Journal of System Management (JSM)
Online ISSN: 2538-1571
Print ISSN: 2322-2301
6(2), Summer 2020, pp. 1-25
Research Paper

Influence Strategies and Social Mechanisms in Promoting Manufacturer Flexibility

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Abstract **This study explores the use of influence strategies and social mechanisms by the manufacturer to achieve supplier flexibility. Major components of marketing research of previous studies related to influence strategies and measures flexibility in the supply chain context are used. This empirical study utilized 300 survey samples from senior management at Small Medium Enterprises (SME)s. Results show that using influence strategies has positive effects on supplier mix flexibility. Furthermore, the effects of trust on shared vision is positive on manufacturer flexibility.**

Keywords *Influence Strategies; Social Mechanisms; Flexibility; SMEs; Supply Chain*

1. Introduction

The ability to maintain a flexible and responsive supply chain is a strategically important capability. As suggested by the literature on manufacturing systems, the flexibility concept is complex, multidimensional, and difficult to summarize (Upton, 1994; Mishra, Pundir and Ganapathy, 2018). The highly competitive manufacturing environment is characterized

Received: 25/11/2019 Accepted: 16/09/2020

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by increasingly sohisticated consumers that demand customized products and short lead times. Several authros have acknowledged the importance of flexiblity in meeting customer demands and improving responsivenss (Wang et.al, 2019; Vickery et al., 1999; Khalaf and El Mokadem, 2019) to the magnitude that it is now described as a strategic cabipility (Stentoft, Paulraj, & Vastag, 2015); (Kumar & Singh, 2019); (Krajewski et al., 2005). Flexibility may be defined as the ability to change or react with little penalty in time, effort, cost or performance (Upton D. , 1994). Some definitions form on the durability of relationships, for example, Bodaghi, Jolai and Rabbani (2018) define supply chain flexibility as the elasticity of the buyer-supplier relatoinship under changing supply conditions. An alternative means of communication, influence strategies are compliance gaining tactices used to motivate the compliance of a target (Frazier & Summers, 1984; Payan & McFarland, 2005). Influence strategies are classified as either coercive or noncoercive. Coercive strategies suggest compliance on the basis of source-controlled rewards and punishments, whereas noncoercive strategies aim to change the attitutde of the target (Frazier and Summers, 1984, 1986). Studies on influence strategies have focused on relationships with power (Gelderman, Semeijin, & De Zoete, 2008;Sheu, 2019; Dang, Pham & Wang, 2019), satisfaction (Lai, 2007; Sanzo et al., 2003), relationalism (Boyle, Robicheaux, & Simpson, 1992) and solidarity (Zhan, 2019). Researchers have found that the choice of influence strategies has a significant efffect on trading relationships (McFarland & Dixon, 2019; Gelderman et al., 2008; Kumar et.al, , 2005). Little is known about the effectivenss of influence strategies for promoting supplier flexibilty, futhermore the conditions where the link between influence strategies and supplier flexibility is strengthened or weakned have not yet been clearly explored. Long term supply chain effectiveness requires trust, shared values and mutually beneficial

relationships to reduce risk and costs (Allee, 2003; Vasileiou and Morris, 2006). Although the importance of inter-organizational relationships to supply network efficiency and performance is well-documented (Podolyn and Page, 1998; Im, Rai and Lambert, 2019 and Nobeoka, 2000; Onofre and Fynes, 2019), there has been limited research examining the influence of such relationships, and in particular, the social capital they may nurture. The organization of this paper is as follows: first, this study reviews the literature on flexibility, influence strategies, and social mechanisms. The next section contains the development of and testing specific hypotheses. Finally, the article includes a concluding summary of the research findings, implications of the study, followed by a discussion of limitations, and directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

