survey carried out among Hungarian companies. Our analysis examines the effect of the exchanged product and service package on relational ties and relationship heaviness. We specifically study the characteristics of the exchange object and their influence on different relational ties developed in the relationship.

**Key words:** business relationship, relationship heaviness, exchange object, activity ties, social bonds and resource links

## 1. Research question

Our research investigates business relationship characteristics in buyer-supplier cooperation. The study is part of an empirical research program of the Competiveness Research Centre which is operated by the Institute of Business Economics at Corvinus University of Budapest. The focal question of the research was stability of business relationships. Stability basically depends on two factors [Håkansson - Ford, 2002]: one hand on the *variability* of cooperating partners' relationship portfolio on the other hand on the *heaviness* of ongoing, existing relationships in the portfolio.

Variability practically refers to the overall cost of building new relationships. The wider and more diversified a company's relationship portfolio is, the cheaper and easier it is to build new relationships. Relationship heaviness invokes the cost of breaking up an existing partnership. In this case costs usually arise because of abandoning previously realized relation-specific investments. In our paper we investigate the heaviness of business relationships. Our research questions are as follows: (1) What forms of relational ties generating relation-specific investments can be revealed in business partnerships and how they influence the heaviness of these relationships? (2) How does the complexity of the exchange object relevant for a specific relationship influences these relational ties and consequently relationship heaviness?

## 2. Factors influencing the heaviness of business relationships

Relation-specific investments are realized by cooperating partners while establishing and operating a given relationship. Relation-specific investments are dedicated to a specific partner, can be used in that partnerships and can not be transformed to other ones without significant losses. When the amount of relation-specific investments rises, the costs associated with abandoning this relationship rises too and consequently partnership heaviness increases.

We can differentiate among many types of relation-specific investments. One type of differentiation can be given along the specific types of relationship ties, which trigger these investments. Ford et al. [2003] distinguish three types of such ties: social bonds, activity ties and resource links. The richer social interactions among partners (1), the more intensive activities (2) and the deeper resource commitments (3) between partners are the more relation-specific investments are triggered.

The level of relationship-specific investments triggered by the different bonds identified by Ford et al. [2003] is increasing while a relationship goes through its life cycle. The specific life cycle stages of a relationship – according to the stages theory [Batonda-Perry, 2003] – are as follows: searching, starting, and improvement, sustaining and finally breaking up. Going through the relationship life cycle activity ties are becoming more intensive between partners. These in line strengthen the resource links and human bonds as well. We can hypothesize that relationship heaviness rises while life cycle evolves.

We also can hypothesise that the level of relation-specific investment depends on the *complexity of the exchange object relevant for a given partnership*. Researchers investigating business relationships [Dyer, 1996; Dyer et al., 1998; Bensaou, 1999] noticed that relationship types and hereby relationship characteristics substantially differ depending on the specific content of the product and service package exchanged. They emphasize that the more complex and unique the subject of exchange is, the more intensive activities within the cooperation will be leading again to more intense social bonds and resource commitments. During our research both factors influencing relationship heaviness (that are stages of relationship life cycle and the subject of exchange) were studied. In this paper we present our findings related to the effect the complexity of the product and service package exchanged has on relationship heaviness.

## 3. Research methodology and sample characteristics

The sample for analysis was gathered using a web-based, on-line questionnaire. The sample contains data about 72 companies; however, the questions related to our focal research question – relationship heaviness caused by the complexity of the exchange object – were answered only by 40 respondents. Because of the low amount of responses, the sample can not be regarded as representative. The majority of the respondent companies are large, international companies, mainly from processing industry. This is not disadvantageous for our analysis, because the relationship ties (both activity, social and resource ties) investigated here are usually more extensive in case of large companies and offer a deeper insight for researchers than the case of smaller firms. The database developed using this on-line questionnaire was investigated through multivariate statistical analyses using SPSS.

## 4. Heaviness of Hungarian business relationships

In this section first we describe those analysed relational ties, which generate relation-specific investments and consequently lead to a heavier relation. We define the way these relational ties will be interpreted and measured in our empirical analysis (section 4.1). Next we look at the question, what different expectations customer may have and investigate, whether different sets of these customer expectations can be proven or not. Along the different customer expectations we will be able to define two concrete product and service packages relevant for supplier-customer relationships in the sample (section 4.2). These packages have significantly different level of complexity and make it possible to analyse the effect of this complexity on relevant relational ties and heaviness of the relationship itself. This will be discussed in section 4.3.

