

**A REVIEW AND INTEGRATION OF SOCIO-
POLITICAL PROCESSES IN MARKETING
CHANNEL RELATIONSHIPS**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The objective of the paper is to review the empirical contributions to understanding socio-political processes in marketing channels. The results of the study will be used as a starting point for our own studies. Nine leading international journals were used to review the empirical evidence, and all issues from 1980 until the summer of 1996 were systematically examined for empirical contributions to understanding marketing channel relationships. This, and some further articles, which turned up by reviewing references in the articles, resulted in a total of 92 papers on the subject. This paper, which is concerned with socio-political processes, reports results from 61 of these papers.

2. We have used the political economy paradigm for the comparative analysis of distribution channels (Stern & Reve, 1980) to systematise the review. The political economy paradigm posits that a social unit, eg a dyad consisting of a manufacturer and a distributor, can be analysed within a set of dimensions, eg economic-polity, structural-process. In this paper we are interested in the socio-political(polity) processes. By this Stern and Reve (1980) understand "the dominant sentiments and behaviours which characterise the interaction between actors within an organised collectivity (eg marketing channel)". When earlier the processes were analysed, they were considered mainly to consist of co-operation and conflict. Later, several other concepts have drawn attention, and nowadays such concepts as communication, influence strategies, adaptation, trust and commitment are seen as important aspects of marketing channel relationships.

3. The review is split into two sections. One, which focuses on the behavioural processes and one which focuses on the sentiment processes. For each category the relevant empirical papers are listed in a table, where a shortened form of the study's hypotheses are listed and the result of the hypothesis test is shown.

4. On the basis of the tables, the results are discussed and integrated and shown in a graphical form. The results of the review of behavioural processes are shown in figure 1, while figure 2 shows the results of sentiment processes.

5. We conclude by pointing at some potential areas for future research. We believe that a better understanding of trust and commitment building processes, and these concepts' relation to co-operation and shared values, is needed. Further, we find that it would be beneficial to increase the understanding of functional and dysfunctional conflict processes, as well as communication, influence strategies, and adaptation processes in order to analyse these in relation to different organisational forms and power/dependence structures.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this review is to examine the stream of research that has been conducted on marketing channel relationships and to use the results from this research as a starting point for our own studies. In accordance with the political economy paradigm for comparative analysis of marketing channels (Arndt 1983; Stern & Reve 1980) the dimensions of relationships, which the review has revealed, have roughly been categorised into internal economic structures and processes, and internal socio-political structures and processes.

In this paper only the findings in relation to internal socio-political processes are discussed and reported.

As a starting point, the search for research results on marketing channel relations was limited to empirical articles published in the following journals: *Journal of Retailing*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Marketing Channels*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, and *International Review of Retail, Distribution & Consumer Research*. All volumes from 1980 until the summer of 1996 were examined except for *International Journal of Research in Marketing* which was not published until 1984, *International Review of Retail, Distribution, & Consumer Research*, which was not published until 1990, and *Journal of Marketing Channels* which started publishing in 1991. In addition, a number of articles turned up by reviewing these articles for further references. In total, 92 empirical papers on channel relationships were found, and 61 of these papers reported findings on socio-political processes. Results from these 61 papers are reported, discussed and integrated in this paper. Non-empirical papers were not included in the study.

THE OUTLINE OF THE PAPER

Firstly, we briefly present the political economy paradigm for the comparative analysis of distribution channels. The rest of the paper is split into two main sections: one concerning behavioural processes and one which reviews the attitude and belief relations in marketing channels. For each section we first discuss the scope of the section, and secondly we review the empirical evidence. Thirdly, the empirical evidence integrated and conclusions are drawn. We conclude by highlighting some areas for future research.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY PARADIGM

In this section, we give a short presentation of the central concepts and dimensions of the political economy paradigm, which has been used in the analysis of both individual organisations (Zald, 1970) and inter-organisational networks (Benson, 1975).

The political economy framework for the comparative analysis of distribution channels was first proposed by Stern and Reve (1980). They adapted the framework to marketing channel dyads. In their view, the "political economy approach views a social system as comprising interacting sets of major economic and

sociopolitical forces which affect collective behavior and performance” (Stern & Reve, 1980, p. 53). Stern and Reve (1980) define distribution channels as “interorganizational collectivities of institutions and actors simultaneously pursuing self-interest and collective goals”. The unit of analysis in the paradigm is a social unit (Arndt, 1983), be it organisations, groups, families, or distribution channels: a dyad of two organisations – typically a manufacturer and a distributor. This is based on the perspective that the fundamental activity in marketing channels is transaction – the act of exchange between two economic agents (Achrol, Reve & Stern, 1983). The central premise of political economy is that these exchanges can be analysed within a set of dimensions or fields, consisting of economy/polity and structure/process. (Stern & Reve, 1980).

The internal economic structure is defined as “the economic arrangements or transactional form within an organised collectivity (eg marketing channel) set up to complete internal exchanges” (Stern & Reve, 1980). These arrangements range from pure market transactions with no formal relationship to complete vertical integration, where transactions take place in a hierarchy of an organisation and a wholly-owned subsidiary. Between these two extremes lies a variety of more or less formalised co-operative arrangements in which many exchanges in practical life take place. By internal economic processes is meant “the decision making processes within an organized collectivity (eg marketing channel) which determine the terms of trade and the division of labour, functions, and activities among the internal actors” (Stern & Reve, 1980). These decision making processes may for example be impersonal or routines, bargaining or centralised planning. The internal polity (socio-political) structure is defined as “the pattern of power/dependence relations within an organized collectivity (eg marketing channel)” (Stern & Reve, 1980). Marketing channel power is defined as the ability of one channel member to control the decision variables in the marketing strategy of another member (El-Ansary & Stern, 1972). Stern and Reve’s definition (1980) of the internal polity (socio-political) processes is “the dominant sentiments and behaviours which characterize the interactions between actors within an organized collectivity (eg marketing channel)”. Internal socio-political processes are represented by two major dimensions, which are highly interrelated but still separate processes: co-operation and conflict. Co-operation involves the joint striving toward a goal of some mutual benefit and is based on compatibility of goals, aims or value. Conflict is characterised by incompatibility of goals, aims and value and the major concern in conflict is to overcome the opponent to secure one’s own objective (Stern & Reve, 1980).

Achrol et al. (1983) extended the original framework proposed by Stern and Reve by elaborating on environmental factors and their influence on the dyad. They distinguish between primary task, secondary task and macro environment. The primary task environment consists of suppliers and customers of the dyad, and in some situations, competitors and regulating agencies as well, when these engage in direct exchange relationships with the dyad. The secondary task environment consists of suppliers to the immediate suppliers, customers to immediate customers and vice versa for regulating agencies and competitors. By the macro environment is understood general social, economic, political and technological forces which affect the primary and secondary task environment.

BEHAVIOURAL PROCESSES IN MARKETING CHANNELS

As mentioned, this paper is only concerned with the socio-political processes (dominant sentiments and behaviours) in channel relationships. Firstly, we look at the empirical evidence on behavioural processes and, later, we turn to empirical evidence on sentiment processes (attitudes and beliefs). There is no doubt that the development and management of channel relationships is very central in today's business, and in that connection behavioural processes are central elements. Earlier, when these processes were analysed in marketing channels, the main emphasis was placed on analysis of co-operation and conflict. These concepts are still very important, but subsequent enhancements have drawn attention to concepts as communication, information exchange, influence strategies, adaptation, trust and commitments. Nowadays many researchers also see these concepts as important behavioural dimensions in channel relationships. The reviewed papers report how these different concepts interact and how the different kinds of behaviour affect channel performance.

