

# **Dependence in Buyer-Supplier Relationships – Present State and Future Perspectives**

## **ABSTRACT**

Buyer-supplier relationships are characterized by dependence between the partners, arising from complementary exchanges, deep integration, mutual investments or joint history and goals. Although research focused on buyer-supplier dependence in the past, the insights predominantly stem from isolated and scattered examinations on single causes, forms, or effects without taking the entire picture into account. This paper conducts a systematic review of the literature to integrate these contributions into a coherent framework. Based on that, this paper contributes by pointing towards distinct research areas to foster and direct the topic's domain in the future.

**Keywords:** Organizational dependence; buyer-supplier relationships; industrial marketing, supply chain management; systematic literature review

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## INTRODUCTION

Firms frequently and increasingly rely on close external partners in buyer-supplier relationships (BSRs) (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987). While these BSRs have been examined intensively regarding their advantages and opportunities for the involved actors (Wilson 1995), insights on potentially negative implications of close BSRs are underrepresented in current research (Barthélemy, 2003; Hammervoll, 2011). Among many disadvantages connected to BSRs, specifically the issue of dependence between partners is of importance (Cahill et al., 2010; Gulati and Sytch, 2007; Langley et al., 2013; Narasimhan et al., 2009). Although scholars discuss the issue, extant contributions appear to be scattered and fragmented in nature while oftentimes not focusing on the issue exclusively. More specifically, existing literature mostly covers dependence as a side-effect when discussing buyer-supplier (BS) issues. This stands in contrast to its importance as a crucial relational construct (Andaleeb, 1996; Gulati and Sytch, 2007; Kumar et al., 1995) and the increasing appearance of vertical BSRs (Langley et al., 2013). Hence, BS research lacks an integrated and holistic inspection that consolidates the scattered findings in order to shed light on the discovered causes, appearances, implications, and management options of dependent, dyadic BSRs. This relevance is confirmed by a recently published literature review within the scope of this paper (Habib et al., 2015), in which the colleagues heavily focus on a minor subpart of the entire BSD discussion by taking only a weaker actor's perspective on management measures. However, they neglect including the second partner's perspective as well as a holistic inspection of the specific causes, forms, or effects of BSD that influence potential management measures.

Hence, the present work-in-progress paper conducts a systematic literature review on the issue of buyer-supplier dependence (BSD). In accordance with established methodological procedures (Borgatti and Foster, 2003; Provan et al., 2007b; Tranfield et al., 2003; Wassmer and Dussauge, 2011), a systematic review process is used. Based on the present research, it analyzes the current state of research on dependent BSRs and provides a systematic overview that structures prior contributions and derives six key areas for future research.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### Dependence

The underlying rationale of dependence is predominantly backed by two theoretical approaches. On the one hand, the transaction cost logic provides an explanatory framework for understanding the emergence of some bonding effects that result in dependence situations (Rindfleisch and Heide, 1997). Frequent and specific transactions in an uncertain and complex setting raise the costs associated with a transaction (Williamson, 1981). In result, the distinct opportunities with regards to organizational settings on the market-hierarchy continuum become differently attractive (Makadok and Coff, 2009). Many firms choose relational partnerships in order to minimize transaction costs for recurring tasks or products (Dyer and Singh, 1998). Mutual adaptation between partners may decrease transaction costs, but at the same time increase the costs for switching to alternative opportunities (Geiger et al., 2012; Rindfleisch and Heide, 1997). Hence, the transaction cost approach argues that such switching costs may lead to inter-organizational dependencies as the costs of searching for a new partner exceed those that are connected with a continuation of the existing exchange (Caniëls and Gelderman, 2007; Harrison et al., 2012).

Next to this rationale, another well developed and frequently applied theoretical backing for the understanding of BSD is provided by resource-dependence theory (RDT). RDT argues

that firms need to rely on external resources in order to handle an uncertain environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). As these advantages resemble the basis for conducting a business successfully, firms inevitably rely on these distinct resources that enable their business success (Casciaro and Piskorski, 2005), thus serving the ground for the emergence of partner dependence.

Taking together TCT and RDT, dependence between firms can be explained by the necessity to maintain distinct relationships (Harrison et al., 2012) as well as by the importance of and access to critical resources (Casciaro and Piskorski, 2005). The explanatory core of these two theoretical foundations as to the issue of dependence is resembled by their key ideas that can be found in widely acceptance dependence definitions. Scholars describe dependence as the mediating influence of partners on one another or of one partner to another partner in pursuing desired relational goals superior to alternative options (Emerson, 1962; Frazier, 1983). Dependence thus describes the critical contribution of a partner firm for which there exist few alternatives (Buchanan, 1992). This leads to the necessity of maintaining this specific relationship in order to achieve the aspired goals (Kale, 1986). From this point of view, the existing relationship can be described as being superior to potential alternative relationships (Anderson and Narus, 1990). It is this understanding of dependence on a relationship towards a partner firm which is applied in this article.