#### **4.1 Relational ties influencing relationship heaviness**

As we have already mentioned, our hypothesis is that heaviness of business relationships is influenced by the complexity of the product and service package exchanged: The more complex this exchange object is, the more intense social, activity and resource ties are triggering high level of relation-specific investments and creating heavy relationships. In the following section we describe the way we captured and tried to measure these different ties in our questionnaire. First we look at activity ties, than social bonds and finally at resource links.

In buyer-supplier relationships there are many *activities* carried out in order to build and maintain a relationship. These activities include for example partnership selection and evaluation, negotiation, problem solving and information exchange. From these activities the information-sharing ones play crucial role and lead to intensive relation-specific investments, are consequently relevant from the relationship heaviness point of view. Therefore we focused our attention to these information sharing activities. We listed several specific type of information exchange activity from everyday operational to more sensitive R+D and cost data exchange activities. We asked companies to evaluate the level of information sharing activities in the relationship with its main customer (questions A25 and A26 in the questionnaire). Evaluation was done according to a 5 point Likert scale, 1 representing very low level and 5 very high level of information exchange.

*Social bonds* were examined through the relationship norms developed in a given partnership [Duffy-Fearne, 2002]. These norms were: level of customer satisfaction, level of commitment and trust. We also asked the respondents to directly evaluate the strength of social bonds between the supplier company and its major customer (questions A27). The questionnaire also included questions listing the different typical organizational functions (unites) of both the focal company (the supplier) and its customer. We asked the responding professionals to evaluate the role of these functions in effective relationship management (questions A28 and A29). Again evaluation was done according to a 5 point Likert scale, 1 representing very low level of a specific relational norm/very low level of importance of a specific function; 5 representing very high level of a specific relational norm/very high level of importance in case of a specific function.

Mapping *resource links* between cooperating parties can be carried out from different perspectives. In our questionnaire we listed the following resource links between supplier and its main customer (question A24 in the questionnaires):

- dedicated human resource to main customer,
- dedicated machinery to main customer,
- dedicated routines to main customer,
- dedicated facility to main customer.

We again asked respondents (representatives of the supplier side) to evaluate these resource ties using again a 5 point Likert scale was applied for evaluation, 1 indicating very low level of dedicated resource and 5 meaning a very high level of dedicated resource.

Table 1 Three types of relational ties investigated in the questionnaire

<b>Type of relational ties</b>	<b>Interpretation of the bond type in the questionnaire</b>	<b>No. of question in the questionnaire</b>
Activity ties	Extent and intensity of information sharing activities	A25 and A26
Social bonds	Characteristics of relationship norms Extent and importance of organizational relations	A27 A28 and A29
Resource links	Different types of dedicated resources to main customer	A24

Let us emphasize again, that we asked the respondents to think of a specific, important customer while filling out the questionnaire. Supplier companies described and evaluated in this way one of its relevant and important customer relationship. Before starting the analysis of business relationships along the three different relational ties we tested the stochastic relations between variables used in the analysis. We looked at correlation coefficients between variables and carried out factor analysis (Principal component analysis, PCA) too. We found medium and low level of correlation between variables, so they can be regarded as independent. Results of the PCA analyse confirmed that variables used describe three different type of relational ties (social, activity and resource).

**4.2 Complexity of the supplied product and service packages in the sample**

Our research question was how heavy the Hungarian business relationships are. As we have already mentioned, one of our hypothesis is that business relationship heaviness depends on the level of complexity the exchanged product and service package can be characterised with.

First we investigated, whether the exchange objects of relationships analysed differ along complexity or not. Differentiating the complexity of the product and service package was done along the specific *customer expectations*, supplier firms in the sample face. Specific, well defined customer expectations form the product and service package supplier firms have to create and deliver to its customers. In case we can prove the existence of different groups of customer expectations, we can also test their level of complexity and the effect this complexity level on the various, previously described relational ties has.

Question A30 in our questionnaire asked respondents (supplier firms) to evaluate the significance of listed, well defined customer expectations in the relationship with their main customer. Significance of these customer expectation elements were also measured on a 5 point Likert scale, where 1 represented the unimportant, 5 the very important elements of customer expectation. Question A30 listed the following specific elements of customer expectations: high product quality, appropriate production quantity, high quality of logistics service, flexibility, good price, incremental product innovation, adaptation to customer’s operation, radical product innovation, innovation in operational processes, technology improvement, improvement of operational efficiency, joint sales efforts, effective management of the supplier base, the possibility of accessing new business partners for the customer, reference, product knowledge, technology knowledge, information about other players in the industry.

