Drivers and outcomes of exercised power in buyer-seller relationships: A meta-analysis

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Abstract

We identify, synthesize, and evaluate the drivers and outcomes of exercised power in buyer-seller relationships, based on a meta-analysis of extant empirical research. Using information extracted from a content analysis of 120 studies found in 103 articles and published in 37 journals, we propose and test an integrative conceptual model comprising one antecedent factor (i.e., dependence) and two outcome aspects (i.e., conflict, satisfaction) of six forms of exercised power, which are divided into coercive (i.e., coercive, reward, legalistic) or non-coercive (i.e., referent, expert, information). Using structural equation modeling, we confirm the vast majority of the hypothesized associations between antecedents and variants of exercised power, as well as between exercised power and outcome dimensions. Important theoretical and managerial implications are derived from this meta-analysis, as well as directions for future research.

Keywords: Exercised power; buyer-seller relationships; meta-analysis

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INTRODUCTION

The sound management of working relationships between buyers and sellers at different levels of the supply chain has been widely acknowledged as one of the fundamental aspects of marketing theory and practice for the last five decades, with the focal point gradually shifting from economic transactions to behavioral interactions (Grönroos, 1991). The very reason for building buyer-seller relationships lies in the fact that firms are caught in a web of interdependencies resulting from the need to complement their resources, skills, and expertise (Heide, 1994). This is because the interacting parties gain benefits from such a relationship: on the one hand, the buyer ensures a long-term supply of inputs, gains better purchasing prices and achieves better inter-functional coordination when dealing with multiple suppliers, and, on the other hand, the seller matches improved offerings to buyer's (customer´s) needs, secures high repeat sales, and minimizes potential customer switching to competitors (Sheth and Sharma, 1997).

Inevitably, any form of interdependency between interacting parties gives rise to power, whereby one party tries to control the behavior of another because of a desire to invest resources (which cannot be used elsewhere) and increase the efficiency of their business transactions (Reve and Stern, 1979). Power is a core element in any kind of buyer-seller relationship, because it can help to take it out of the realm of chance and give it purpose, order, and direction, while its incorrect use can result in low efficiency, poor performance, and even disintegration of the working relationship (Dwyer and Walker, 1981). However, the actual alteration of the other party's behavior cannot be achieved without the use of specific power sources. The nature and degree of these power-based strategies will determine to a large extent the success or failure of a business relationship, through their interaction with other behavioral constructs.

This pivotal role of power exercised in buyer-seller relationships has attracted the attention of many scholars since the early 1960s, with a sizeable amount of research conducted on the drivers and outcomes of influence strategies in buyer-seller relationships. However, this has been described as too scattered, fragmented, and non-programmatic to yield a clear picture on the subject. In fact, some studies report inconsistent and, in some cases, antithetical results which create confusion. Although there have been several attempts to review this line of research (e.g., Belaya *et al.*, 2009; Drea *et al.*, 1993; Gaski, 1984; Hunt *et al.*, 1985), they did not capture the full set of associations between the various forms of exercised power and their antecedents and consequences.

In response, our study aims to identify, synthesize, and assess the antecedents and outcomes of exercised power in buyer-seller relationships, based on a meta-analysis of pertinent empirical studies. The remainder of the article is organized as follows. First, we provide a brief review of literature on power. Then, we present our conceptual model and develop a set of hypotheses. Next, we explain the details of the methodology adopted. Following that, we report and discuss our research findings. Finally, we draw conclusions, and discuss managerial and research implications.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Power is defined as the ability of one party to alter the behavior of another (Hunt and Nevin, 1974). It refers to the competence of a party in making another to do something that s/he would not do otherwise (Gaski, 1984). Within a buyer-seller relationship context, power refers to the ability of one partner to control the business-related decision variables of another (El-Ansary and Stern, 1972). Power is important to coordinate the activities involved in the working relationship and its judicious use is essential to keep the relationship alive and ongoing (El-Ansary and Stern, 1972; Reve and Stern, 1979). Power is a dispositional concept in the sense that it denotes an ability and a potential, rather than an actual change of behavior

(Busch and Wilson, 1976). However, the actual behavioral modification of the business partner can only be achieved through exercised or activated power (Gaski and Nevin, 1985). Depending on the aggressiveness of its nature, power sources can be classified into coercive (i.e., aggressive) and non-coercive (i.e., non-aggressive) (Frazier, 1983; Hunt and Nevin, 1974; Lusch, 1977; Lusch and Brown, 1982).