### **Buyer-supplier relationships**

As it is inherent in the above presented definitions of dependence, the effect frequently emerges in inter-organizational settings. Inter-organizational forms of interaction between companies can be observed in multiple ways. As such, they can be differentiated along their direction (vertical, horizontal, or diagonal), as well as their intensity according to the market-hierarchy continuum (arm's length relationships – closely integrated relationships). Furthermore, research distinguishes between the number of involved actors when discussing dyadic, triadic or network relationships. As this study aims to integrate existing understanding of why and how dependence develops into which characteristic manifestations and effects, this paper takes the basic setting of a dyadic partnership into perspective. In dyadic partnerships the probability of becoming dependent on a close exchange partner is amplified and particularly severe and consequential.

Vertical dyadic relationships can further be observed in different areas. While supply chain scholars frequently discuss outsourcing to a service provider (Razzaque and Sheng, 1998), marketing research rather discusses channel partner relationships in detail. While these and other research areas benefit from insights of dependence research within their specific domains, industrial marketing literature tries to bridge these isolated domains. BSRs are specifically characterized by their evolution from recurring transactions between partners over time (Dwyer et al., 1987; Schurr, 2007; Wilson, 1995). In the course of this evolution, particularly the information and knowledge exchange increase, while mutually integrated processes and activities oftentimes require joint investments by the partners (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997; Dwyer et al., 1987; Mohr and Spekman, 1994; Whipple and Frankel, 2000; Wilson, 1995). As a result, BSRs extend over a certain period of time in contrast to single transactions and contacts on the market. In doing so, shared costs, the usage of synergetic effects, and the access to complementary resources yield cost decreases and relational rents in producing an output or service (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Wilson, 1995).

Scholars in the boundary-spanning field of BS research, acknowledge dependence, next to commitment, trust and loyalty, as an indispensable construct for achieving fruitful long-term strategic partnerships (Wilson, 1995). Thus, dependence plays a key role in BSRs since many

years, producing a wide array of insights. These sometimes consistent, sometimes conflicting study results from different areas appear to be isolated, although containing significant potential with regards to an integration into a coherent framework. Lastly, managerial practice supports the relevance of BSD as numerous examples and their effects are reported in supply chain relationships, retail channels, IT-sourcing arrangements, or service relationships. Therefore, this review sets out to systematically consolidate the existing insights in order to arrange them in an insight-providing overview of BSD research. This can serve as the basis to foster and direct future research in this area towards so far neglected spots.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to provide a comprehensive overview of existing research in the BSD domain, this paper conducts a systematic approach according to widely used process steps to review the literature (Borgatti and Foster, 2003; Provan et al., 2007b; Tranfield et al., 2003; Wassmer, 2010). This procedure was structured into distinct steps.

An initial *scoping review* was conducted to determine the essential parameters of the review's search interval and appropriate keywords (Tranfield et al., 2003). First contributions on BSD got into discussion after the influential contributions on BSRs by the IMP group in the early 1980s (Håkansson, 1982). Hence, I decided for a thirty-year search interval starting from 1984 until July 2014. In accordance to scientific practice in systematic reviews, I based the literature search on the EBSCO, ABI/INFORM ProQuest and the Thomson Reuters Web of Science databases (Menz, 2012; Wassmer, 2010). The search was limited to the business and management subject areas, which appeared to be necessary due to vast amount of quantitative studies and their inherent variables from all scientific disciplines making use of the word 'dependen\*' in their title or abstract. The scoping phase also resulted in a list of appropriate search terms (Shinkle, 2012; Tranfield et al., 2003). These were applied in title, abstract and keywords via the databases by using an integrative command syntax. I searched for any variation of the terms 'dependen\*', 'interdependen\*', or 'lock-in' with a selection of terms and synonyms describing inter-organizational relationships. Table 1 entails a full list of search terms were entered into the databases during the sample collection. This search was conducted within peer-reviewed academic journals, excluding practitioner oriented publications, editorials, or conference papers, resulting in a total number of 4.269 hits.

Based on this initial collection I entered the *sample reduction phase* to narrow down the hits according to the commonly used principles. At first, I *cleaned up* the list taking out double-hits and contributions from journals stemming from unrelated disciplines, such as biology, agricultural studies, law, or political sciences that found their way into the sample despite the business and management focus entered into the databases. After this stage the sample counted for 2.784 hits.