First, we analysed the internal consistency of the question itself. We started with checking the level of correlations. High level of this correlation (0.7) would mean that respondents do not perceive real difference between specific customer expectation elements. Results show low or medium correlations, which justify the use of all the listed customer expectation elements in our further analysis.

Next step we conducted factor analysis using responses about different customer expectation elements (sample size was: 41). Factor analysis pointed out which variables, customer expectation elements behave in a similar way and move together in the sample. Customer expectation elements having high correlation with a given factor represent a relevant group of customer expectation. These appear as coherent sets of customer expectations. For factor analysis the principal component analysis was used combined with Varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization. Results showed the existence of 5 factors.

Table 2 Sets of different customer expectation - rotated component matrix of the factor analysis described

	Komponensek				
	1	2	3	4	5
a) High product quality				.700	
b) Appropriate production quantity				.602	
c) High quality of logistics service				.801	
d) Flexibility				.668	
e) Price					.943
f) Incremental product innovation	.707				
g) Adaptation to customer’s operation	.760				
h) Radical product innovation	.784				
i) Innovation in operational processes	.747				

j)	Technology improvement	.762			
k)	Improvement of operational efficiency	.650			
l)	Joint sales efforts		.845		
m)	Effective management of the supplier base		.557		
n)	Accessing new business partners through the supplier		.813		
o)	Reference		.784		
p)	Product knowledge		.816		
q)	Technology knowledge		.727		
r)	Information about other players in industry from the supplier		.588		

**Factor 1** showed strong correlation with the following customer expectation elements: incremental product innovation, adaptation to customer's operations, radical product innovation, technology improvement, improvement of operational efficiency. The factor represents a coherent set of customer expectations including different, but all innovation-related customer expectations. Consequently Factor 1 was interpreted as the *set of innovation related customer expectations*.

**Factor 2** showed strong correlation with customer expectations like reference, product knowledge and technology knowledge. The common phenomenon behind these three specific expectation elements is knowledge. Reference guarantee customer about suppliers capabilities and extant knowledge of the firm. The other two elements in the factor indicate the existence of two types of knowledge dimensions. Consequently this factor can be interpreted as the *set of knowledge related customer expectations*.

**Factor 3** highly correlated with joint sales efforts, effective management of the supplier base, access to new business partners and new information access about other players in industry. Common in these variables is that they all refer to customer expectations related to the effective use of the supplier firm's own business network. Mandjak and Durrieu [2000] have pointed out that this special type of customer expectation really exists. We interpret Factor 3 as the *set of supplier's network related customer expectations*.

Variables with high correlation with **factor 4** were high product quality, appropriate production quantity, high quality of logistics service and flexibility. This factor basically contains quality type of expectation elements relevant for all transactions (exchange of specific product and service packages) between cooperating parties. Factor 4 will be interpreted consequently as the *set of quality related customer expectations*.

**Factor 5** is very interesting because it consists of only one variable: *price* (correlation is very high: 0.943). On the other hand this result is not surprising because companies are usually extremely price-sensitive. When selecting a supplier partner price is always an elementary and decisive issue. Factor 5 is therefore is interpreted as the *customer expectation related to price*.

*The factor analysis supported our hypothesis that different sets of customer expectations can be distinguished and are relevant for suppliers in our sample. In the next paragraphs we analyse and describe the different portfolios of customer expectation sets supplier firms face and have to satisfy. (The analysis of question A30 was supplemented with cluster analysis. Hierarchical cluster analysis was carried out (between-groups linkage method). Results strengthened the above described sets of coherent customer expectation elements and their interpretation.)*

In order to get the relevant portfolios of customer expectations we used the results of the above mentioned factor analysis. We used for subsequent analysis those specific customer expectation elements, which had the highest correlation with a given factor. These were as follows (in brackets we indicated the level of correlation that specific variable has with the factor):

Factor 1 – innovation related expectations: incremental product innovation (0.784)

Factor 2 – knowledge related expectations: product knowledge (0.816)

Factor 3 – network related expectations: joint sales efforts (0.845)

Factor 4 – quality related expectations: logistics service quality (0.801)

Factor 5 – price related expectation: price (0.943)

Using this reduced number of variables we analysed what kind of customer expectation portfolios the companies in our sample face. We conducted hierarchical cluster analysis using these variables. Cluster analysis resulted in *two significantly different groups of companies, clusters with different portfolios of customer expectations*. (Results showed that regarding the different sets of customer expectations a view companies have a substantially different behaviour, than the majority of them. This was the reason for taking these companies (No. 3, 7, 18, 21, 37, 51, 62) out of the sample.