Channel performance is a multi-dimensional attribute of an exchange which, in this review, includes satisfaction, adaptability, commitment, level of conflict, and economic performance measured as effectiveness or efficiency.

Empirical evidence on behaviour in marketing channels

Table 1 lists the reviewed empirical papers concerned with behavioural processes in marketing channels. The first column gives the authors' names and the year of publication. The number in front of each author is a reference number, which will be used later in the figures. The second column provides the empirical setting for the conducted research and the method used for testing the hypotheses. In the third column lists a shortened form of the different hypotheses related to behaviour, and the last column shows whether the hypotheses were supported or not.

Table 1. Empirical studies on behavioural processes in marketing channels

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
1. Ross & Lusch (1982)	Food brokers and wholesalers, 54, correlation	Greater domain dissensus in dyad related to higher conflict and lower co-operation Greater perceptual incongruity in dyad related to higher conflict and lower co-operation	Domain dissensus related to lower co-operation Perceptual incon- gruity related to lower co-operation
2. Sibley & Michie (1982)	Farm implement manufacturers, 123, regression	Co-operation is positively related to non-coercive power sources Co-operation is negatively related to coercive power sources	Supported Not supported
3. Brown, Lusch & Muehling (1983)	Retail stores, 93, Lisrel	Retailer (R) dependence is determined by Supplier(S) power Economic and non-economic power held and used by S determine S's power Economic and non-economic power held and used by S determine R's dependence and level of conflict S's power determine degree of conflict	Supported Economic power determines power Supported Supported
4. Schul, Pride & Little (1983)	Real estate brokerage, 349, canonical correlation	Participative, supportive, and directive leadership behaviour lowers level of conflict	Supported
5. Anderson & Narus (1984)	Electronic distributors, 153, Lisrel	Conflict is a function of manufacturer control and communication	Low conflict and satisfaction asso- ciated with low manufacturer control
6. Eliashberg & Michie (1984)	Industrial installations, 130, correlation	Conflict positively associated to (1) actual preference incongruity on system business goals, (2) actual and perceived incongruities on operative goals, and (3) perceptual differences on preference structures for operative business goals	(3) supported on franchisor's side
7. Ford (1984)	Multi-industry, 196, canonical correlation	Supplier commercial and technical skills associated with perceived level of conflict and supplier adaptability	Supported
8. Frazier & Summers (1984)	Auto dealers, 435, correlation	Firms rely mostly on information ex- change influence strategies, least on threats and legal pleas and moderate- ly on requests and promises Information exchange and requests positively correlated and both are negatively correlated with promises, threats, and legalistic pleas Promises, threats, and legalistic pleas positively correlated High (low) inter-firm agreement asso- ciated with frequent information ex- change and requests (threats, recom- mendations, and legalistic pleas)	Supported Supported Supported Supported

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
9. Gaski & Nevin (1985)	Heavy industrial machinery dealers, 238, regression	Exercise of coercive power has stronger negative effects on satisfaction than its sources Exercise of non-coercive power has stronger positive effects on satisfaction than its sources Exercise of coercive power has stronger positive effects on conflict than its sources Exercise of non-coercive power has stronger negative effects on conflict than its sources Exercise of power has stronger effects on power than its sources Exercise of coercive power has stronger negative effects on performance than its sources Exercise of non-coercive power has stronger effects on performance than its sources	Supported Supported Supported Weakly supported Supported for reward power Not supported Not supported
10. Schul, Little Jr. & Pride (1985)	Real estate brokerage, 349, canonical correlation	Satisfaction is positively correlated with channel leaders' initiating structure (planning, co-ordinating), consideration, perceived autonomy, performance-reward relationship	Supported
11. Frazier & Summers (1986)	Auto dealers, 435, correlation	Manufacturer power is inversely related to the firm's use of coercive influence strategies Manufacturer use of coercion is related to dealers' use of coercion Manufacturer use of coercion negatively related to accommodativeness of manufacturer and dealer's satisfaction, positively related to dealer's attitude to dissolution of relationship	Supported Supported Supported
12. Gaski (1986) and Howell (1987)	Heavy equipment dealers, 238, Lisrel	Reward power use has positive impact on expert, referent and legitimate power sources Coercive power use has negative impact on expert, referent and legitimate power sources Total effect of use of reward and coercive power sources on power and dealer satisfaction are no different than the direct effects	Supported Supported Coercion and reward are indirectly linked to power and satisfaction
13. Kale (1986)	Indian machine tools, 51, correlation	Manufacturer's power positively related with more coercive strategy use Use of non-coercive strategies correlated Use of coercive strategies correlated	Supported Not supported Supported

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		Use of coercive and non-coercive influence negatively correlated Manufacturer's power correlated with dealer's attribution of influence to the manufacturer	Information exchange negatively correlated with coercion Supported
14. Anand (1987)	Convenience store franchises, 99, t-tests	Strategy initiators attribute profitable performance to internal factors of ability and effort Strategy initiators attribute unprofitable performance to external factors of luck and difficulty	Supported Franchisee (franchisor) initiated poor performance attributed to internal (external) factors
15. Anderson, Lodish & Weitz (1987)	Manufacturer representatives, 492, logit regression	Resource allocation related to communication	Supported
16. Hunt, Mentzer & Danes (1987)	Plumbing, heating, cooling distributors, 477, Lisrel	Compliance positively associated with partner's non-coercive power and ability to punish When desire for autonomy increases, compliance probability with partner's use of non-coercive power decreases If issue-specific importance is high, compliance probability with partner's use of non-coercive power decreases	Compliance associated with expert, referent, and legitimate power sources Not supported Supported
17. Frazier, Gill & Kale (1989)	Indian machine tools, 51, Lisrel	Manufacturer's use of coercion relates positively to dealer's dependence and negatively to manufacturer's role performance Dealer's use of coercion relates negatively to dealer's dependence Perceived conflict relates positively to manufacturer's and dealer's use of coercion, negatively to manufacturer's role performance Dealer's satisfaction relates negatively to conflict	Supported Supported Supported except dealer use of coercion Supported
18. Anderson & Narus (1990)	110 industries, wholesaler/distributor firms, 462, Lisrel	Conflict is negatively related to influence over partner firm, positively to influence by partner firm Satisfaction is positively related to cooperation, negatively related to conflict	Not supported Satisfaction is negatively related to conflict in manufacturer's perspective