Power is derived from different bases/sources, which define the resources available to influence decisions about the relationship (French and Raven, 1959). These can be classified into six major groups: (a) *reward*, that is, the belief by one firm that another firm has the ability to mediate rewards and that s/he will actually provide these rewards (e.g. better credit terms) if the former complies; (b) *coercive,* that is, threats by one firm to punish the other (e.g., reduction in margins) if s/he fails to cooperate and comply to its requests; (c) *legal/legitimate*, that is, the belief by one party that the other has a legitimate right (based on internalized values or formal processes) to affect his/her behavior; (d) *referent,* that is, the identification of one party with another (e.g., feeling pride of dealing with the other partner), which makes him/her comply with the latter's requests; (e) *expert,* that is, the specialized and unique expertise and/or knowledge possessed by one, which is needed by the other; and (f) *information power*, that is, the belief of one party that another possesses critical information (e.g., specific market data) which is not available to the former (Brown *et al.*, 1983; Diamantopoulos, 1987; Hunt and Nevin, 1974; Lusch, 1976; Raven and Kruglanski, 1970).

The exercise of power leads to certain types of *compliance behavior*, namely acting in accordance with the influencer (Payan and McFarland, 2005). Compliance can take the form of attitude change, behavioral change, joint action, or coordination (e.g., Busch and Wilson, 1976; Hausman and Johnston, 2010; Sahadev, 2005). There is evidence (e.g., Busch and Wilson, 1976; Hunt *et al.*, 1987; Sahadev, 2005; Zhuang *et al.*, 2010) to indicate that, as opposed to coercive strategies, the use of various non-coercive sources of power generally increases the possibility of compliance with the source. Irrespective of the source of power, the degree of compliance will largely depend on the individual characteristics of both the source and the target (e.g., Hausman and Jonhston, 2010). For example, the target's fear of being punished as result of noncompliance and the source's credibility regarding the real enforcement of sanctions will positively affect compliance (Hunt *et al.*, 1987; Payan and McFarland, 2005).

The various drivers of power in the extant literature can be grouped into three broad categories. The first centers on the role of relational structure as the predictor of exercised power, with the most commonly studied determinant being dependence (e.g., Grundlach and Cadotte, 1994; Kale, 1986; Handley and Benton, 2012), followed by bureaucracy, control difficulties, transaction-specific investments, and *guanxi* (e.g., Boyle and Dwyer, 1995; Simpson and Paul, 1994; Zhang and Zhang, 2013). The second category investigated the impact of situation-specific factors, such as complexity of decision, buying situation, and importance and transaction volume, on exercised power (Hood *et al.*, 1993; Hunter *et al.*, 2006; Son *et al.*, 2008). The third category considered environmental variables (e.g., uncertainty, regulatory volatility, etc) as antecedents of power (Chelariu *et al.*, 2006; McFarland *et al.*, 2008).

With regard to the consequences of exercised power, these mainly concerned behavioral dimensions of the working relationship between buyers and sellers, namely conflict, opportunism, commitment, trust, cooperation, and communication (e.g., Benton and Maloni, 2005; Brown *et al.*, 2009; Goodman and Dion, 2001; Johnson *et al.*, 1990; Sahadev, 2005). Other widely-investigated outcomes of power are satisfaction and relational performance, with evidence repeatedly reporting a positive influence of non-coercive strategies, but a negative influence of coercive strategies (e.g., Boyle and Dwyer, 1995; Leonidou *et al.*, 2008; Rawwas *et al.*, 1997). Finally, reciprocal actions from parties exposed

to exercised power were also examined in the literature, concluding that coercive strategies of one party are reciprocated by coercive actions of the other, while non-coercive strategies are reciprocated by non-coercive actions (Frazier and Rody, 1991; Johnson *et al.*, 1993; Kim, 2000).

MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model of the study. The model contains nine basic constructs, divided into three major groups, namely: (a) drivers (i.e., dependence); (b) exercised power sources (i.e., reward, coercive, legal, referent, expert, and legitimate), and (c) consequences (i.e., conflict and satisfaction). Based on input derived from the pertinent literature, eighteen hypothesized paths between constructs of the model have been identified. Each of these hypotheses is developed in the following.