We tested the results of hierarchical cluster analysis with a K-means cluster analysis and checked how stable the groupin are. The groups resulted from hierarchical cluster analysis and K-means cluster were 90% stable, only 4 companies got different classification depending on the method applied (sample size was 38).

In the subsequent analysis, which aims at describing the specific portfolios of relevant customer expectations supplier firms face, we used the classification of the K-means cluster method. Values in Table 3 are the cluster centers calculated for each set of relevant expectations.

Table 3 Two clusters of companies in sample along the different sets of customer expectations

<i>Customer expectation types</i>	<b>Company clusters</b>	
	<b>Cluster 1</b>	<b>Cluster 2</b>
<i>Quality related expectations</i>	5	3
<i>Price expectations</i>	5	4
<i>Innovation related expectations</i>	4	2
<i>Network related expectations</i>	3	2
<i>Knowledge related expectations</i>	3	3

As you can see, the cluster analysis resulted in two clusters of supplier companies with significantly different portfolio of customer expectations. Cluster 1 companies face a quite complex portfolio of customer expectations. In this group of companies price and quality related customer expectations are extremely important (value of 5 on a 5 point Likert scale in both cases). These basic set of expectations are complemented with the innovation related set of expectations (importance level is 4). The two additional sets of customer expectations – network and knowledge related ones – have medium importance for this class of suppliers. Interesting point is, that for companies in the first cluster innovation related customer expectation is high (value of 4), still knowledge related expectations have medium importance (value of 3). Innovation is based on knowledge; therefore this result seems to be contradicting. On the other hand different types of innovations – incremental and radical – have different knowledge content. The latter, the radical innovation leading to completely new product, technology or business solution is very much knowledge sensitive, while incremental innovation needs a much lower level of accumulated knowledge. Consequently our results lead to the interpretation, that although innovation related customer expectation are of high importance for supplier firms in cluster 1, but these innovations expected to be carried out are usually incremental in nature. This interpretation seems to be validated with the fact that the correlation between incremental innovation expectation and radical innovation expectation shows a very high correlation.

Cluster 2 supplier companies face a less complex portfolio of customer expectations than cluster 1 firms. Price related customer expectation is the most relevant for these suppliers (cluster center is 4). Quality related expectations and knowledge related customer expectations have only medium importance (cluster center is 3), while innovation and network related ones have low level of relevance (cluster center have a value of 2). Summarising the results described above, we can state that in case of cluster 1 we experienced an extended, complex portfolio of customer expectations. The product and service package relevant for these supplier firms (in relation to their main customer) is complex in nature. These supplier firms are denominated in the following analysis as **Developed suppliers**. Cluster 2 firms supply product and service packages with much lower level of complexity. Therefore these firms are denominated as **Common suppliers**.

#### ***4.3 Relationship heaviness – the effect of complexity the exchanged product and service package has***

Our hypothesis is that companies facing complex customer expectations offer a complex product and service package, and can build more intense relational ties, consequently will have heavier business relationship with their customers than those facing a less complex portfolio of customer expectations and consequently supplying less complex product and service packages. In this paragraph we describe the analysis and present the results, which aim at testing this hypothesis.

During this analysis we used the relationship ties described in section 4.1. These included different activity ties (focusing on information sharing activity), social bonds (emphasizing relationship norms and the

importance of different functions of the cooperating parties) and resource links (concentrating on the different relation-specific investment types: dedicated human resource, machinery, operational routine and facility).

We looked at these different specific relationship ties and their concrete level in the analysed buyer-supplier relationship. All variables were measured on 5-point Likert-scale, where 1 meant very low level and 5 meant very high level of a specific relational tie.

We counted the means of these different, specific relationship ties in case of both the Developed and the Common supplier groups and checked, whether these means are significantly different or not. We regarded the difference observed in the strength of a specific relational tie between Developed and Common suppliers significant when significance level exceed 0.006.