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		<p>Conflict is negatively related to functionality of conflict and influence over partner firm, positively to influence by partner firm</p> <p>Functionality of conflict and co-operation relates positively to trust, which is positively related to communication and CL</p>	<p>Conflict is positively related to trust, influence by partner firm in manufacturer's perspective</p> <p>Co-operation is a function of CL and communication</p>
19. Hallén, Johanson & Seyed-Mohamed (1990)	Multi-industry, 237, Lisrel	<p>Adaptation and information exchange processes are attributes of inter-company relationships</p> <p>Business relationships strengthened through interplay of adaptation and information exchange processes</p> <p>Adaptation and information exchange affects stability of relationships</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Supported, adaptation and information exchange separate but related processes</p> <p>Supported</p>
20. Heide & John (1990)	Multi-industry purchasers, 175, correlation	<p>Joint action is positively related to continuity expectations and verification of supplier qualifications by buyer</p> <p>Performance ambiguity increases supplier verification efforts</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>
21. Keith, Jackson & Crosby (1990)	Food brokers, 232, MANOVA	<p>Readiness to respond is greater when non-mediated power is used rather than mediated power</p> <p>Satisfaction and perceived self control is higher when non-mediated power is used</p>	<p>Brokers hire staff when reward or referent power is used</p> <p>Supported</p>
22. Metcalfe, Frear & Krishnan (1990)	Aircraft engines, 116, regression	<p>Co-operation is related positively to information exchange and social exchange</p> <p>Co-operation is related positively to adaptation</p> <p>Adaptation is related positively to perceived product importance and information exchange</p>	<p>Co-operation is related positively to information exchange</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>
23. Ong, Elliott & Armstrong (1990)	Service stations, 96, regression	Coercive and non-coercive power sources influence intra-channel conflict	Non-coercive power use and conflict inversely related
24. Frazier & Rody (1991)	Industrial distributors, 300, partial correlation	<p>Use of coercive and non-coercive influence strategies is returned in kind</p> <p>Power is positively related to non-coercive influence strategies and inversely to coercive influence</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Power is positively related to non-coercive influence strategies</p>

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		<p>Latent conflict is positively related to coercive strategies, negatively to non-coercive</p> <p>Manifest conflict related positively to both coercive and non-coercive strategies</p> <p>Use of non-coercive (coercive) strategies is related positively (negatively) to attitude to conflict resolution</p>	<p>Latent conflict positively related to coercion</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>
25. Hallén, Johanson & Seyed-Mohamed (1991)	Multi-industry, 237, Lisrel	<p>A firm's adaptation is reciprocated by adaptation of partner firm</p> <p>Firm adaptation is positively related to degree dependency on counterpart</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>
26. Anderson & Weitz (1992)	Manufacturer and branch offices, 378, regression	<p>Commitment increases when communication is open and two-way.</p> <p>Commitment inversely related to conflict</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>
27. Boyle, Dwyer, Robicheaux & Simpson (1992)	Auto + auto tire dealers, 168 + 686, correlation + regression	<p>Negative (positive) association between relationalism and use of promises, threats, legalistic pleas, and requests (information exchange and recommendation)</p> <p>Use of information exchange, requests, recommendation, promise, threats, and legalistic pleas highest in corporate systems, second highest in franchise, lower in aligned systems, and lowest in market channel systems</p>	<p>Supported, promises positively associated with relationalism</p> <p>Supported</p>
28. Dant & Schul (1992)	Fast food restaurants, 176, multiple discriminant analysis	<p>Bargaining and politics is used for conflict resolution of policy issues, persuasion and problem-solving is used for operational issues</p> <p>If stakes are high (low), bargaining and politics (problem-solving and persuasion) are used</p> <p>If complexity of issue is high (low), bargaining and politics (problem-solving and persuasion) are used</p> <p>If dependency is high (low), bargaining and politics (problem-solving and persuasion) are used</p>	<p>Politics used in policy issues, persuasion, problem-solving and bargaining in operational issues</p> <p>Politics used in high stake issues, bargaining in high and low, persuasion and problem-solving in low stake issues</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Politics used when high dependency, bargaining both high and low, and persuasion and problem-solving when low</p>

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		If solidarity, mutuality or role integrity are high (low), problem-solving and persuasion (bargaining and politics) are used	Politics used when role integrity high, others used when role integrity low
29. Scheer & Stern (1992)	MBA students, 208, correlation and analysis of variance	A target experience: less positive attitude towards the influencer (a), lower autonomy (b), and stronger motivation for compliance (c) when more contingent (1) and negative influence (2) is exercised and contingent influence is framed negatively (3) A target has stronger attribution when outcomes are unfavourable and contingent influence is used Favourable (unfavourable) performance outcomes from compliance related to more (less) positive attitude to influencer when contingent influence is exercised Positive attitude toward the influencer related to favourable performance outcomes as a result of compliance	Relations a-2, a-3, b-2, b-3, c-2, and c-3 supported Not supported Not supported Supported
30. Skinner, Gassenheimer & Kelley (1992)	Farm and power equipment dealers, 226, Lisrel	Conflict inversely related to co-operation Dependence influences co-operation positively and conflict negatively Coercive (non-coercive) power bases influence co-operation negatively (positively) and conflict positively (negatively) Co-operation has positive effect on satisfaction Conflict has negative effect on satisfaction	Supported Dependence influences co-operation positively Supported Supported Supported
31. Cronin Jr. & Baker (1993)	Fluid power product distributors, 117, Lisrel	Attribution of influence to a partner positively affects conflict and performance and negatively affects satisfaction Conflict negatively affects performance and satisfaction Performance positively affects satisfaction	Attribution of influence to a partner positively affects conflict and performance Supported Supported
32. Ganesan (1993)	Retail buyers, 100, regression	Major conflicts between long-term oriented channel members lead to problem-solving strategy, whereas minor conflicts lead to compromise Major conflict increases use of aggressive strategy when short-term orientation exists	Major conflicts and long-term orientation leads to problem-solving strategy Supported

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		<p>Relatively powerful retailers use less aggressive strategy and more problem-solving strategy</p> <p>Problem-solving is related negatively to concessions on important issues and positively to concessions on unimportant issues</p> <p>Compromise strategy is positively related to concessions on important and unimportant issues</p> <p>Aggressive strategy is negatively related to concessions if retailer is relative powerful</p> <p>Satisfaction is positively affected by concessions on unimportant issues and negatively by concession on important issues</p> <p>A retailer's aggressive strategy use is related negatively to retailer's satisfaction, while compromise and problem-solving is positively related to satisfaction</p>	<p>Relatively powerful retailers use more problem-solving strategy</p> <p>Problem-solving is negatively related to concessions on important issues</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Satisfaction is positively affected by concessions on unimportant issues</p> <p>Problem-solving is positively related to satisfaction</p>
33. Olsen & Granzin (1993)	Auto part stores, 90, Lisrel	<p>Dependence influences willingness to help and satisfaction positively, and conflict negatively</p> <p>Control influences satisfaction negatively and conflict positively</p> <p>Conflict influences satisfaction and willingness to help negatively</p> <p>Satisfaction influences willingness positively</p>	<p>Dependence positively influences satisfaction and willingness</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>
34. Ping (1993)	Hardware retailers, 222, Lisrel	<p>Satisfaction (a), investment (b), and switching costs(c) are positively associated with loyalty (1) and voice (2), negatively with exiting (3), opportunism (4), and neglect (5)</p> <p>Alternative attractiveness is positively associated with voice, opportunism, and exiting, negatively associated with loyalty and neglect</p>	<p>a-2, a-3, a-5, b-2, b-5, c-1 supported</p> <p>Alternative attractiveness is positively associated with exit, opportunism, and neglect</p>
35. Price (1993)	Furniture retailers, 163, regression	Directive leadership more positively related to satisfaction and negatively to conflict in low than in high interdependence channels	Directive leadership more positively related to satisfaction in low interdependence channels than in high