…insert Figure 1 about here…

Dependence is the extent to which one party needs to maintain a relationship with another to acquire resources and accomplish his or her goals (Heide and John 1988). In fact, dependence on another relationship party will be higher when the required resources cannot be found elsewhere and goals can only materialize from within the relationship (Andaleeb, 1996). The nature of dependence enables buyers and sellers to exercise power on each other (Chakrabarty *et al.*, 2010). The party in a working relationship that is more dependent is more likely to be subjected to power by the other party. Under conditions of high dependence, it is more likely for the power exercised to be based on non-coercive sources (e.g., information, expert, reward, referent) (Frazier and Rody, 1991). This is because the target firm, perceiving the other partner as powerful using non-coercive actions, will seek to comply with his/her requests without any resistance, due to the fact that the relationship is conducted in a more coordinated than autonomous fashion (Zhuang *et al.*, 2010). However, as dependence on the other party decreases, the other party is more likely to use coercive approaches (e.g., coercive and legalistic) to influence his/her behavior (e.g., Frazier *et al.*, 1989; Kale, 1986). For instance, Frazier and Rody (1991) found that non-coercive strategies increase and coercive strategy decrease as the dependence between sellers and buyers increases, while Boyle *et al.* (1992) revealed that the use of coercion is reduced as the exchange between the two parties is characterized by greater 'relationalism'. Based on the above, we may posit the following:

> H_1: *High dependence in buyer-seller relationships is positively related to the exercise of power derived from information, referent, reward, and expert sources, but negatively related to the exercise of power derived from legalistic and coercive bases.*

Information-based exercised power provides firms with an ability to control the behavior of the others by creating or collecting valuable marketing data that can be used in their interactions with their business partners (Williams and Moore, 2007). For example, information provided by a retailer to the manufacturer about consumer preferences would be helpful for the latter in properly planning his/her production operations. Such information is particularly useful for supply chain members who are highly distant from the end-market (Leonidou and Katsikeas, 1997; McAuley, 1993). Persuading a party to take actions through the provision of valuable and unique information is vital to reduce conflict, because this will help to better understand problems and critical issues concerning the relationship, and appropriate actions to be taken to accommodate them (e.g., Leonidou *et al.*, 2006). It will also help to improve satisfaction levels, by increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of operations in the relationship (Ruekert and Churchill, 1984; Selnes, 1998). Hence, we may hypothesize that:

> H_2: *The exercise of information power in a buyer-seller relationship is: (a) negatively related to conflict; and (b) positively related to satisfaction.*

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Referent-based exercised power implies a perceived attractiveness of relationship partners to one another (Busch and Wilson, 1976). Working with a business partner toward whom one displays favorable attitudes is expected to tolerate or even avoid any conflict arising from different goals, expectations, and views regarding the working relationship (Etgar, 1979). This is because one party's identification with the other will create a state of compliance that will marginalize (or even ignore) any negative behavior, such as gaining more resources or insisting on pursuing an antithetical course of action (Anderson and Narus, 1990). In fact, referent power can be used as a means to manage and resolve conflict in the relationship (Raven and Kruglanski, 1970). The exercise of referent power by one party will also lead to higher levels of satisfaction by the other, because of creating a feeling of trust, benevolence, and predictability, based on the belief that the powerful party would not misuse his or her power (Chakrabarty *et al.*, 2010). Based on the above, the following hypothesis can be made:

H₃: The exercise of referent power in a buyer-seller relationship is: (a) negatively related to conflict; and (b) positively related to satisfaction.

Expert-based exercised power rests on the belief of one party that another has special knowledge or expertise, which is essential for the attainment of their joint goals (Raven and French, 1958; Richardson *et al.*, 1993). This implies that the expertise possessed by a party in the working relationship is instrumental in successfully accomplishing objectives and increasing satisfaction with its overall performance (Leonidou, 1989). For example, a manufacturer may appreciate the expertise of a retailer about products preferred, store layout, and shelf design, and comply with the retailer's options. There is also evidence that partners in a working relationship are receptive to and compliant with influence strategies that are based on rational arguments, such as specific market knowledge, market research data, and previous experience (Payan and McFarland, 2005). In addition, the exercise of expert-based power will help to enrich information exchange in the relationship, thus reducing the possibility of any misunderstandings and deceptive behavior, as well as facilitating the adoption of conflict resolution processes (Sahadev, 2005). Thus, we may posit that:

H₄: The exercise of expert power in a buyer-seller relationship is: (a)
negatively related to conflict; and (b) positively related to satisfaction.