As it was already mentioned we focused on different types of information sharing activities, when analysing *activity ties* between cooperating partners. Question A25 asked respondent supplier firms to evaluate the level of these specific information sharing routines developed by their main customer. Question A26 posed similar question but respondent had to describe their own information sharing practice. We explored significantly different information sharing activity level between the two clusters, the Developed and the Common suppliers along all the analysed information sharing routines! Table 4 and 5 show the results of our analysis concerning buyers-suppliers information sharing routines as a specific type of activity ties within a relationship.

Table 4 Customers' information sharing activity and its strength in case of the Developed and the Common suppliers

Variable	Developed suppliers	Common suppliers	Significance level
<i>Question A25</i>			
a) data for everyday operation (e.g. to order fulfilment)	3.96	3.06	0.016
b) data for planning (e.g. forecasting data)	3.48	2.69	0.038
c) sales data, POS data	3.43	2.13	0.002
e) data about incremental innovation	3.5	2.13	0.001
f) data about radical innovation	3.55	2.44	0.013
g) actual cost and other financial data	2.59	1.56	0.003
h) actual performance data of the relationship	3.83	2.5	0.001

Tables indicate that *Developed suppliers had a significantly more intense information sharing activity with their main customer than Common suppliers. And vice versa, customers of Developed suppliers do have a more intense level of information sharing activity with their suppliers than those customers having Common-type of suppliers. More intense and stronger information sharing activity ties generate higher level of relation-specific investments. Consequently we can state that Developed supplier's can build heavier relations with their customers than Common suppliers.*

Table 5 Suppliers' information sharing activity and its strength and importance in the analysed business relationships

Variable	Developed suppliers	Common suppliers	Significance level
<i>Question A26</i>			
a) data for everyday operation (e.g. to order fulfilment)	4.05	3.31	0.017
b) data for planning (e.g. forecasting data)	3.37	2.88	0.013
e) data about incremental innovation	3.43	2.56	0.011
f) data about radical innovation	3.81	2.81	0.011
g) actual cost and	2.71	1.93	0.034

other financial data			
h) actual performance data of partnership	3.71	2.81	0.03

Business relationship heaviness is also influenced by *social bonds*. Therefore we investigated what differences in social bonds can be experienced between the two clusters of supplier companies. Within this broad concept of social bonds, we distinguished and used different relational norms (for example the level of customers' trust, commitment, satisfaction and the quality of personal relations in the relationship) and asked the supplier firms to evaluate them. *Significant difference between Developed and Common suppliers was achieved only in case of customer's satisfaction level. A strange point that Common suppliers' cluster realized higher satisfaction level (with 4.13) than Developed suppliers' (with 3.64; significance level was 0.036).*

During the analysis of social bonds between buyer and supplier we also analysed the importance of specific company functions in sustaining and improving the relationship. We searched for significant differences between the two supplier groups. We asked respondents about their own company practice, and their perceptions about customers. Question A28 inquired about the importance of different functions (for example marketing, logistics) of the respondent supplier company in respect to successful relationship management with their main customers. A29 posed the same question inversely and asked respondents to evaluate the customer's different departments' role in effective relationship management. (In cases, where no value in significance level column can be found, the difference between Developed and Common suppliers was not significant.)

Results indicate that *in case of Developed suppliers sales, CRM and chief executive were the supplier firms' organisational functions influencing effective relationship management with the main customer at a significantly higher extent than in case of Common suppliers. It was interesting for us to see that the same result was relevant when the customer's organizational unites and their importance in effective relationship management was investigated: the importance of sales and chief executive were much higher in effective relationship management in case of the Developed suppliers than in case of Common suppliers.*

Table 6 Importance of different functions of the supplier firm in effective relationship management

Variable	Developed suppliers	Common suppliers	Significance level
<i>Question A28</i>			
a) purchasing	3.05	3.00	
b) sales	4.5	3.69	0.026
c) marketing	3.19	2.69	
d) CRM	4.00	3.00	0.031
e) logistics	3.86	3.5	
f) finance	3.41	2.81	
g) R+D	2.75	2.31	
h) production	3.33	3.19	
i) chief executives	4.24	3.63	0.031

Table 7 Importance of different functions of the customer firm in effective relationship management

Variable	Developed suppliers	Common suppliers	Significance level
<i>Question A29</i>			
a) purchasing	3.82	3.88	
b) sales	3.9	2.94	0.014
c) marketing	2.95	2.63	
d) CRM	3.5	2.73	
e) logistics	3.62	3.13	
f) finance	3.19	2.81	
g) R+D	2.95	2.25	
h) production	2.82	2.5	
i) chief executives	3.81	3.0	0.039

Besides activity ties and social bonds *resource links can be sources of relationship heaviness too. As mentioned in section 4.1 the following different relation- specific resource ties were analysed through question A24:*

- dedicated human resource to main customer,
- dedicated machinery to main customer,
- dedicated routines to main customer,
- dedicated facility to main customer.