In the second step, I checked all *titles and abstracts* eliminating those studies from the review sample, which obviously did not belong to this study's focus (Müller-Seitz, 2012; Provan et al., 2007a). Among these were contributions on intra-organizational issues, multi-partner relationships, information systems, firm internationalization, or organizational cultures (e.g. "Do culture-dependent response styles distort substantial relationships?"). A large part of the eliminated studies, again, found their way into the sample due to the morphological connection of the word 'dependent' to e.g. 'dependent variable(s)' which are part of many titles in studies from diverse research areas. This step left me with 455 hits in total.

<b>Applied search terms in the data collection</b>	
(dependen* OR interdependen* OR lock-in) AND	Alliance*
	Buyer-seller
	Buyer-supplier
	Collab*
	Cooperat*
	Dyad*
	Firm
	Interfirm
	Interorg*
	Inter-org*
	Mutual
	Organisation*
	Organization*
	Outsourcing
	Partner*
	Relation*
	Supplier

**Table 1: Applied combination of search terms in the data collection process**

In the next reduction step, I went beyond the abstracts and *screened the articles* to check for their relevance to this review's research question (Müller-Seitz, 2012; Tranfield et al., 2003). This systematic review aims for an integrated and holistic inspection consolidating the scattered findings in BSRs to shed light on the discovered causes, appearances, implications, and management options of close and long-term interdependent dyads. As such, articles included into this review needed to focus on long-term vertical dyadic BSRs, thus excluding contributions on dependence in e.g. triadic or network relationships as well as transactional arm's length relationships. Besides, I screened the articles for their fit and knowledge-adding value to the BSD domain. Studies were discarded that focus on broad relational topics, thereby only using e.g. RDT as supportive arguments (e.g. to derive a research question or focus) without adding insights to the BSD discussion. Thus, studies in which the dependence construct was not considered a key moderator in a study, but instead one out of a broad and unfocused range of moderating or conditioning inter-organizational variables or partnership attributes in a quantitative examination were also excluded. On the contrary, included studies were demanded to add insights by either testing at least one major hypothesis covering BSD, discussing a central construct in a conceptual study, or containing BSD as part of an explanatory model in case of a qualitative study. In order to avoid the widely discussed single-author bias in excluding studies, a representative number of selected cases was discussed with different colleagues at our department. After this inspection the sample was reduced to 230 articles. During this selection it became clear, that although many articles seemed to somehow touch the issue of BSD in minor arguments, they rather treated BSD as a side-effect in their discussion failing to add in-depth insights for the BSD discussion. Thus, I followed Tranfield et al. (2003) by determining the value of a study for this review based on the relevance of its research question for this review's aim. Studies in which BSD did not take an explicitly key role in its research question or aim were excluded. Applying these criteria, the data reduction phase finished with a total of 100 hits. Lastly, I ensured for appropriate quality of the studies in this review's sample by checking for a journal's recognition among the scientific community, before ultimately including an article of this specific journal. To do so, I referred