Reward power is based on the ability to give a partner in a working relationship something of value (Diamantopoulos, 1987). Powerful parties may set up rewards or positive sanctions that will enhance collaboration and productivity in the relationship (Wilkinson, 1996). For example, a manufacturer may reward a retailer for offering better shelf space, contributing to advertising expenses, or sharing market research data. As a result, the recipient of these rewards is expected to enjoy working with the other party and feel more satisfied (Benton and Maloni, 2005; Rawwas *et al.*, 1997; Zhao *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, since rewards are provided for compliance, the exercise of reward power will result in less disagreements between exchange parties as regards their goals, interests, and values, and will help to decrease hostile and aggressive behavior (John, 1984). This leads us to the following hypothesis:

H₅: The exercise of reward power in buyer-seller relationships is (a) negatively related to conflict; (b) positively related to satisfaction.

Legitimate power refers to a legalistic, formal or informal, agreement that requires or suggests that the weaker party comply with the more powerful one (Lai, 2007). Using this form of power, one party refers to obligations cited in the agreement to force the other to

perform certain actions (e.g., paying debts on time) (Chu *et al.*, 2012). The exercise of such a power base may lead to disagreements over goals and future directions, as well as create a climate characterized by resentment, anxiety, and frustration and move interacting parties away from the friendly resolution of conflict (Frazier and Rody, 1991). This will increase the amount of economic and psychological costs, and cultivate a feeling that the expected benefits from the relationship will not be fully delivered (Frazier and Summers, 1984). Hence, we may argue that:

> *H_6: The exercise of legalistic power in a buyer-seller relationship is: (a) positively related to conflict; and (b) negatively related to satisfaction.*

Coercive power refers to threats or even enforcement of economic and behavioral sanctions on one party in a working relationship by another (El-Ansary and Stern, 1972). Such sanctions may include, for example, imposing financial penalties, withholding important support, or threatening to withdraw from initial promises (Goodman and Dion, 2001). The exercise of coercive power is most likely to escalate tension, frustration, and disagreement in the working relationship, because one party performs actions of which the other disapproves, does not have the resources to carry out, or feels offended by them (Frazier and Rody, 1991; Rawwas *et al.*, 1997). It will also generate negative feelings, anxiety, and resistance that will seriously harm satisfaction with the relationship and eventually lead to its abandonment (Frazier and Summers, 1986; Hunt and Nevin, 1974; Kasulis and Spekman, 1980). Accordingly, we can hypothesize the following:

> *H_7: The exercise of coercive power in a buyer-seller relationship is: a) positively related to conflict; and (b) negatively related to satisfaction.*

RESEARCH METHOD

Our meta-analysis covers all studies published in the marketing, management, and general business journals, since the inception of this body of research in the early 1960s up to 2013. For an article to be included in the meta-analysis, it had to fulfill the following criteria: (a) to focus on power aspects of buyer-seller relationships, either as a main issue or as part of a wider study; (b) to appear in internationally-recognized academic journals published in English; (c) to have an empirical nature and disclose vital methodological information (e.g., sample size); and (d) report Pearson's correlation coefficients or other relevant statistics (e.g., *F*-values, *t*-values, *p*-values) that could be converted into correlation coefficients.

Relevant articles were identified, using a combination of various electronic databases, namely, ABI Global, EBSCO, Science Direct, Web of Science, and Emerald. We have employed keywords referring to 'power', 'exercised power', 'influence strategy', 'coercive', 'information', 'reward', 'referent', 'expert', and 'legitimate' in conjunction with 'buyer-seller relationships', 'buyer-supplier relationships', 'inter-organizational relationships', and 'manufacturer-distributor relationship'. In the case of articles not contained in online databases, manual search procedures (e.g., examining the reference sections of articles, physically inspecting hard copies of articles, checking table of contents of journals) were also employed. The outcome of this process was to obtain 120 studies that appeared in 103 articles published in 37 academic journals during the period 1972-2013.