Among these specific resource ties only the relation-specific, dedicated routines were significantly higher in case of Developed suppliers. In case of Developed suppliers these dedicated routines had a value of 3.52 (using again a 5 point Likert scale); whereas Common suppliers indicated only a value of 2.81 (level of significance was 0.043). All the other relation-specific investment types showed higher value in case of Developed suppliers compared to Common suppliers, but these differences did not prove significant.

## 5. Summary

In the focus of our research was relationship heaviness which is a potential source of relationship stability. We tried to measure this heaviness through different relational ties proposed by Ford et al. [2003]: activity ties, social bonds and resource links. Building and maintaining these ties or bonds generates some relation-specific investment and consequently fixes the relationship to some extent and increases its heaviness. Our hypothesis was that relationship heaviness is influenced by the complexity of the product and service package exchanged in a given buyer-supplier relationship. The conducted survey results could not verify our hypothesis (small sample size), however our results confirmed it. One of our results is that we could show the existence of product and service packages with different level of complexity. For professionals it is evident that there are different customer expectation groups [Chase et al., 2001; Mandják - Durrieu ,2000; Möller - Törrönen; 2003], however there are limited empirical evidence concerning the existence of these different kinds of expectations and about those different product and service packages, which suppliers have to develop and offer in order to satisfy these customer expectations.

We also could point out, that in case of a more complex exchange object supplier–customer relationships create stronger ties in case of two analysed relational ties: activity links and resources ties. As far as activity links are concerned we revealed significantly higher intensity in information exchange, an important and relevant type of activity link, when the exchange object was complex in nature. We also pointed out that dedicated routines – a special relation-specific investment type – are also significantly more typical, when the supplier has a complex type of exchange object. Development and operation of all these relational ties generates relation-specific investments and increase the cost of abandoning the relation itself. Consequently we can state that relationships characterised with complex of exchange object are heavier than those with a common and less complex objects.

## References:

- Batonda, G. – Perry, C.* (2003): Approaches to relationship development processes in inter-firm networks; *European Journal of Marketing*; Vol. 37 No.10, pp. 1457 – 1484
- Bensaou* (1999): Portfolios of Buyer-Supplier Relationships, *Sloan Management Review*, 1999 summer,
- Chase, D. – Aquilano, N. – Jacobs, B.* (2001), *Operations Management for Competitive Advantage*, Ninth edition, McGraw – Hill Irwin, New York
- Duffy, R. - Fearne, A.* (2002): The development and empirical validation of political economy model of buyer-supplier relationships in the UK food industry; Centre for Food Chain Research Discussion Paper, No.2; November
- Dyer, J.H.* (1996): Specialized Supplier Networks as a Source of Competitive Advantage: Evidence from the Auto Industry, *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol.17., 271-291
- Dyer, J. H. – Cho, D. S. - Chu, W.* (1998): Strategic Supplier Segmentation: The Next „Best Practice” in Supply Chain Management; *California Management Review*, Vol. 40 No 2 , Winter, pp 57-77
- Ford, D. - Håkansson, H. - Gadde, L-E. – Snehota, I.* (2003): *Managing Business Relationships*, John Wiley
- Gelei, A.* (2008): Heaviness of the Hungarian FMCG networks – Object of exchange in the relationship as an influencing factor; 24. IMP Conference, Uppsala, Sweden; 4-6. September, 2008; <http://www.impgroup.org/uploads/papers/6823.pdf>
- Håkansson, H. – Ford, D.* (2002): How should companies interact in business networks?; *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 55, Issue 2, February, pp. 133-139
- Mandják T. – Durrieu, F* (2000): Understanding the non-economic value of business relationships; 16th Annual IMP Conference, Proceedings, CD Rom, Bath, pp. 1-16.
- Möller, K. – Törrönen, P.* (2003) “Business suppliers’ value creation potential. A capability -based analysis”, *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 32, pp. 109-118.