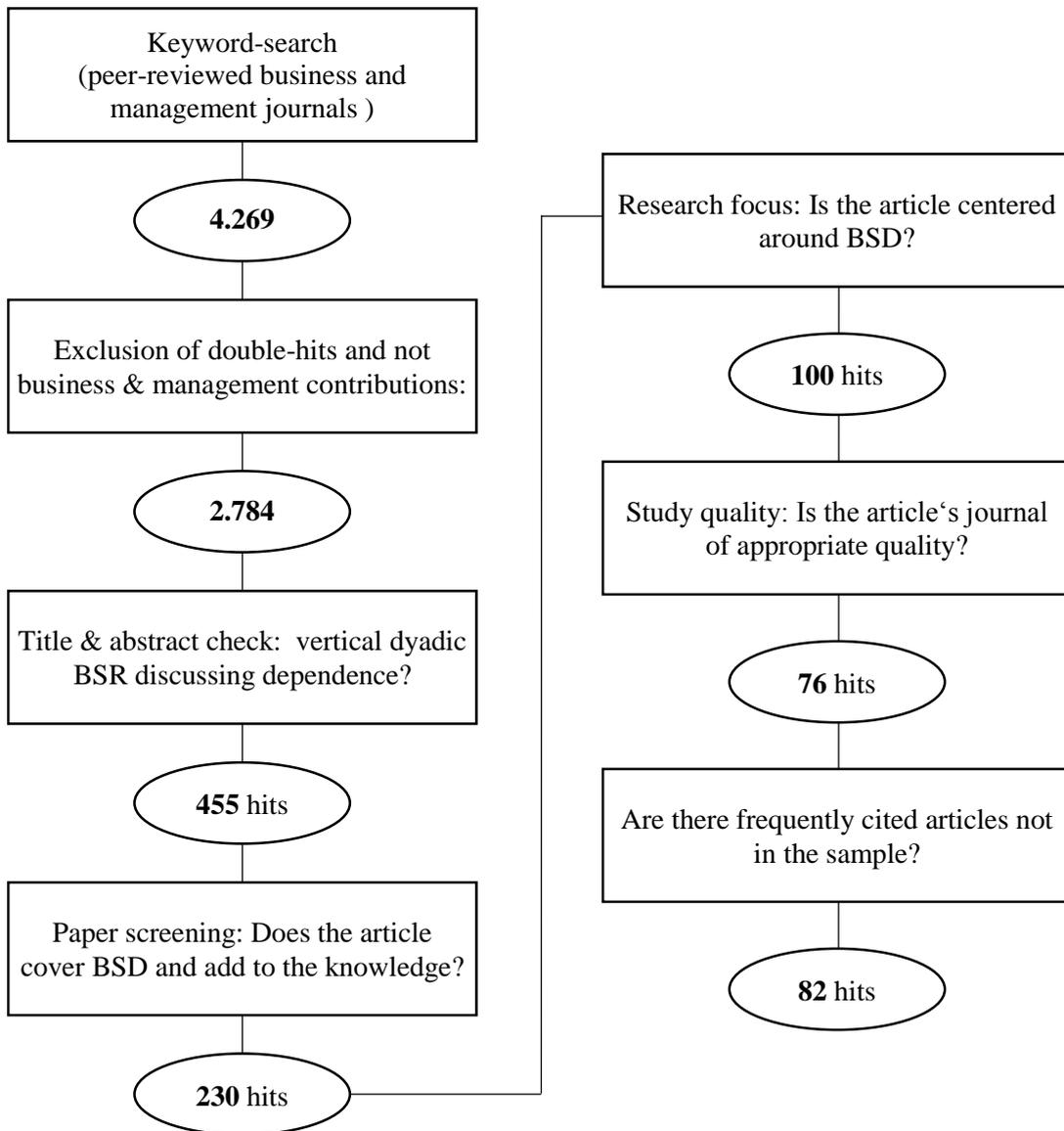
to three accepted journal ratings to apply their quality vote jointly. Journals had to yield either a five-year impact factor of at least one in Thomson Reuters' journal citation report 2013, or a SJR score of at least one in the SCImago journal rank 2013 (SJR), or a B-rating in the German VHB-JOURQUAL-3 ranking. If a journal could not yield one of these criteria, its articles were excluded from the sample, leaving me with a final amount of 76 articles. Table 2 summarizes my inclusion criteria and provides the respective rationales, while an overview of the journals contributing to this review can be found in the appendix.

Inclusion criteria	Rationale
Vertical buyer-supplier dyad	Basic inter-organizational setting, most prone to develop and experience dependencies; basis for insights into triads or networks
Long-term relationship	Dependence frequently considered to develop over time
Dependence in focus of the research question and aim	Include studies discussion BSD in-depth instead of using dependence to make other arguments
Adding-value to the BSD discussion	What are the key insights in detail? Closer examination than testing significances
Journal quality (5 yr. IF $\geq$ 1, SJR $\geq$ 1, VHB $\geq$ B)	Ensure recognized quality standards as of the scientific community

**Table 2: Inclusion criteria as applied in the review process**

As a final step, further sources (articles and book sources) which initially not included in the review but *cited* by many studies *consistently* as being important to the field, were *added* to the review (e.g. Anderson & Narus 1990; Cannon & Jr 1999; Ganesan 1994). These led to a final sample size of 83 in the systematic review process, which is summarized by Figure 1. A reference list of the final sample can be found in the appendix.

Based on the final sample, the *data extraction phase* consolidates the basic data (authors, title, journal, year of publication) of a contribution in the sample into a spreadsheet. Content wise, a coding process of the expressions and findings on BSD within each source is conducted in order to synthesize the knowledge in the field (Majchrzak et al., 2014). In doing so, I aim to collect an article's research question, unit of analysis, status and direction of the dependence construct, industry context, study type, methodology, as well as key findings and future research implications with regards to the BSD discussion. Building on these consolidated insights, the remainder of this paper aims to give insights into the current state and future perspective of BSD research.