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		Participative leadership more positively related to satisfaction and negatively to conflict in high inter-dependence channels than in low	Not supported
36. Zemanek Jr. & Hardin (1993)	General line distributors, 406, regression	Distributor satisfaction is positively affected by manufacturer's expert power, reward power, referent power, legitimate power and negatively affected by coercive power	Supported except the relation between satisfaction and legitimate power
37. Gassenheimer & Calantone (1994)	Furniture and office systems, 324, EQS	Activities contributing to dealer operations are positively inter-related TSI's and coercive power use are positively related Assistance, information exchange and continuity are negatively related to coercive power use Economic dependence increases compliance Coercive power use increases compliance, which increases coercive power use	Supported Supported Supported for information exchange and continuity Supported Supported
38. Gassenheimer, Calantone, Schmitz & Robicheaux (1994)	Furniture and office systems, 324, EQS	Power(a) is a positive function of role performance dependence(1) and economic dependence(2) Coercive power use is positively related to power Compliance relates positively to partner power and use of coercive power Satisfaction relates positively to role performance dependence and economic dependence, negatively to use of coercive power, and is indirectly related to partner power Primary supplier has greater effects on the above than secondary supplier	a-2 supported, a-1 negatively related Supported Compliance relates negatively to power and use of power Generally supported but satisfaction relates positively to coercive power use Supported power-role performance, compliance-use of power, satisfaction-power use, satisfaction-economic dependence relations
39. Gilbert, Young & O'Neal (1994)	Multi-industry purchasers, 107, discriminant analysis	JIT producers exhibit comparatively more frequent deliveries, fewer suppliers, less low cost purchasing, supplier time commitment, reduce delivered lot size, reduced cycle time	JIT producers exhibit comparatively reduced lot size, frequent deliveries, fewer suppliers

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		<p>JIT producers exhibit comparatively increased duration of relationships, frequency of communication, diversity relation activities, symmetry of communication, facilitation of mutual relationship</p> <p>JIT suppliers exhibit comparatively increased duration of relationships, frequency of communication, diversity relation activities, symmetry of communication, facilitation of mutual relationship</p>	<p>Supported for duration of relationships, diversity relation activities, symmetry of communication, facilitation of mutual relationship</p> <p>Supported</p>
40. Gundlach & Cadotte (1994)	Business students, 179, regression	<p>Interdependence positively associated with non-coercive strategies and negatively with coercive</p> <p>Conflict inversely related to interdependence</p> <p>Evaluation of partner performance is positively related to interdependence</p> <p>Asymmetry of interdependence is negatively associated with non-coercive strategies, positively with coercive strategies</p> <p>Asymmetry of interdependence is positively associated with non-coercive strategies, negatively with coercive strategies</p>	<p>Interdependence is positively associated with non-coercive strategies, negatively with punishment</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Asymmetry of interdependence positively associated with non-coercive strategies for distributors</p>
41. Morgan & Hunt (1994)	Auto tire retailer, 203, correlation, Lisrel	<p>Trust relates positively to functional conflict</p> <p>Commitment relates positively to cooperation</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>
42. Boyle & Dwyer (1995)	Industrial product distributors, 314, correlation	<p>Power is positively related to use of mediated power and negatively to use of non-mediated power</p> <p>Increased levels of supplier's centralisation have positive effect on supplier's mediated power use and negative effect on non-mediated power use</p> <p>Increased channel formalisation has positive effects on suppliers' use of non-mediated influence and negative effect on mediated power use</p>	<p>Not supported</p> <p>Centralisation has positive effect on use of promises, legalistic pleas, and threats.</p> <p>Formalisation has positive effect on use of non-mediated influence and requests and legalistic pleas</p>

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		Threats, legalistic pleas, and requests have negative effect on performance, promises have an effect, non-mediated has positive effect	Requests, legalistic pleas, and threats have negative effect, information exchange positive
43. Brown, Lusch & Nicholson (1995)	Farm equipment dealers, 203, Lisrel	<p>High use of mediated power by Supplier (S) associated with higher instrumental and low normative commitment by Retailer (R)</p> <p>Positive relationship between S's use of mediated power and compliance commitment when S is more powerful than R</p> <p>Negative relationship between S's use of mediated power and normative commitment when power is symmetrical or R is more powerful than S</p> <p>High use of non-mediated power by S associated with low instrumental and high normative commitment by R</p> <p>Negative relationship between S's use of non-mediated power and instrumental commitment when S more powerful than R</p> <p>Positive relationship between S's use of non-mediated power and normative commitment when S more powerful than R</p> <p>Increased use of mediated (non-mediated) power by S associated with R's low (high) performance evaluation of S</p> <p>Most negative relationship between S's use of mediated power and R's low evaluation of S's performance when symmetric power or R is more powerful</p> <p>Most positive relationship between S's use of non-mediated power and R's high evaluation of S performance when S is more powerful</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>High use of non-mediated power increases normative commitment</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Strongest negative effect when power is symmetrical</p> <p>Strongest positive effects when power is symmetrical</p>
44. Kumar, Scheer & Steenkamp (1995b)	Auto dealers, 417, regression	<p>Distributive and procedural fairness have positive effect on relationship quality, procedural fairness have strongest effect</p> <p>Outcomes have positive effect on quality and as outcomes increase, importance of procedural fairness lessens and distributive fairness increases</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		Age affects quality positively and is positively related to procedural fairness, negatively related to distributive fairness Environmental uncertainty affects quality negatively and is positively related to procedural fairness, negatively related to distributive fairness	Not supported Environmental uncertainty affects quality negatively and is positively related to procedural fairness
45. Leuthesser & Kohli (1995)	Multi-industry, 454, regression	Greater use of initiating, signalling and disclosing behaviour by S and greater interaction frequency and richness make R more satisfied Greater lateral and vertical involvement by S makes R more satisfied	Initiating, signalling and disclosing behaviour and frequency supported Not supported
46. Mohr & Sohi (1995)	Computer dealers, 125, EQS	Communication frequency, bidirectionality and formality are associated with communication quality Communication formality is negatively related to distortion and withholding of information Quality is positively related to satisfaction with communication	Frequency positively related to communication quality Supported Supported
47. Richardson, Swan & Hutton (1995)	Beer distributors, 324, regression	Satisfaction is positively related to non-coercive power sources and use of non-coercive power, negatively related to coercive power sources and use of coercive power Use of coercion has stronger effect on satisfaction than coercive power sources Use of non-coercion has stronger effect on satisfaction than its sources Satisfaction more positively correlated to product satisfaction components than other satisfaction components	Supported Not supported Potential for financial assistance has stronger effect than its use Not supported
48. Sachdev, Bello & Verhage (1995)	Multi-industry, 225, regression	Conflict is related inversely to dependence and positively to percentage of export to total sales Conflict is related positively to number of product lines exported and export employees Conflict is inversely related to years of exporting and number of export intermediaries used	Conflict is related inversely to dependence Conflict related positively to product lines exported Supported

DISCUSSION AND INTEGRATION OF THE FINDINGS

a. Research on influence strategies

As can be seen from table 1, a large part of the research in channel behaviour concerns what has been termed influence strategies. Influence strategies, or use of power, should be distinguished from power sources or possession of power (Frazier & Summers, 1984). Influence strategies can be labelled coercive and non-coercive, where coercive strategies (ie use of promise, threat, legalistic pleas) put direct pressure on the partner to perform or behave in a specific way with adverse consequences from non-compliance, and where non-coercive strategies (ie use of requests, information exchange, recommendations) implies little – if any – direct pressure to comply (Boyle & Dwyer, 1995; Frazier & Rody, 1991). Another typology of influence strategies is mediated power (ie reward, coercion, legal legitimate) versus non-mediated power (ie expertise, referent, information, authority, traditional legitimate) (Brown, Lusch & Nicholson, 1995). Where the mediated power bases can be directed toward a specific channel member and related to specific performance by channel members, whereas the non-mediated power bases are less flexible.