In operations management, flexibility is most commonly associated with the literature on Manufacturing Flexibility with seminal papers in the 1980s and 1990s by Slack (1983, 1987);Ibraimi, Bexheti, Zuferi, Rexhepi and Ramadani (2016); Upton (1995). Several studies have reported positive effects of manufacturing flexibility on firm performance, targeting the study of flexibility to intra-organizational components (such as mix, product, volume and routing flexibility) and production environments (Swamidass and Newell, 1987; Mishra, Pundir and Ganapathy, 2018; Vickery et al., 1997). Influence strategies are communicative ways in which a firm (the source) attempts to make a firm with which it does business (the target) comply (Handley, de Jong and Benton, 2019; Dang, Pham & Wang, 2019) and can be classified as either coercive or noncoercive (Frazier & Summers, 1986). Firms use influence strategies to encourage a partner's behavior or decision-making process (Ghijsen, Semeijn, & Ernston, 2010; Spiro & Perreault, 1979) and play a crucial role in interfirm relationships, including marketing channels

and supply chains. Most research argues that noncoercive influence strategy has a greater effect than a coercive influence strategy as the target easily accepts it. However, empirical studies prove mixed and conflicting results. For example, in their meta-analysis, Kang, Asare, Brashear-Alejando, Granot and Li (2018) find that noncoercive influence strategies can foster satisfaction but do not reduce conflict. Other research has found that noncoercive influence strategies exert a positive (Zhan, 2019), negative (Brown et al., 2009; Simpson & Mayo, 1997), or unclear (Payan & McFarland, 2005) effect on relational outcomes or have no effect at all (Boyle et al., 1992). Noncoercive influence strategies (i.e. recommendations and information exchange) primarily center on the beliefs and attitudes of the target firm and involve little direct pressure. Venkatesh, Kohli, and Zaltman (1995) divided influence strategies into three categories from a coercive intensity perspective. These categories include hard coercive influence strategies (i.e. threats and legalistic pleas), soft coercive strategies (i.e., recommendations and promises), and noncoercive strategies (i.e., requests and information exchange). Lai (2009) divided influence strategies into three categories which include hard coercive strategies (including legalistic pleas and threats), promises, and noncoercive strategies (including information exchange, recommendations, and requests). Trust is defined as the willingness to reply on a trading partner in whom one has confidence (Spekman, Kamauff, & Myhr, 1998); (Kim D. W., 2019). Trust is conveyed through faith, reliance, belief, or confidence in the supply chain partner, viewed as the willingness to forego opportunistic behavior (Spekman, Kamauff, & Myhr, 1998). Trust has been considered by many researchers to be the essential factor in most productive partner relationships (Wilson & Vlosky, 1998). Partners who trust one another can find ways to work out difficulties such as power, conflict, and lower profitability. Trust stimulates favorable attitudes and behaviors (Schurr & Ozanne, 1985). Additionally, allowing an outside organization to view

transaction-level data places a premium on trust between trading partners because of the competitive risks associated with access to this data (Young, Carr, & Rainer, 1999). Shared vision between trading partners is defined as the degree of similarity of pattern of shared values and beliefs (Achrol, Scheer, & Stern, 1990). Shared vision is therefore the extent to which partners have beliefs in common about what behaviors, goals, and policies are important or unimportant, appropriate or inappropriate, and right or wrong (Ballou, Gillbert, & Mukherjee, 2000). It is obvious that supply chain members with similar organizational cultures should be more willing to trust their partners. Spekman et al.(1998) even suggest that collaboration within a supply chain can be achieved only to the extent that trading partners share a common world-view. An extension of the framework of Payan and McFarland (2005) is used to develop hypotheses. Figure 1 provides a pictorial representation of the hypotheses.

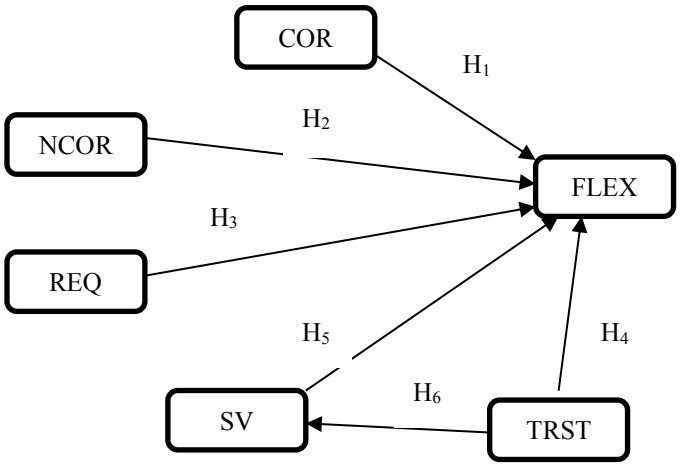

Fig. 1. Effects of Influence Strategies and Social Mechanisms on Supplier Flexibility

H_1: The use of coercive influence strategies has a positive impact on supplier mix flexibility.