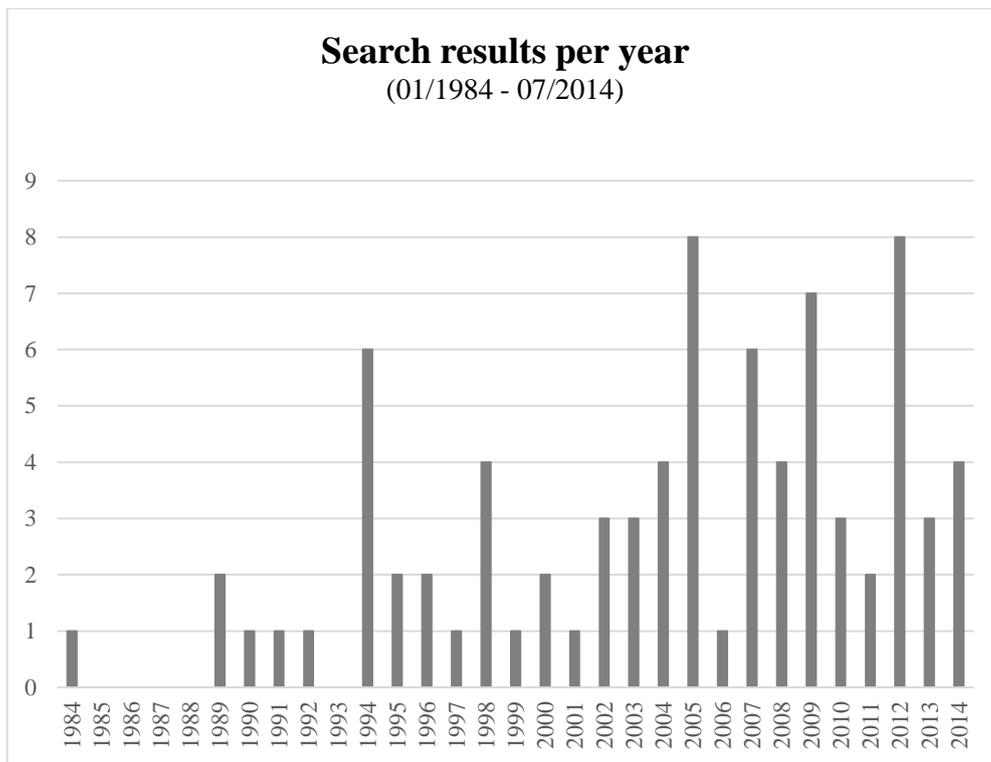


**Figure 1: Data reduction process**

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

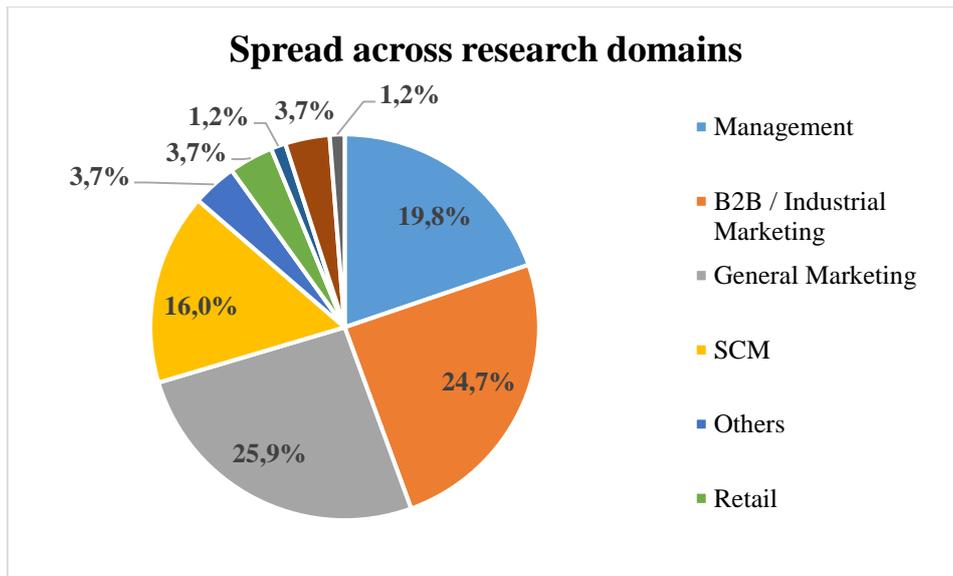
### Observations

While some of the most influential contributions stem from the early 1990s (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Buchanan, 1992; Ganesan, 1994; Gassenheimer and Ramsey, 1994; Provan and Skinner, 1989), the majority of the contributions as found in this review, has been published from the early 2000s on. A slightly increasing trend in publications within the BSD domain is observable, resembling the increasing and enduring relevance of the topic. This is also supported by a recently published literature review that is in the scope of this paper (Habib et al., 2015), which covers only a minor section of this review's focus from a distinct perspective.