Empirical research suggests that firms use more information exchange and requests than coercive strategies (Frazier & Summers, 1984). This can be interpreted as an indication that firms rely mostly on non-coercive strategies because they are generally more supportive of an ongoing co-operative relationship, whereas the opposite can be said for the use of coercion. This argument is based on the assumption that some degree of dependence and trust exists in the relationship, which makes non-coercion a feasible influence strategy. If no trust or dependence exists, the parties have no incentive for complying with a request from an exchange partner. Research furthermore indicates that the form of influence strategy used is returned in kind by the partner (Frazier & Rody, 1991; Frazier & Summers, 1986). Whether the party initially exposed to the partners' use of power returns the use of power in kind, depends on whether the exposed partner possesses alternatives and status (Frazier & Rody, 1991). If a firm lacks this, it is more inclined to have a high degree of tolerance and will comply with the attempt to influence without retaliation. This will probably not be the case in many western marketing channels, where alternative suppliers or customers generally are much more accessible than in, eg, developing countries.

There is a quite substantial amount of evidence that the use of coercive influence makes partners less satisfied (Frazier & Summers, 1986; Gaski & Nevin, 1985, Richardson et al., 1995), even though Gassenheimer et al. (1994) came to the opposite result. They note that this result is counter-intuitive and suggests that the reason for the result might be that coercion, used with discretion, may be an effective communicator of constructive advice. One reason for the result might be the empirical setting of the research – office systems and furniture dealers – where there is a clear power imbalance in favour of the suppliers (Gassenheimer et al. 1994). In a channel where dealers have no, or very limited, power, satisfaction with their most important supplier might increase, even if coercion is used upon them, because this reassures them that the powerful suppliers still believe that the dealer is important to the supplier and intends to collaborate in the future. If the supplier does not expect future interaction, the supplier would not urge the dealer to perform or comply in a specific way.

The research of Keith, Jackson and Crosby (1990) and Richardson et al. (1995) demonstrates that use of non-coercive influence has a positive effect on the other channel members' satisfaction.

b. Research on conflict

A central issue in research concerning marketing channel behaviour is the concept of conflict. Channel conflict can be defined as "a situation in which one channel member perceives another channel member(s) to be engaged in behaviour that is preventing or impeding it from achieving its goals" (Stern & El-Ansary, 1988, p. 285).

Empirical evidence suggests that the use of coercion increases the level of conflict, while there are differing results on effects of the use of non-coercion on conflict. Gaski and Nevin (1985) find that non-coercion use lowers conflict and Frazier and Rody (1991) find that non-coercion use raises manifest conflict. It is obvious that the use of coercion will lead to a decline in satisfaction. On the other hand we do not think that it is equally obvious why the use of non-coercive power should lead to less conflict. Gaski and Nevin (1985) operationalise non-coercive power as rewards and assistance, which differs from the later operationalisation of Frazier and Rody (1991) and Boyle and Dwyer (1995), where non-coercion implies use of requests, recommendations and discussions. This difference has probably influenced their results, because it is clear that getting assistance and rewards from a partner firm lowers the level of conflict, while intuitively it is not so clear that getting recommendations and requests lowers conflict. Firms obviously prefer being influenced by recommendations and requests to threats or legalistic pleas, but recommendations and requests, as such, do not necessarily lower the level of conflict.

A substantial amount of research results show, to no surprise, that conflict has a negative influence on satisfaction, ie more conflict makes channel members less satisfied (Anderson & Narus, 1990; Cronin Jr. & Baker, 1993; Frazier & Kale, 1989; Olsen & Granzin, 1993; Skinner et al., 1992). Satisfaction is generally seen as the channel members' overall approval of the relationship (Gaski & Nevin, 1985). However, as Olsen and Granzin (1993) note, the concept of conflict might be viewed as consisting of functional and dysfunctional conflict, where the contention is that some low levels of conflict could exist that are actually beneficial to the relationship performance and satisfaction. At a low level of conflict, disagreements are resolved productively, and if this is not the case, disagreements can escalate and make conflict dysfunctional. But generally speaking, empirical evidence shows that more conflict decreases channel member satisfaction. Cronin and Baker (1993) further find that increased levels of conflict adversely affect performance in the relationship.

In Stern and Reve's work (1980) the dominant sentiments and behaviours in the internal socio-political processes consisted of conflict and co-operation, "ranging from minimal cooperation, high dysfunctional conflict to maximal cooperation, functional conflict" (Stern & Reve 1980, p. 62). Considering this, the relation between the two concepts has attracted limited empirical attention. Ross and Lusch (1982) tested the relationship between domain dissensus and perceptual incongruity and the level of conflict and co-operation. They found that both

domain dissensus and perceptual incongruity related to lower co-operation. Skinner, Gassenheimer and Kelley (1992) found support for the hypothesis that higher levels of conflict lead to lower levels of co-operation. Additionally, Anderson and Weitz (1992) found that the level of conflict influences commitment to the relationship inversely, ie high levels of conflict will have a tendency to lower commitment, while the opposite can be said for low levels of conflict.

c. Research on communication and information exchange

In inter-firm relationships, communication or information exchange between partners is important to make the partnership work. Leuthesser and Kohli (1995) divide information exchange between partners into three dimensions: Initiating behaviour, signalling behaviour, and disclosing behaviour. Initiating behaviour involves efforts to better understand the partner's needs and help the partner in becoming more competitive. Signalling behaviour refers to providing advance information to the partner about changes in marketing plans, product design etc., while disclosing behaviour involves the extent to which a partner is perceived to reveal sensitive information. Operationalised in this way, communication or information exchange is positively related to satisfaction (Leuthesser & Kohli, 1995).