H_2: The use of noncoercive influence strategies has a positive impact on supplier mix flexibility.

H_3: The use of request strategy has a positive impact on supplier mix flexibility.

H_4: A manufacturers' trust in its suppliers has a positive impact on supplier mix flexibility.

H_5: Shared vision has a positive impact on supplier mix flexibility.

H_6: A manufacturer's trust in its suppliers will help to develop a shared vision

3. Method

This research investigated the relationship between influence strategies, social mechanisms, flexibility and manufacturer performance. A survey of manufacturing firms in Faisalabad was conducted. A questionnaire was pre-tested with 30 top managers from different companies not included in the final study. Based on their responses, several questions were eliminated and reworded. The revised survey instrument was sent to senior managers of 1,200 companies identified from the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI). Firms represented by these individuals were from Harmonized System (HS) codes 50-63. The harmonized commodity description and coding system is an internationally standardized system of names and numbers to classify traded products. The respondents represented manufacturers of products from silk, wool, cotton, vegetable fibers, manmade filaments, yarns and woven fabrics, manmade staple fibers, wadding, carpets, special woven or tufted fabric, laminated textile fabric, knitted fabric, articles of apparel and made-ups. Survey packet including a cover letter explaining the research objectives, the questionnaire, and a stamped, return-addressed

envelope, was distributed to senior managers of each participating firms. The respondents were asked to select one important supply relationship and to answer all questions referring to this one supplier. As a result, 313 returns were received out of 1,200 questionnaires (26%). After elimination of 13 incomplete questionnaires, the final sample was 300 questionnaires for analysis (25%). The sample size is sufficient for studying the hypothesis developed in the study (Hair J. F., Tatham, Anderson, & Black, 2006). We use Smart PLS 3, which relies on Partial Least Squares (PLS) method to estimate the hypothesized relationships. PLS is prediction oriented and allows the researcher to assess the predictive validity of exogenous variable (Khan, et al., 2019). Hence, our study aims to assess the prediction or explanatory power of antecedent factors (i.e. influence strategies, social mechanisms). In conducting the model estimation, we follow the procedure advocated by Khan, et al., (2019) by evaluating PLS models in two stages: examining the validity and reliability of the structural model and analyzing the structural model. Figure2-3 shows firm demographics.

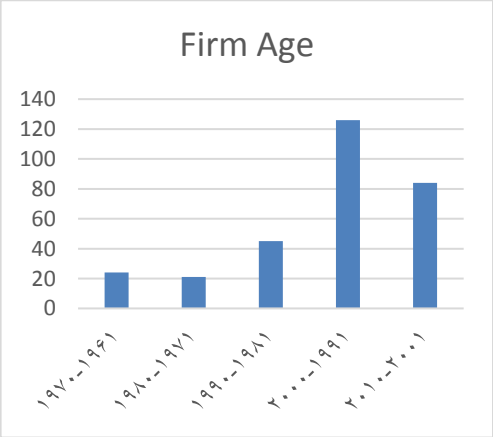

Fig. 2. Year of Incorporation

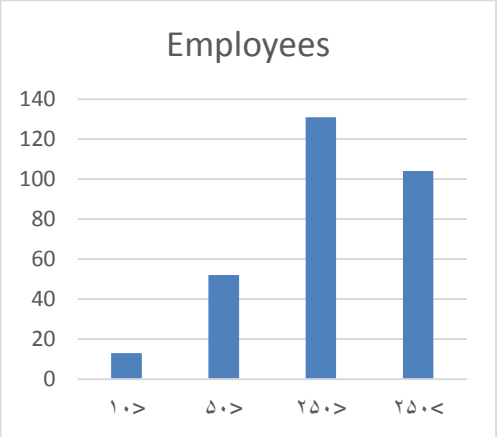

Fig. 3. Size of Firm

The most popular measure of evaluating the reliability of the scale is the internal consistency method which is characterized by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Thus, reliability analysis is done by obtaining the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The model possesses reliability as well as composite reliability because all values are higher than .7 as shown in Table 1 which indicates that the measures are robust in terms of their internal consistency reliability as indexed by the composite reliability.