**Figure 2: Number of search hits as of year of publication in the review sample**

Besides the increase in publications, the study area's relevance can also be observed in the publications in which they have been accepted. The journals come from different focus areas with the general management as well as the general and industrial marketing literature which provides the largest amount of contributions. The supply chain domain – as of the publishing journals – lacks behind with a smaller amount of contributions, while other areas provide only limited amounts of input into the BSD discussion. This distribution across the three major fields is represented (amongst others) by the inputs of *Industrial Marketing Management* (11), *Journal of Management Studies* (8), *Journal of Business Research* (8), as well as the *Journal of Operations Management* (6) as widely appreciated, high-ranked academic publications providing the largest numbers of articles to this review.



**Figure 3: Spread of review contributions across research domains.**  
 (Classification into research areas based on the VHB-journal ranking's allocation)

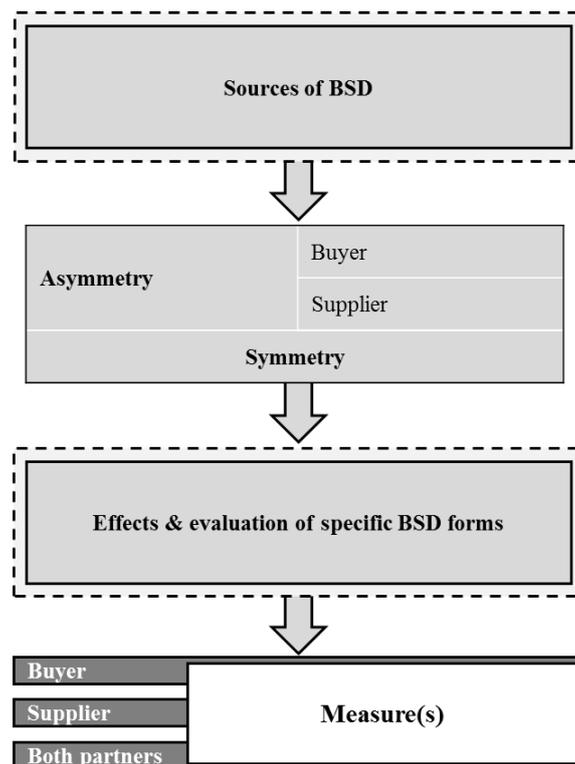
A couple of focus areas became obvious during the review process. As introduced and connected to the domain of the journals in the field, BSD is usually examined in a retail, industrial supply, service relationship, or IT-infrastructure context. Within these empirical fields, scholars predominantly collected and analyzed data by means of surveys and quantitative analysis. Some of them conduct their examinations using key-informant interviews to design a survey in an informed manner. The minority of detected studies fully relies on such interview data by employing qualitative case studies. Those who do so, however, yield in-depth insights (Harrison et al., 2012; Krause and Ellram, 2014). With regards to their research question and contribution the majority of articles in the BSD field - as of this review's overview - examines interrelations between general cooperative parameters of a BSR. Among these, dependence plays a central role (Wilson, 1995). This is followed by second most type of research question covering case-based examinations of the effects and their impacts on the dependent parties. Third, the causes and developments that lead to BSD are studied in parts of the articles. These are evaluated with regards to their implications for buyer and supplier in few papers. While most of the articles use one or the other classification of dependence types, a focus on distinct forms of BSD is rarely conducted. Lastly, the derivation of management measures to handle or counteract dependencies represents the smallest share of research foci in this review. It is this structural logic of contributions that I use in the following to present the current state of BSD research.

### **The present state of BSD research**

This review reveals a structured presentation of existing contributions in the BSD field. Past efforts concentrated on the identification of sources, forms, effects, evaluations and measurements with regards to BSD.

Many of the existing studies focused on the emergence of dependence situations. Their findings can be grouped into relational sources, partner-inherent sources and market-related sources. Relational sources describe dependence reasons that lie within the partnership between buyers and supplier. For instance, a closely integrated relationship that is successful due to the

mutual adaptations of the partner, the close exchange relationship or joint investments is likely to become dependent (Casciaro and Piskorski, 2005; Corsten and Felde, 2005; Hammervoll, 2005; Laaksonen et al., 2008). Next, partner-inherent sources of dependence encompass specific capabilities, or knowledge, as well as the access to tangible and intangible resources that become accessible due to the connection to a specific partner (Cannon and Perreault, 1999; Laaksonen et al., 2008; Lonsdale, 2001). This category of dependence reasons is closely linked to the arguments of Pfeffer & Salancik (1978) as described in their understanding of the RDT. A third category of reasons for BSRs to become dependent is already observable in the previously introduced dependence definitions. Thus, market-related sources of dependence describe the lack of availability of alternative options or sources on the market to replace the incumbent buyer or supplier (Ganesan, 1994; Handley and Benton, 2012; Harrison et al., 2012).