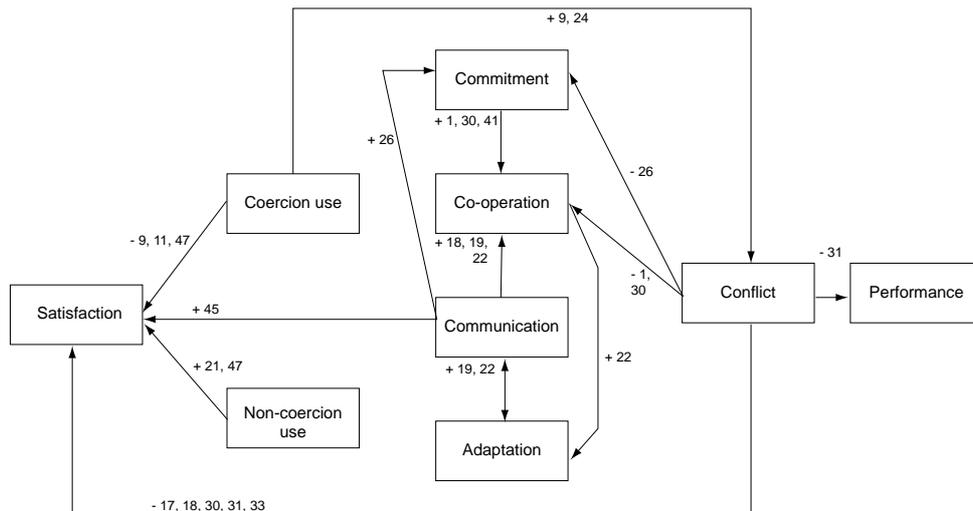
Moreover, there seems to be evidence that communication or information exchange has a positive influence on the co-operation in a channel. Defining communication as "the formal as well as informal sharing of meaningful and timely information between firms" (Anderson & Narus, 1990, p. 44), Anderson and Narus (1990) reach the result that communication has a positive effect on co-operation. A similar result is reached by Metcalf et al. 1990, ie they found strong support for the hypothesis that information exchange is related positively to the degree of co-operation between buyer and seller. Furthermore Anderson and Weitz (1992) suggest that communication positively affects commitment to the relationship, where commitment is defined as "a desire to develop a stable relationship, a willingness to make short-term sacrifices to maintain the relationship, and a confidence in the stability of the relationship" (Anderson & Weitz, 1992 p. 19). And finally Morgan and Hunt (1994) found that commitment to a relationship increases co-operation.

The relationship between the concepts of communication and adaptation has been examined by Metcalf et al. (1990) and Hallén et al. (1990). According to Metcalf et al. (1990) adaptation refers to the extent to which buyer and seller make substantial investments in the relationship, where investments can be physical assets like technology or inventory management, as well as investments in changes of attitudes, values or goals. It is thus clear that the concept of adaptation is related to the concept of transaction-specific investments in the transaction cost approach (eg Williamson, 1985). Metcalf et al.'s results of the hypothesis tests (1990) show that communication facilitates adaptation in the relationships. Hallén et al. (1990) concluded that information exchange and adaptation are separate but related processes, and that especially in domestic relationship there seems to exist an interactive relationship between information exchange and adaptation, where information exchange enhances adaptation, and the more adaptation of the organisations, the more information exchange takes place.

The results of the Metcalf et al. study (1990) further indicate that co-operation has a positive effect on adaptation, and adaptation by one company in a relationship further seems to be reciprocated by the other party (Hallén et al., 1991).

An overview and integration of our review conclusions is presented graphically in figure 1. Only relations for which significant empirical support was found are incorporated in the figure.

Figure 1. Behavioural processes of marketing channel relationships



ATTITUDE AND BELIEF PROCESSES OF SOCIO-POLITICAL PROCESSES

As noted above, earlier the main emphasis of socio-political processes was placed on conflict and co-operation. But since then, growing attention has been paid to the part of socio-political processes which Stern and Reve (1980) labelled sentiments. Attitude and belief processes address dominant sentiments and opinions within the channel. Much research in this area has focused on commitment and trust between channel participants and effects of these concepts on other relationship dimensions such as shared values, dependence, co-operation and communication.

Table 2. Empirical studies of attitude and belief dimensions of socio-political processes

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
1. Ford (1984)	Multi-industry, 196, canonical correlation	Supplier's commercial and technical skills associated with Supplier's overall market commitment and customer commitment	Supported
2. Anderson, Lodish & Weitz (1987)	Manufacturer representatives, 492, logit regression	Resource allocation related to trust	Supported
3. Anderson & Narus (1990)	110 industries, wholesaler/distributor firms, 462, Lisrel	Trust is a positive function of communication and CL Functionality of conflict (productive resolution of disagreements) and conflict are positive functions of trust	Trust is a positive function of co-operation and communication Not supported
4. Crosby, Evans & Cowles (1990)	Households, 151, Lisrel	Similarity, service domain expertise and relational selling behaviour affect relationship quality (trust and satisfaction) positively Relationship quality affects sales effectiveness and anticipation of future interaction positively	Service domain expertise and relational selling affect relationship quality positively Relationship quality affects anticipation of future interaction positively
5. Anderson & Weitz (1992)	Manufacturer and branch offices, 378, regression	A channel member's (A) commitment is affected by perceived partner's (B) commitment, which is affected by partner's commitment A's commitment is increased by A's TSI A's perception of B's commitment increases by A's perception of B's TSI A's acceptance of constraining contractual terms of product class and territorial exclusivity, termination notification and restriction on termination increases A's commitment and B's perception of this increases B's commitment A's commitment increases when communication is open and two-way. Commitment is inversely related to conflict	Supported Supported Supported Granting territorial exclusivity has negative impact on A's commitment and positive on B's perception of A's commitment. Distributors' granting of category exclusivity increases distributor commitment perceived by manufacturer Supported Supported

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		<p>A's commitment is positively related to B's reputation for fairness</p> <p>Distributor's perception of manufacturer's commitment is negatively related to manufacturer's direct selling</p>	<p>Distributor's commitment increases when manufacturer has reputation for fairness</p> <p>Not supported</p>
6. Heide & John (1992)	Multi-industry, 215, regression	Buyer's investment in transaction specific assets increases control over supplier's decision for high levels of norms of flexibility, norms of information exchange, and norms of solidarity	Supported
7. Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpandé (1992)	Market research users, 779, regression	<p>Trust is positively related to involvement, quality of interaction, commitment, use of market research information</p> <p>Involvement is positively related to interaction quality</p> <p>The higher interaction quality or greater involvement, the greater the commitment</p> <p>The higher interaction quality, or involvement, or commitment, the greater use of market research information</p> <p>Hypothesised relations among trust, relationship processes, and research use are weaker for manager-researcher dyads than researcher-researcher, weaker for non-marketer-marketer than marketer-marketer, and weaker for inter- than intra-organisational dyads</p>	<p>Trust is positively related to involvement, quality of interaction, commitment</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>The higher the interaction quality, the greater the commitment</p> <p>The higher the interaction quality, the greater use of market research information</p> <p>Commitment, involvement, and commitment to research use stronger in intra-organisational dyads. Relations interaction quality to research use, involvement to quality, and trust to involvement stronger in inter-organisational dyads</p>
8. Scheer & Stern (1992)	MBA students, 208, correlation and analysis of variance	A target experience: less positive attitude towards the influencer (a), lower autonomy (b), and stronger motivation for compliance (c) when more contingent (1) and negative influence (2) are exercised and contingent influence is framed negatively (3)	Relations a-2, a-3, b-2,b-3, c-2, and c-3 supported