Table 1.
Results Summary for Reflective Outer Models

Latent Variable	Indicators	Initial Loading	Factor Loading after Deleting	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
NCOR	IE1	0.744	0.766	0.837	0.877	0.507
	IE2	0.746	0.768			
	IE3	0.785	0.813			
	IE4	0.648	0.667			
	REC1	0.688	0.673			
	REC2	0.693	0.654			
	REC3	0.646	-			
	REC4	0.650	0.623			
COR	LP1	0.563	0.663	0.903	0.923	0.601
	LP2	0.737	0.737			
	LP3	0.766	0.766			
	LP4	0.801	0.801			
	TH1	0.771	0.771			
	TH2	0.870	0.870			
	TH3	0.848	0.848			
	TH4	0.807	0.807			

Latent Variable	Indicators	Initial Loading	Factor Loading after Deleting	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
FLEX	M1	0.581	0.681	0.837	0.885	0.584
	M2	0.889	0.889			
	M3	0.886	0.886			
	M4	0.879	0.879			
	M5	0.305	0.604			
	M6	0.852	0.852			
REQ	RE1	0.678	0.678	0.846	0.883	0.603
	RE2	0.837	0.837			
	RE3	0.765	0.765			
	RE4	0.822	0.822			
	RE5	0.771	0.771			
SV	SV1	0.782	0.782	0.846	0.883	0.632
	SV2	0.817	0.817			
	SV3	0.784	0.784			
TRST	TRU1	0.052	-	0.846	0.883	0.544
	TRU2	0.036	-			
	TRU3	0.790	0.794			
	TRU4	0.742	0.740			
	TRU5	0.742	0.745			
	TRU6	0.720	0.722			
	TRU7	-0.072	-			
	TRU8	-0.100	-			
	TRU9	0.681	0.679			

Results demonstrate that initially a few of the initial loading factors are not up to the mark so to have accurate results it is recommended by Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014 to delete those questions to have reliable and valid results. The seventh column shows the values regarding variance between the constructs and all the variables have a value greater than 0.5 thereby supporting the concept of discriminate validity. The evaluation of the measurement model continues by testing the discriminate validity, translated by the absence of a possible correlation between the items of the constructs. In other words we attempted to affirm that the items are well represented on their constructs. The Fornell-Lacker criterion and cross loading (CL) are often used for this purpose. The academic literature confirms that the latent variables must display a value on their lines and columns that is superior to the rest of the constructs (Hair, Babin, & Krey, 2017). The test depicted in Table 2 minimum value is for NCOR, which has a value of 0.712 and all the remaining values are above this.

Table 2.
Correlation of Latent Variables (Fornell Larcker Criterion)

	COR	FLEX	NCOR	REQ	SV	TRST
COR	0.775					
FLEX	0.787	0.764				
NCOR	0.746	0.718	0.712			
REQ	0.411	0.538	0.475	0.777		
SV	-0.030	0.026	-0.064	0.083	0.795	
TRST	-0.027	-0.051	-0.050	-0.038	0.713	0.737

Next analysis is cross loading analysis for discriminate validity; here the test considers the factor loading values of all items with his own construct as

well as with other variables in theoretical model. Here criteria is that value of item should be greater than 0.6 and should also maximum with its own construct and lesser with other constructs as shown in a Table 3.

Table 3.
Cross Loading

Items	COR	FLEX	NCOR	PRO	REQ	SV	TRST
LP1	0.663	0.454	0.482	0.387	0.314	-0.073	-0.042
LP2	0.737	0.552	0.569	0.535	0.300	0.026	0.013
LP3	0.766	0.572	0.525	0.543	0.270	-0.003	0.031
LP4	0.801	0.564	0.528	0.460	0.272	0.012	0.038
TH1	0.771	0.561	0.531	0.423	0.310	-0.023	-0.076
TH2	0.870	0.691	0.674	0.622	0.357	-0.010	-0.011
TH3	0.848	0.694	0.610	0.543	0.301	-0.045	-0.058
TH4	0.807	0.732	0.670	0.596	0.411	-0.064	-0.052
M1	0.514	0.681	0.478	0.386	0.278	-0.009	-0.038
M2	0.692	0.889	0.638	0.697	0.476	0.072	-0.008
M3	0.708	0.886	0.658	0.672	0.455	0.009	-0.069
M4	0.691	0.879	0.597	0.677	0.487	0.006	-0.055
M5	0.153	0.604	0.130	0.204	0.162	0.033	-0.062
M6	0.656	0.852	0.608	0.772	0.493	0.012	-0.030
IE1	0.540	0.554	0.766	0.507	0.254	-0.048	-0.034
IE2	0.620	0.591	0.768	0.495	0.219	-0.065	-0.062
IE3	0.676	0.623	0.813	0.550	0.308	-0.039	-0.008
IE4	0.484	0.448	0.667	0.473	0.375	-0.051	-0.031
REC1	0.490	0.455	0.673	0.461	0.438	0.007	-0.002
REC2	0.415	0.406	0.654	0.375	0.427	-0.041	-0.020