**Figure 4: Framework of BSD research as perceived in the WIP-review.**

These reasons can lead to dependencies in numerous forms. Widely used, but sometimes differently termed, is an important distinction describing the direction of dependencies between buyer and supplier. Thus, asymmetric or unilateral dependence is present if either only one partner in the BSR is dependent upon the other or if the degree of dependence significantly differs between the partners (Buchanan, 1992; Gulati and Sytch, 2007). While extant research covers the situation in which the buyer is dependent upon the supplier (Lonsdale, 2001; Petersen et al., 2008), the majority of contributions discusses the supplier’s dependence upon the buyer (Carr et al., 2008; Habib et al., 2015). It is this specific form of dependence which is in focus in the recently published review on BSD (Habib et al., 2015), thus depicting only a minor part of the entire BSD domain that this article tries to cover. On the opposite, scholars also report on situations in which both partners are equally dependent on one another, which is described as symmetric dependence or *interdependence* (sometimes also called mutual-, bilateral dependence) (Buchanan, 1992; Caniëls and Gelderman, 2007). Gulati and Sytch (2007) introduce joint (sometimes also called total-) dependence as the sum

of dependence levels of both partners. These different forms of dependencies are further differentiated according to their extent (i.e. intensity), or the relational level as to which buyer and supplier are dependent. Here, different intensities ranging from slight (inter)dependence to a lock-in situation (Narasimhan et al., 2009) are differentiated. Moreover, partners can be (inter)dependent on different levels of the relationship, such as a resource (e.g. technical aspects, knowledge, or production factor), financial, strategic or outcome-related (e.g. performance, or quality) level (Hammervoll, 2005).

The third sub-area within the BSD area can be depicted as the subsequent effects and evaluation of the prior emerged and characterized dependence situation. While many research efforts described dependence as a negative outcome of close BSRs (e.g. Barnes et al., 2005), other authors discuss positive effects of dependent BSRs (e.g. Andaleeb, 1996). In this aspects, present research provides a mixed picture of insights and assessments. Anyway, either dependence is perceived as a good or a bad thing, it evokes certain effects in the reported studies. These can be classified into cooperation-, behavior-, or success-related aspects. Other effects play a minor role and are subject to the further work on this systematic review. Cooperation-related effects of BSD include the partner's reaction of a deeper integration, an increased information exchange, or the planning and formation of joint projects (Cai et al., 2009; Simpson and Paul, 1994; Zhang and Huo, 2013). Besides, behavior-related effects of BSD (Gundlach and Cadotte, 1994) report on the influence of dependence on opportunistic actions (Joshi and Arnold, 1997). However, the majority of studies in the BSD-effects area report on the influence of dependencies on cooperative success (Buvik and Reve, 2001). These impressions are closely linked to the mixed results of BSD evaluation as depicted above.

Finally, present research reports on the buyer's, the supplier's, or the relationship's reactions toward these effects. However, this research area still represents a minor part in the entire BSD domain. Nevertheless, depending on which party is in a dependent situation, or whether interdependence between both actors is present, scholars report on three characteristic reactions. Closely linked to the success and evaluation of a dependence situation, countermeasures to decrease dependencies into a symmetric state are observable in recent studies (Davis and Mentzer, 2006; Joshi, 1998) (e.g. search for alternative partners, adaptation of business processes). As opposed to that, also the exit of the less dependent partner from the BSR is reported (Kumar et al., 1998). Finally, in the case of an opportunistic actor, single measures to make use of a dependence situation for the sake of the more powerful party might be concluded.

Each of the presented aspects stem from single studies focusing on one or some aspects within the presented BSD framework. It summarizes single insights by attempting to provide a comprehensive picture of the research landscape. Thereby, not every area is as strongly represented as others, leaving substantial room for further research in this field of study. It will be the task of this article to link the above mentioned findings based on their similarities and implicit connections in order to add to the knowledge in the field and to derive future research directions.

## **DISCUSSION**

Future research in the BSD area is necessary to cover white-spots in the above depicted framework, in order to foster research within this domain. This may then lead to implications, recommendations and guidance for managerial practice in dealing with BSD. To do so, future research should focus on six specific areas.

## **BSD development**

The presented framework consolidates insights from different studies into a research scheme. However, each level is composed of single studies. What is lacking, however, is an integrative study discovering certain paths that link specific sources that most likely develop into a distinct form which is best managed by (counter)measure A or B. Such a development path through the depicted framework from source to evaluation and measurement would yield interesting insights for scholars and a predictive guideline for practitioners.