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		<p>A target has stronger attribution when outcomes are unfavourable and contingent influence is used</p> <p>Favourable (unfavourable) performance outcomes from compliance are related to more (less) positive attitude to influencer when contingent influence is exercised</p> <p>Positive attitude toward the influencer is related to favourable performance outcomes as a result of compliance</p>	<p>Not supported</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Supported</p>
9. Haugland & Reve (1993)	Salmon distribution channels, 39, correlation, regression	<p>Channel formalisation (centralisation) is positively (negatively) associated with relational contractual norms</p> <p>Reliance, solidarity, and mutuality is positively associated with channel cohesion and product satisfaction</p> <p>Formalisation and centralisation is positively associated with channel cohesion and product satisfaction</p>	<p>Not supported</p> <p>Reliance, solidarity, and mutuality are positively associated with product satisfaction</p> <p>Not supported</p>
10. Hyvönen (1993)	Food retailers, 236, regression	<p>Maintaining autonomy increases trust in contractual relationships</p> <p>Trust is positively related to frequency of communication, net benefits, and negatively related to intra-channel competition</p> <p>Trust is positively related to relationship age</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Not supported</p>
11. Moorman, Deshpandé & Zaltman (1993)	Market research users, 779, regression	<p>Trust is inversely related to user's job experience, user's firm experience, user's hierarchical position, and user firms' formalisation, centralisation, and complexity</p> <p>Trust is positively related to researcher expertise and willingness to reduce uncertainty, researcher's sincerity, integrity, dependability, collective orientation, tact, timeliness, confidentiality, congeniality, project importance and project customisation</p> <p>Trust is higher when organisations are clan or adhocracy cultures, lower when organizations are hierarchical or market cultures</p>	<p>Trust inversely related to formalisation</p> <p>Trust is positively related to expertise, willingness to reduce uncertainty, integrity, dependability, tact, timeliness, confidentiality and project customisation, negatively to congeniality</p> <p>Not supported</p>

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		<p>Trust is positively related to researcher's hierarchical level, partner organisations' power, negatively related to own organisation power</p> <p>Relation between trust and interpersonal characteristics are stronger in relationships involving dissimilar parties than similar and stronger for inter-organisational relations than intra-organisational</p>	<p>Trust positively related to researcher organisational level and partner organisation power</p> <p>Not supported</p>
12. Ganesan (1994)	Retailing, 176, Lisrel/regression	<p>Trust in vendor credibility and benevolence is positively related to retailer's long-term orientation</p> <p>Reputation is positively related to credibility</p> <p>Satisfaction with past outcomes is positively related to benevolence and credibility</p> <p>Experience with vendor is positively related to perception of vendor benevolence and credibility</p> <p>Perception of vendor TSI's is positively related to perception of vendor benevolence and credibility</p>	<p>Trust in vendor credibility positively related to long-term orientation</p> <p>Supported in retail sample, not in vendor sample</p> <p>Supported in vendor sample, not in retail sample</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Supported in retail sample, credibility supported in vendor sample</p>
13. Morgan & Hunt (1994)	Auto tire retailer, 203, correlation, Lisrel	<p>Relation termination costs, relationship benefits, and shared values relate positively to commitment</p> <p>Shared values and communication relate positively to trust, opportunistic behaviour relates negatively</p> <p>Commitment relates positively to acquiescence and co-operation, negatively to propensity to leave</p> <p>Trust relates positively to commitment, co-operation and functional conflict, negatively to decision-making uncertainty (DMU)</p>	<p>Supported except relationship benefits</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>
14. Andaleeb (1995)	Business students' and managers' experimentation, 192, MANOVA	<p>When dependence is high, trust has little effect on intention to co-operate, when dependence is low, trust has large effect</p> <p>When trust is high, inclination to exert controls is low</p> <p>When trust is high, strong influence strategies will be less used</p>	<p>High dependence resulted in greater intention to co-operate</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		When dependence is high, intentions to use strong influence strategies is low and not sensitive to levels of trust. Low dependence results in intention to use strong influence strategies is sensitive to levels of trust	Not supported
15. Brown, Lusch & Nicholson (1995)	Farm equipment dealers, 203, Lisrel	<p>High use of mediated power by Suppliers (S) associated with higher instrumental and low normative commitment by Retailer (R)</p> <p>Positive relationship between S's use of mediated power and compliance commitment, when S is more powerful than R</p> <p>Negative relationship between S's use of mediated power and normative commitment, when power is symmetrical or R more powerful than S</p> <p>High use of non-mediated power by S associated with low instrumental and high normative commitment by R</p> <p>Negative relationship between S's use of non-mediated power and instrumental commitment, when S more powerful than R</p> <p>Positive relationship between S's use of non-mediated power and normative commitment, when S more powerful than R</p> <p>High level of normative commitment of R to S when R attributes high performance to S</p> <p>High level of instrumental commitment of R to S when R attributes low performance to S</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>High use of non-mediated power increases normative commitment</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Not supported</p>
16. Gundlach, Achrol & Mentzer (1995)	Microcomputers, 130, regression	<p>Commitment positively affects social norms</p> <p>Social norms reinforce long-term commitment</p> <p>Disproportionate commitment facilitates opportunism by the less committed party</p> <p>Social norms are negatively related to opportunism</p> <p>Commitment is negatively related to partner's opportunistic behaviour</p> <p>Commitment input and long-term commitment intentions are positively related</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Supported</p>

AUTHOR (YEAR)	EMPIRICAL SETTING, SAMPLE SIZE, METHOD	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
		<p>Commitment intentions are positively related to commitment input in period t+1, and to commitment intention in period t+1</p> <p>Social norms are positively related to commitment input and intention in period t+1</p> <p>Commitment input and intention in period t+1 are negatively related to partners opportunism in period t</p>	<p>Supported for distributors</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Not supported</p>
17. Kumar, Scheer & Steenkamp (1995a)	Auto dealers, 417, regression	<p>Total interdependence is inversely related to conflict and positively to trust and commitment</p> <p>Interdependence asymmetry positively related to conflict and negatively to trust and commitment</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>
18. Mohr & Sohi (1995)	Computer dealers, 125, EQS	Norms of information sharing positively related to frequency of communication flows, and bidirectionality of communication flows, negatively related to formality of communication flows	Norms positively related to frequency and bidirectionality of communication flows
19. Spriggs & Nevin (1995)	Duty truck franchises, 199, regression	<p>Exchange context is related to exchange success</p> <p>The positive relation between contract norms and exchange success is moderated by exchange context</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Not supported</p>
20. Strutton, Pelton & Lumpkin (1995)	Multi-industry franchisees, 318, regression	Autonomy, cohesiveness, fairness, innovativeness, recognition have positive influence on solidarity in relationship, pressure has negative influence	Cohesiveness, fairness, innovativeness, recognition have positive influence on solidarity in relationship
21. Andaleeb (1996)	Executive MBA students, 72, MANOVA	<p>Trust is positively related to satisfaction</p> <p>If dependence is high, satisfaction is very sensitive to level of trust, and if low dependence, satisfaction is not very sensitive to level of trust</p> <p>Commitment positively related to trust and dependence</p> <p>If dependence is high, commitment is high and not very sensitive to level of trust, and if low dependence commitment very sensitive to level of trust</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p>

DISCUSSION AND INTEGRATION OF THE FINDINGS

a. Research on commitment

Commitment is proposed to be central to marketing channel relationships. Commitment can be defined as “an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes the relationship is worth working on to ensure that it endures indefinitely” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23). By definition, relationship marketing is an ongoing process which takes place over time, indicating that commitment to the process must be of importance. Research results show that trust in a relationship fosters commitment to the relationship (Andaleeb, 1996; Moorman et al., 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The reason is that in a trusting relationship, the need to monitor the other party is low, and the reason to expect opportunistic behaviour is limited. These benefits will make relationship parties more interested in continuing the relationship and thereby build commitment.