Items	COR	FLEX	NCOR	PRO	REQ	SV	TRST
REC4	0.436	0.449	0.623	0.406	0.451	-0.086	-0.099
RE1	0.497	0.598	0.470	0.590	0.678	0.066	0.001
RE2	0.238	0.334	0.331	0.374	0.837	0.075	-0.005
RE3	0.155	0.255	0.228	0.291	0.765	0.065	-0.034
RE4	0.240	0.367	0.327	0.380	0.822	0.106	-0.040
RE5	0.256	0.308	0.341	0.346	0.771	-0.009	-0.097
SV1	0.008	0.077	-0.033	0.065	0.071	0.782	0.675
SV2	-0.032	0.001	-0.056	0.066	0.054	0.817	0.510
SV3	-0.060	-0.041	-0.072	0.011	0.070	0.784	0.467
TRU3	-0.025	-0.062	-0.065	-0.018	-0.065	0.488	0.794
TRU4	-0.029	-0.003	-0.054	0.045	-0.004	0.600	0.740
TRU5	-0.056	-0.046	-0.050	0.025	0.028	0.553	0.745
TRU6	0.025	-0.004	-0.006	0.031	-0.058	0.471	0.722
TRU9	-0.006	-0.077	-0.004	-0.020	-0.055	0.493	0.679

4. Finding

Model fit is measured by SRMR, Chi Square and NFI. SRMR is defined as the difference amongst the observed correlation and predicted correlation of the variables i.e. constructs. Its value should be less than 0.10 which is being considered to be a good fit value. The NFI represents an incremental fit measure and also defined as 1 minus the Chi² value of the proposed model divided by the Chi² values of the null model. Consequently, the NFI results in values between 0 and 1. The value of NFI closer to 1, the better the fit it is (Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). Value of NFI is .715 and 0.710, value for SRMR is less than 0.10 for both models, while the chi-square is also good enough to support the structural and estimated model fit. To assess co

linearity issues of the inner model, the latent variable scores can be used to the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The outer and inner model VIF are all less than 5 (Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). Path coefficient i.e. (β) amongst the latent variables is a significant criterion for evaluating the predictive power of the structural model. The magnitude of the path coefficient points out the power of the relationship among the latent variables and the positive sign of the path coefficient corresponds to the pre-proposed hypothesis. In Figure 4, the outer and inner model is explained outer shows the factor loading values whereas inner shows the coefficient values between the variables.

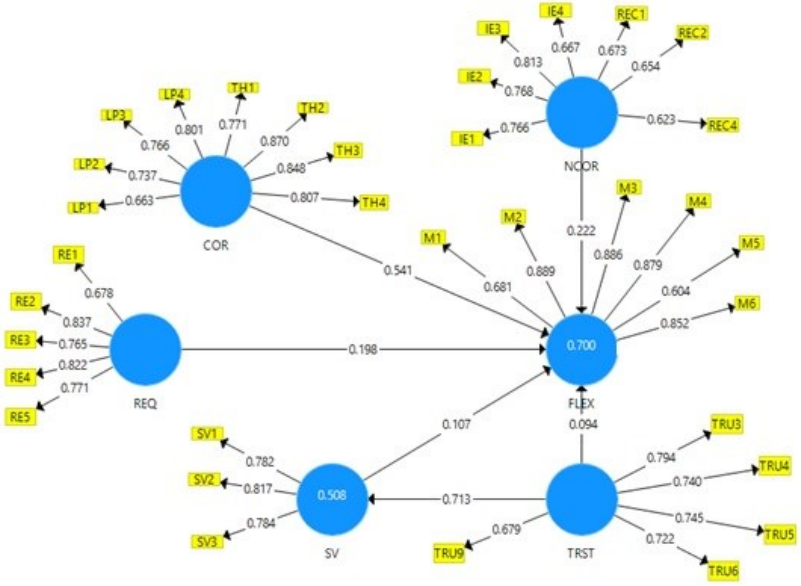

Fig. 4. PLS-SEM Algorithm Model

Table 4 used for hypotheses testing; is an output of bootstrapping. Path coefficient shows the beta coefficient values, the impact of exogenous variable

on endogenous variable. Here T Statistics value and P Value are the thresholds for hypotheses acceptance.