All 120 studies identified were content-analyzed by two coders, who worked independently of each other. Initially, both coders recorded the frequency of appearance of antecedents, sources of exercised power, and consequences, as well as available correlations between them. To ensure equivalence among the same constructs across studies, we had to exclude some studies from the analysis. As a result, information about the associations between the constructs of the model was extracted from 44 independent studies contained in 39 articles. The two coders separately recorded the data collected on a specially-designed

coding protocol, focusing on sample size, reliability scores, effect size estimates, direction of association, and the sign of all possible paired associations. Inter-coder reliability ranged between 95% and 100%, which is well above acceptable threshold levels.

Meta-analytical correlations were calculated using the incomplete data method, which enables the inclusion of studies that contain at least one pair-wise correlation between the constructs (Colquitt *et al.*, 2000). We have also adopted the random-effect model to calculate mean correlations, because it allows for variation of the population parameters (ρ) across studies (Raudenbush, 2009). Based on Hunter and Schmidt (2004), we computed weighted mean correlations (*r*), correlations corrected for attenuating artifacts (*cr*), confidence intervals (at 95% level), *z*-values (using the Fisher's *r* to *z* transformation), and the *Q* statistic (see **Table 1**).

…insert Table 1 about here…

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Structural equation modeling, using the R (version 2.15.3) software program, was incorporated to test the research hypotheses. The modeling procedure was based on the meta-correlation matrix, which was extracted from the corrected mean pair-wise correlations among constructs of the conceptual model (Viswesvaran and Ones, 1995) (see **Table 2**). For each construct of the model, error terms were set equal to one minus the mean reliability score derived from the meta-analysis. To avoid the possibility of the biased estimates of the standard error of the structural paths due to incomplete data, the harmonic mean of all the effect sizes in the correlation matrix is estimated (Viswesvaran and Ones, 1995).

…insert Table 2 about here…

The proposed meta-analytical model provides a good fit with the data (Chi-square (χ^2) = 26.66, *p* < .032; *df* = 8, NFI = .989; NNFI = .952; CFI = .981; RMSEA = .075). **Table 3** shows standardized path coefficients and corresponding *z*-values for each of the 18 paths. These results indicate that fifteen out of eighteen hypotheses are supported.[1]

…insert Table 3 about here…

With regard to H$_1$, dependence was found to have a positive effect on information power (β = .188, *z* = 0.428, *p* = .000), referent power (β = .118, *z* = 2.657, *p* = .008), expert power (β = .175, *z* = 3.974, *p* = .000), and reward power (β = .482, *z* = 12.300, *p* = .000), while a negative association was observed in the case of legalistic power (β = -.202, *z* = -4.612, *p* = .000) and coercive power (β = -.142, *z* = -3.208, *p* = .000). This confirms that the more dependent party is more likely to be the subject of non-coercive as opposed to coercive strategies by the other party, because, since the more dependent party will comply, considering the other party's power, the latter does not need to employ coercive methods ((Zhuang *et al.*, 2010). In contrast, as the dependence of one party on the business partner decreases, coercive strategies gain momentum, because the influencer believes intuitively that the value of complying with such strategies will be higher for the weaker party (Payan and McFarland, 2005).

In the case of H$_2$, information power was found to negatively affect conflict (β = -.234, *z* = -4.291, *p* = .000), but had a positive significant effect on satisfaction (β = .183, *z* = 3.612, *p* = .000). This could be attributed to the fact that information is acquired in a non-coercive, persuasive manner, which creates a positive predisposition toward that information and its source (Williams and Moore, 2007). Also, the exchange of accurate and timely information is essential in buyer-seller relationships in that it holds both parties together (Nes *et al.*, 2007). It also enhances the quality of their interactions through a better co-alignment of strategies and participation in decision-making (Mohr and Nevin, 1990).

With regard to H$_3$, referent power's effect on conflict was statistically non-significant, although the sign was in the correct direction (β = -.039, *z* = -.697, *p* = .486). However,

referent power significantly affected satisfaction (β = .242, z = 4.659, p = .000), probably because the use of this power source does not imply any hidden agenda, but rather a belief that the powerful party behaves in a friendly way and s/he would use this friendship to their advantage (Chakrabarty *et al.*, 2010).