Shared values or norms seem to be related to commitment. Gundlach et al. (1995) define social norms as shared expectations regarding behaviour, while Morgan and Hunt (1994, p.25) define shared values as “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”. Thus, norms can be considered an integral part of shared values. Morgan and Hunt’s results (1994) indicate that shared values increase the commitment to the relationship, while Gundlach et al. (1995) find support for the propositions that social norms can increase commitment, and that commitment as well can increase social norms. This indicates that there is an iterative mutually enhancing – or deterring – relationship between commitment and norms/shared values.

Commitment also seems to be enhanced by dependence on a relationship (Andaleeb, 1996; Kumar et al., 1995a). The argument for this is that when a partner is dependent, the partner should value the relationship more and therefore want to maintain it. Dependence is defined as the degree to which a firm needs the resources of a partner firm to achieve its goals (Andaleeb, 1996), whereas Kumar et al. (1995) consider total interdependence which is the sum of the firm’s interdependence. Whatever definition used, it seems intuitively correct that the firms are more committed to relationships they value more.

Additionally, the research results indicate that the amount of transaction specific investments or relationship termination costs have an increasing effect on relationship commitment (Anderson & Weitz, 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This is not surprising, considering dependence and transaction specific investments being two sides of the same matter, ie transaction specific assets or relationship termination costs will undoubtedly increase a partner’s dependence on the relationship. For the purpose of this review, we consider relationship termination costs and transaction specific investments to be two closely related constructs. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994) relationship termination costs include all expected losses from termination of a relationship, such as dissolution expenses, switching costs and perceived lack of potential alternative partners. This definition is in many respects close to the consequences of loss of transaction specific investments. The research of Morgan and Hunt (1994)

further suggests that commitment has positive effects on co-operation in the relationship and decreases the partners propensity to leave the relationship.

Finally, research on commitment indicates that commitment has a positive effect on co-operation (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and that communication has a positive effect on commitment (Anderson & Weitz, 1992). This reflects the fact that the open sharing of information motivates firms to commit more to a relationship.

b. Research on trust

The concept of trust is the second central concept within this category of attitude and belief dimensions. Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23) have defined trust as “existing when one party has confidence in an exchange partner’s reliability and integrity”. As with commitment, trust is supposedly positively affected by dependence (Kumar et al., 1995a), which indicates that the more dependent a partner is on a relationship, the more trust is developed. Trust also seems to be built by the existence of shared values (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Communication or information exchange has a positive influence on trust (Anderson & Narus, 1990; Hyvönen, 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994), while opportunism seems to have a negative affect on trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), neither of which is very surprising. Furthermore, there is evidence that increased formalisation in a relationship has a tendency of decreasing trust (Moorman et al., 1993). The reason for this is, according to Moorman et al. (1993), that trust is developed through interpersonal relationships, and that organisational bureaucratisation will reduce trust because it discourages interpersonal risk-taking, including displays of uncertainty and vulnerability. Furthermore, bureaucratisation reduces flexibility toward exchange partners, which also reduces trust.

Concerning the effects of trust in a relationship, the research indicates that more trust has an increasing effect on the long-term orientation (Ganesan, 1994) and satisfaction of the parties (Andaleeb, 1996).

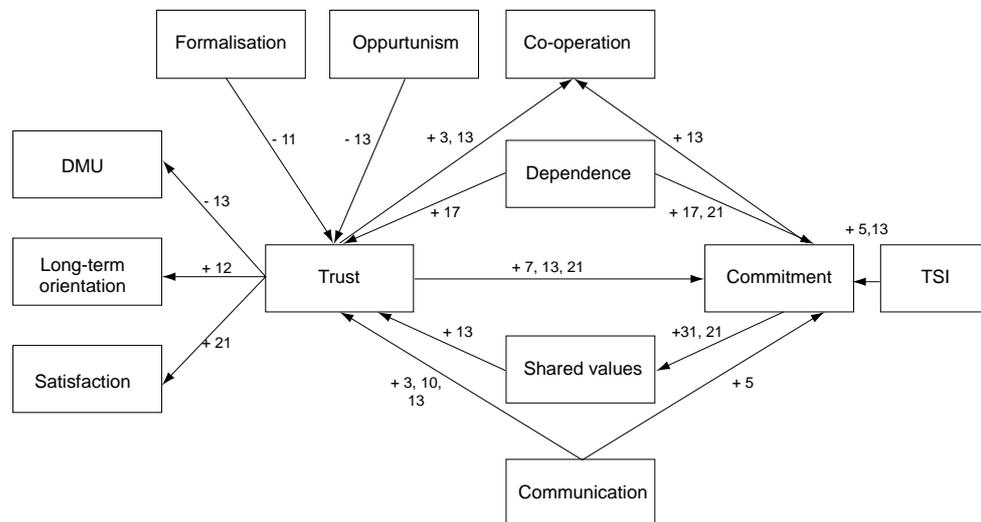
Moreover, there are indications that trust has a lowering effect on decision-making uncertainty (DMU) (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), which refers to the degree to which a channel partner has enough information to make key decisions, is able to predict consequences of the decisions and has confidence in the decisions made (Achrol & Stern, 1988). The rationale for the lowering effect of trust on DMU is that uncertainty is lowered because the trusting party is confident that the trustworthy party can be relied on.

Trust is directly related to co-operation, even though the direction of the relationship between co-operation and trust is not altogether clear as there is different evidence concerning which concept is an antecedent of the other. Anderson and Narus (1990) hypothesised that co-operation is a function of trust, but found that trust is in fact a positive function of co-operation. On the other hand Morgan and Hunt (1994) find that co-operation is a positive function of trust. Discussing their results, Anderson and Narus (1990) note that the result might be caused by the cross-sectional design of their research: When respondents are asked about trust, they give a present state report, while asked about co-operation, they report past co-operation experiences. In fact, it could be

proposed, that co-operation and trust is iteratively related (Anderson & Narus, 1990), which means that co-operation leads to trust, which leads to greater willingness to co-operate, which leads to greater trust, etc.

The general conclusions are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. Attitude and belief relations in marketing channel relationships



CONCLUSION

The objective of this paper has been to review empirical contributions to understanding socio-political processes of marketing channel relationships. The 61 empirical references found have provided a more comprehensive understanding of behaviour and sentiments in marketing channels. We have outlined what we believe to be the major conclusions in figures 1 and 2.

Several interesting areas for future research can be noted. From among sentiment (attitude and belief) processes a better understanding of, eg, trust and commitment building processes, and how these concepts relate to co-operation and shared value building is needed. It would especially be interesting to see some longitudinal studies, which could shed more light on the causalities between trust, co-operation and shared values over time. From among the behavioural processes, conflict processes could be analysed to obtain a better understanding of what characterises functional and dysfunctional conflicts, and how these conflicts are resolved. Also communication, influence strategies, co-operation and adaptation processes would be highly beneficial to analyse, especially if these various behavioural processes could be studied across different relational forms and power/dependence structures. Finally, a better understanding of how performance is influenced by socio-political processes is also needed.

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