Table 4.
PLS-SEM Hypotheses Testing

	Relationship (IV-DV)	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Decision
H_1	COR -> FLEX	0.541	0.542	0.052	10.337	0.000	Accepted
H_2	NCOR -> FLEX	0.222	0.220	0.060	3.701	0.000	Accepted
H_3	REQ -> FLEX	0.198	0.201	0.039	5.125	0.000	Accepted
H_4	TRST -> FLEX	0.094	0.094	0.046	2.048	0.031	Accepted
H_5	SV -> FLEX	0.107	0.106	0.049	2.181	0.030	Accepted
H_6	TRST -> SV	0.713	0.716	0.027	26.658	0.000	Accepted

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Studies on influence strategies have tended to focus on western societies. This study investigates Pakistan's textile industry, to understand the differences among diverse contexts. According to Western business norms, firms prefer less interference and more autonomy (Lai, 2009), and low power distance societies rarely accept compelling interventions (Samaha et al., 2014). In contrast, in non-Western societies such as Pakistan, collective firms are interdependent; the high power distance dimension suggests the acceptance of social inequalities (Samaha et al., 2014). These facts suggest that Pakistani firms are more tolerant of forceful interference and compelling communication pressures (Tikoo, 2005; Lai, 2009). Thus such coercive strategies have a less mitigated impact manufacturer relationships. Bacharach and Lawler (1980) and others believe that the threat strategy is to be used as a last resort. From this study, it appears that threats are frequently and successfully used to gain supplier mix flexibility. Payan and McFarland

(2005) suggested that legalistic pleas are rarely used in practice. However, in this study, we found that legalistic pleas were frequently used and appear to be part of normal business practice. Information exchange and recommendation strategies are both based on motivating behavioral change through altering the target's perceptions. In this study, these noncoercive influence strategies were used less frequently than coercive influence strategies perhaps due to the considerable time and effort required over an extended period of time to be effective (Frazier and Summers, 1984). Unlike coercive influence strategies, noncoercive influence strategies are non-compulsory, and therefore cannot force suppliers to comply with requirements of the manufacturers. The use of noncoercive influence strategies by manufacturers towards suppliers will increase supplier mix flexibility; this is in agreement with other studies (Kang, Asare, Brashear-Alejandro, Granot, and Li, 2018; Ting, 2016). The request strategy is a strong and specific communication tool to seek the targets desired actions. For request strategies, there is minimal difference when compared with noncoercive influence strategies in this study; however, both positively affect supplier mix flexibility. As for the perception with request strategies is different from recommendations and information exchange, for the Pakistani manufacturer, the relationships between request strategies and flexibility need further examination. According to Aarnio (2018), higher levels of manufacturers' perceived trust of suppliers leads suppliers to embroil and facilitate performance. From the social exchange theory, trust building is a gradual process through increased exchange and positive outcomes. While a supplier attempts to meet a manufacturer's requirements (i.e. produce various product combinations, minimize the time to implement new product development) the supplier needs to change over its capacity and production plans. If a supplier benefits from cooperating with the manufacturer, it will be willing to maintain

the relationship. A manufacturer with high-perceived trust will have more confidence that the suppliers will act honestly. The manufacturer, therefore, is willing to share more strategic and sensitive information with its suppliers, and facilitates the notion of common goals. This research found that trust facilitates manufacturer-supplier shared vision. Greater supplier flexibility gives manufacturers the advantage of responsiveness over their competitors. Suppliers with the ability to simultaneously produce multiple products or changeover quickly from one product to another maintain a competitive advantage. Suppliers often limit the ability of a manufacturer to respond quickly to customer requirements (Gilgor, Gilgor, Holcomb, & Bozkurt, 2019). The results of this study indicate that a manufacturer using influence strategies and social mechanisms with its suppliers can help to advance supplier flexibility to accommodate dynamic customer demands. In return, the manufacturer is able to perform better in terms of market share, customer satisfaction and the solicitation of new projects.

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