H_4 was fully supported, with expert power exhibiting a negative influence on conflict (β = -.241, z = -3.937, p = .000), but a positive influence on satisfaction (β = .415, z = 7.285, p = .000). This finding gives credibility to the notion that the party exposed to expert power believes that the powerful partner is expert at fulfilling his or her function, can offer effective strategies to achieve their goals, and complement their resources and capabilities (Zemanek and Pride, 1996). It also underlines the fact that the exercise of this type of power actually solves, rather than causes, problems for the weaker party in the working relationship

H_5 was not supported, since legalistic power had no significant impact on either conflict (β =.064, z = 1.527, p = .127) or satisfaction (β = -.044, z = -1.132, p = .278), although the sign obtained (positive for conflict but negative for satisfaction) underscores its harmful effect on the relationship. This could be ascribed to the fact that the exercise of this form of power is neither punitive nor threatening, but is rather derived from the formal or informal regulatory system of a country where it has prevailed for years. . This finding could also be affected by the content of the agreement: if the agreement has fair terms for both parties, possibility is reduced of conflict arising using this source of power, while if the terms favor the powerful party, then this may lead to higher conflict (Frazier and Summers, 1984).

With regard to H_6, as hypothesized, reward power was found to have a negative effect on conflict (β = -.334, z = -7.877, p = .000) and a positive effect on satisfaction (β = .482, z = 12.240, p = .000). On the one hand, this demonstrates that rewards granted by the powerful party can help to achieve congruency in goals and interests with the weaker party (Katsikeas and Piercy, 1991). On the other hand, obtaining some advantages, benefits, and assistance from the most powerful party in terms of rewards results in a positive affective state for the weaker party (Leonidou *et al.*, 2008).

Finally, support was also found for H_7, since coercive power had a significant positive effect on conflict (β = .663, z = 16.602, p = .000) and a significant negative effect on satisfaction (β = -.561, z = -15.137, p = .000). This is in line with the view that exercising coercive power (through punitive threats, actions, and so on) is likely to provoke resentment and anxiety in the working relationship, with all the negative effects that this may entail for its mere survival (Leonidou *et al.*, 2008; Mayo *et al.*, 1998). Furthermore, the negative sanctions imposed by coercive strategies on the weaker party (e.g., increasing prices) will have a damaging effect on its business performance (Payan and Nevin, 2006).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A summary conclusion which can be derived from our meta-analysis is that power is a core concept in buyer-seller interactions, which seriously affects the success or failure of a working relationship. Specifically, dependence was found to have a negative relationship with coercive-related strategies of exercised power, but a positive impact on non-coercive exercised power strategies. In addition, the exercise of non-coercive power sources, namely information, expertise, and reward, reduces conflict between buyers and sellers, while increasing satisfaction. On the other hand, the exercise of aggressive power, namely legitimate and coercive, plays a destructive role by escalating conflict and reducing satisfaction.

Our study contributes to the marketing and purchasing literature on three major grounds: *first*, we synthesize scattered findings of extant empirical studies on exercised power in buyer-seller relationships, that can provide researchers with a useful inventory of

knowledge on the subject; *second*, we provide an integrative model of the key drivers and outcomes of various types of exercised power, and identify associations between them derived from the pertinent literature; *third*, we concurrently test (using a powerful statistical analysis) the strength, sign, and causal direction of the effect of the various links between constructs of this model, by taking into consideration all previous empirical results.

Our findings should be seen within the context of certain limitations. Firstly, although we made every possible effort to gather all pertinent empirical studies on the subject, there is always the risk of having missed some studies. Moreover, a number of studies did not disclose the required statistical information, while when attempting to obtain this information directly from the authors, in some cases this was not successful. Furthermore, other important relational variables with a potential antecedent (e.g., distance) or outcome (e.g., trust) role on exercised power could not be included in our meta-analysis due to insufficient data.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research could take a number of different directions. First, it is important for more studies to be carried out in this important field of research, in order to understand various issues, such as how power is formed in inter-firm relationships, under what conditions it is exercised, and what the optimum mix of power derived from different sources is. It would also be interesting to shed more light on the nature of compliance behavior by the target firm, as well as the role of countervailing power in buyer-seller interactions.

 Second, to obtain a more complete picture of the links between antecedents, power sources, and outcomes, it would be useful to take the following actions: (a) to receive information about the relationship from both sellers and buyers, preferably in the form of matched-pairs; (b) to cover different types of firms involved in these relationships, namely large versus small, new versus old, and successful versus unsuccessful; and (c) to examine relationships that are at different stages in their cycle (e.g., initial, development, mature).

Third, although buyer-seller relationships are a very dynamic phenomena, involving numerous episodes, the overwhelming majority of studies examined used a cross-sectional design. Even though gathering longitudinal data is a resource-intensive, time-consuming, and costly task, such studies are imperative to develop a complete picture of the changes in the different sources of power exercised, as well as of the role of antecedent and outcome factors.