Furthermore, existing studies commonly take a static perspective at a distinct point in time. As opposed to that, a dynamic perspective on a given BSR taking a long-term view on the development of a dependent relationship and the connected changes due to this situation appears necessary. Closely connected to this might be a view on the behavioral aspects of BSD taking the perspective of either a dominant or a weaker party over time. This may link current research in the behavioral management domain with the BSRs, which is currently lacking in BSD research.

Moreover, recent research could elaborate on the implications of BSD on managerial actions depending on different perspectives in the BS dyad. As such, more research is needed on potential management measures to handle dependence, as well as potential measures to perhaps make use of BSD.

## **Dependence measurement**

Dependence is frequently mentioned as being present in a BSR. Therefore, single subjective expressions or survey data serve as the basis for concluding a dependent relationship. However, a dedicated and objective measurement of the presence of dependence or the degree of dependence would support further examinations. In order to come up with such a measurement framework, an operationalization of the dependence term according to predefined parameters is necessary. This would enable practitioners in answering the question, whether a relationship has surpassed the independence-dependence border or not.

## **BSD manifestations**

The derived framework tries to arrange different dependence types (asymmetric and symmetric) in a matrix structure together with the levels, respects or sources that characterize a dependence relationship. Although some studies are present that discuss different dependence types, a more elaborated typology might yield fruitful insights. Thereby, future research could differentiate among the indicated forms as illustrated in the framework. This may then support and be linked to the prior recommended studies as referred to under BSD development.

## **Dependence evaluation**

A central question in the BSD examination remains whether it is positive or negative to be in an (inter)dependent state (Gassenheimer et al., 1998). This review proposes that there is no general answer to that question. One approach might be to base the evaluation of BSD on distinct dependence forms and contingencies. These would have to be defined according to a set of elaborated parameters, which could contain the reason for dependencies, the specific industry context, a partner's economic situation and market position, or the age and scope of a BSR.

Based on such evaluations appropriate strategies that meet the distinct forms and implications of BSD need to be derived. For the case of a weaker party in a specific BSR, the previously mentioned existing review provides first insights (Habib et al., 2015).

## **Methodological advances**

BSD research largely relies on survey-based studies and quantitative examinations. This provides two possibilities for future research. On the one hand a meta-analytic across suitable existing studies could give insights into the significance of existing findings on a larger scale and in different contexts. On the other hand, first qualitative studies building on case-study examination and grounded theoretical techniques can dig into single aspects more in-depth than quantitative approaches. This could be connected to questions regarding behavioral or developmental studies. Hence, an application of these methodological approaches could foster BSD research.

## **Context-specific insights**

BSRs are prevalent in many different business and research areas. While extant research from theoretical marketing and channel research as well as practical retail contexts dominate the field, supply chain management literature and logistics practitioners might benefit from a knowledge transfer into this domain. Besides, the determination of research contexts might influence the characteristics of BSD sources, forms, and measures. Hence, an enrichment of the existing industry contexts, an insight-transfer across these contexts and potentially resulting differentiated views on BSD could yield interesting results in future studies.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article aimed at providing an integrated overview of the BSD literature and its current state by conducting a systematic literature review. Although this paper is still at a work-in-progress stage, first conceptualizations and insights into the BSD domain could be generated. Keeping in mind the shortcomings of a systematic review, first insights into the BSD domain can primarily be identified within the areas of general management, industrial marketing and supply chain research. While each literature string provides their specific findings, an integrated framework of the BSD research could provide insights beyond the boundaries of a distinct domain. A summarizing framework tries to consolidate single findings into a coherent picture by elaborating on different sources, characteristics forms, effects as well as appropriate management measures. Interestingly, these are differently evaluated by current studies. This systematic review contributes by providing insights into white-spots that need to be addressed in future BSD research. These can be structured into necessary research on BSD development, its measurement, BSD manifestations and evaluations. Lastly, BSD research would benefit from methodological advances as well as increased context-specific applications. Future work within in this domain as well as on this article will further differentiate as to current BSD contributions and potential avenues for future research.

## APPENDIX

### List of journals providing articles to the final review sample

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Journal	
Academy of Management Journal	Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice
Administrative Science Quarterly	Journal of Operations Management
Decision Sciences	Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management
European Journal of Marketing	Journal of Retailing
European Management Journal	Journal of Small Business Management
Industrial Marketing Management	Journal of Supply Chain Management
International Journal of Operations & Production Management	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science
International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management	Journal of the Operational Research Society
International Journal of Production Economics	Long Range Planning
International Journal of Research in Marketing	Management Decision
Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing	Marketing Letters
Journal of Business Logistics	Organization Studies
Journal of Business Research	Psychology & Marketing
Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing	Strategic Management Journal
Journal of Management Studies	Transportation Research: Part A
Journal of Marketing	Transportation Research: Part E
Journal of Marketing Research	

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