Fourth, the role of environmental (e.g., uncertainty), institutional (e.g., law enforcement), and cultural (e.g., individualism/collectivism) factors on the sources of exercised power warrants attention. The potential moderating role of inter-organizational (e.g., leadership position) or personal (e.g., pride) factors on the link between antecedents and exercised power, as well as between exercised power and outcomes, also needs investigation.

Finally, since researchers tend to use different definitions, operationalizations, and measurements for power sources and other constructs, it would be advisable to develop uniform measures to obtain comparability of results across different studies. To this end, there is a need to augment quantitative modeling designs with more qualitative analytical methods.

Note
1. Our results are generally in congruence to those of another meta-analytical study conducted by Geyskens et al. (1999) fifteen years ago, although the different range of constructs employed and associations examined did not allow to have a full comparison between the results of the two studies.
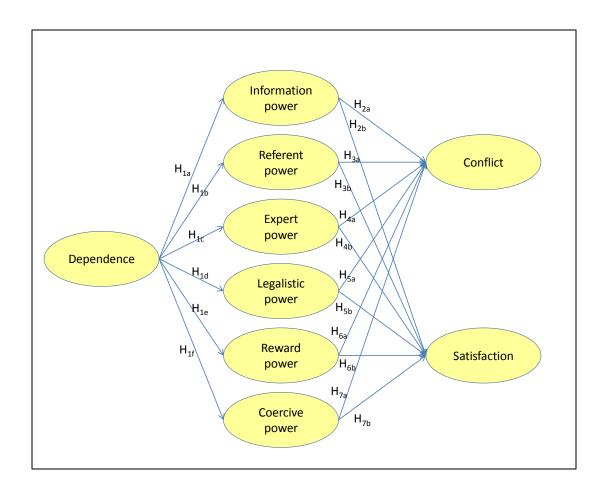
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Figure 1: The conceptual model

Construct definitions
Dependence: The extent to which one party needs to maintain a relationship with another to acquire resources and accomplish his or her goals (Heide and John, 1988)
Information power: Source of power based on the belief of one firm that another firm has some information which is not available to the former (Raven and Kruglanski, 1970)
Referent power: Source of power based on the identification of one firm with another firm or the former's wish for being closely associated with the latter (Brown *et al.*, 1983)
Expert power: Source of power based on the belief that one firm has specialist knowledge needed by another firm (Hunt and Nevin, 1974)
Legalistic power: Source of power based on the belief that one firm retains a legitimate right based on formal processes to influence another (Brown *et al.*, 1983; Hunt and Nevin, 1974)
Reward power: Source of power based on the belief by one firm that another firm has the ability to mediate rewards and s/he will actually bring these rewards if the former complies (Diamantopoulos, 1987; Hunt and Nevin, 1974)
Coercive power: Source of power based on the belief by one firm that another firm has the ability to punish the former if it fails to cooperate (Diamantopoulos, 1987; Hunt and Nevin, 1974; Lusch, 1976).
Conflict: Disagreements, frustration, and tension among firms originating from the differences in goals, aims, and values (Anderson and Narus 1984, 1990)
Satisfaction: Positive affective state showing the extent to which the expectations of one party from the relationship are met (Anderson and Narus, 1984)

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Variable A	Variable B	Number of study estimates	Total sample size	Mean correla-tion	Confidence interval (95%)	z-value	Q-statistic
Dependence	Information	4	361	.185	(.017, .342)	2.161	6.82
	Referent	2	273	.118	(.001, .234)	1.950	.37
	Expert	2	273	.175	(.058, .288)	2.892	.26
	Legalistic	5	700	.202	(-.052, .431)	1.560	40.19
	Reward	4	361	.482	(.063, .757)	2.226	52.29
	Coercive	5	917	-.142	(-.381, .116)	-1.078	57.01
	Conflict	5	984	-.131	(-.495, .272)	-.627	92.69
	Satisfaction	2	407	-.025	(-.122, .073)	-..500	.02
Information	Referent	6	715	.670	(.474, .802)	5.389	71.97
	Expert	5	574	.743	(.621, .830)	8.126	26.69
	Legalistic	6	715	.308	(.168, .435)	4.202	17.65
	Reward	7	662	.299	(.113, .464)	3.10	32.59
	Coercive	6	715	-.050	(-.257, .161)	-.464	36.67
	Conflict	3	227	-.233	(-.414, -.033)	-2.282	3.87
	Satisfaction	1	78	.122	-	1.064	-
Referent	Expert	9	1920	.731	(.666, .786)	12.28	54.52
	Legalistic	9	1910	.459	(.391, .521)	11.767	22.20
	Reward	7	1531	.410	(.174, .602)	3.287	134.23
	Coercive	9	1910	-.223	(-.445, .025)	-1.763	222.45
	Conflict	3	340	-.333	(-.607, .012)	-1.895	41.94
	Satisfaction	9	1544	.241	(-.122, .548)	1.307	353.31
Expert	Legalistic	9	2255	.441	(.371, .506)	11.014	27.27
	Reward	7	1531	.445	(.066, .712)	2.276	347.85
	Coercive	8	1769	-.177	(-.388, .051)	-1.526	147.09
	Conflict	2	690	-.255	(-.518, .052)	-1.636	11.11
	Satisfaction	9	1880	-.398	(.111, .603)	2.661	304.89
Legalistic	Reward	7	1531	.451	(.347, .544)	7.665	28.61
	Coercive	9	1910	.178	(-.110, .438)	1.212	298.90
	Conflict	2	690	-.080	(-.154, -.005)	-2.107	9.66
	Satisfaction	10	2030	.089	(.045, .132)	3.986	273.05
Reward	Coercive	9	1866	.239	(-.184, .588)	1.112	645.13
	Conflict	7	1263	-.182	(-.438, .101)	-1.264	132.23
	Satisfaction	8	1394	.359	(.311, .404)	13.890	289.19
Coercive	Conflict	11	2756	.534	(.385, .656)	6.148	226.46
	Satisfaction	11	3146	-.446	(-.627, -.263	-4.220	403.39
Conflict	Satisfaction	4	1584	-.596	(-745, .-.391)	-4.913	64.75

Table 2: Correlation matrix

	Dependence	Information	Referent	Expert	Legalistic	Reward	Coercive	Conflict	Satisfaction
Dependence	1								
Information	.188	1							
Referent	.118	.670	1						
Expert	.175	.743	.731	1					
Legalistic	-.202	.308	.459	.441	1				
Reward	.482	.299	.410	.446	.451	1			
Coercive	-.142	-.050	-.223	-.177	.178	.239	1		
Conflict	-.131	-.233	-.333	-.255	.080	-.182	.549	1	
Satisfaction	-.025	.122	.241	.397	.089	.359	-.464	-.196	1

Table 3: Results of the Structural Paths of the Integrated Model

H	Hypothesized association	Expected sign	Standardized path	z-value	p-value	Status
H_{1a}	Dependence → Information	+	.188	.428	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{1b}	Dependence → Referent	+	.118	2.657	**.008**	**Accepted**
H_{1c}	Dependence → Expert	+	.175	3.974	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{1d}	Dependence → Reward	+	.482	12.300	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{1e}	Dependence → Legalistic	-	-.202	-4.612	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{1f}	Dependence → Coercive	-	-.142	-3.208	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{2a}	Information → Conflict	-	-.234	-4.291	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{2b}	Information → Satisfaction	+	.183	3.612	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{3a}	Referent → Conflict	-	-.039	-.697	.486	Rejected
H_{3b}	Referent → Satisfaction	+	.242	4.659	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{4a}	Expert → Conflict	-	-.241	-3.937	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{4b}	Expert → Satisfaction	+	.415	7.285	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{5a}	Reward → Conflict	-	-.334	-7.877	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{5b}	Reward → Satisfaction	+	.482	12.24	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{6a}	Legalistic → Conflict	+	.064	1.527	.127	Rejected
H_{6b}	Legalistic → Satisfaction	-	-044	-1.132	.278	Rejected
H_{7a}	Coercive → Conflict	+	.663	16.602	**.000**	**Accepted**
H_{7b}	Coercive → Satisfaction	-	-.561	-15.137	**.000**	**Accepted**

Fit statistics:
Chi-square (χ^2) = 26.66, p < .032; df = 7; Ratio Chi-square to d.f. (χ^2/df) = 3.7;
Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .989; Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = .952; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .991;
Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .075; 90% Confidence Interval of RMSEA = (.05, .09).