

중소기업의 관계마케팅 투자가 대기업 고객의 장기거래성향에 미치는 영향*

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I. Introduction

Large manufacturers source diverse components, parts, and materials from a number of suppliers. The quality of a manufacturer's final products and ultimately financial performance of a manufacturer will depend on suppliers. Securing cooperative relationships between suppliers and manufacturers is considered as a key to gaining competitive advantage and is mutually beneficial for both sides.

Many studies have been conducted on supplier-manufacturer relationships. One stream of research examines how a supplying firm can build up a long-term business relationship with a manufacturer. Long-term orientation, a manufacturers' willingness to make short-term sacrifices to realize long-term benefits from the relationship with its supplier (Anderson and Weitz 1992; Ganesan 1994), is affected by the manufacturer's trust in its supplier. Eyuboglu (2003) reports that a manufacturer trusts a supplier when the supplier is credible and honest. A supplier's credibility and honesty provides a signal to the manufacturer that its future opportunism will be minimal.

Another stream of research examines supplier-manufacturer (buyer) relationships in terms of specific asset investments (Suh, Xie, and Kwon 2005). Total specific asset investment is positively related to commitment and trust in the relationship. When all partners to the relationship mutually commit specific asset investment in the relationship, the interdependence between them is subsequently boosted, resulting in a more solid and interdependent relationship. On the other hand, asymmetric specific asset investment, as a result of the difference of specific asset investment among partners in a relationship, was found to be positively related conflict among the partners.

It has been suggested that relationship marketing investments build stronger, more trusting customer relationships (Morgan and Hunt 1994) and improve financial performance (DeWulf Odekerken-Schroder and Iacobucci 2001; Reicheld and Teal 1996). A customer will seek a long-term relationship with suppliers when it helps to improve the customer's competitiveness. We can posit that a customer's relationship commitment will require his or her evaluation of both the benefits and the costs of a relational exchange and thus the effectiveness of a suppliers' relationship marketing activities (Palmatier, Scheer, Evans, and Arnold 2008).

Extant research indicates that strong relationships develop best when the customer is receptive to the relationship-building efforts (Anderson and Narus 1991). The alignment perspective (Venkatraman 1989) predicts that RM generates the highest returns when the salesperson's relationship-building efforts match the buyer's relational governance needs.

How can small-and-medium sized suppliers build and/or keep long-term business relationships with large manufacturers? Small suppliers and large manufacturers as business counterparts are observed in diverse industries and countries. Examples include automobiles, semi-conductors, mobiles, home appliances, and ship-building industries in Korea and Japan. The relationship has been characterized as asymmetric because small firms do not have viable options vis-a- vis giant manufacturers. Some large manufacturers are known to behave opportunistically, that is press suppliers hard to lower price, to provide more service, and sometimes they replace suppliers unexpectedly. If managers can identify the factors that affect a customer's relationship commitment, they might target their relationship marketing efforts in a manner superior to current practices, which allocate relationship marketing spending more effectively.

This study builds and tests a dependence-based model. The supplier can have a secure, long-term business relationship when a buyer depends on a supplier in any respect. That is, a supplier must have capabilities which are sought by a buyer. This study examines supplier's core offering capabilities, operations capabilities, interpersonal networking capabilities and supplier transaction specific investments and dependence asymmetry as antecedents to buyer's dependence and buyer's opportunism. Secondly, this study examines relationships between buyer dependence and buyer commitment.

II. Research Model

The importance of collaborative supplier-manufacturer or buyer-seller relationships has been growing in the marketing literature and the relationships are viewed as a source of competitive advantage (Webster 1984; Ulaga and Eggert 2006). Scholars and practitioners recognize the need to manage interfirm relationships as strategic assets. Authors agree that there are diverse benefits of close supplier-buyer relationships and that the relationships can result in improved performance.

Along with the strategic importance of supplier relationships, customers have increasingly moved away from an adversarial relationship management style with many suppliers toward a logic of building long-term relationships with selected key suppliers (Ulaga and Eggert 2006). Vendors face the alternative of either gaining key supplier status with their customers or being pushed into the role of a backup supplier, capturing only a small share of a customer's business. Suppliers in this situation need to search for new ways to differentiate themselves through improved customer interactions. Differentiation in business relationships must contribute to customer value by either providing benefits to the customer or lowering a customer's costs.

Through a depth interview with purchasing managers and an empirical investigation Ulaga and Eggert (2006) show that providing more benefits as well as lowering costs contribute to customer's relationship value, benefits and costs are two fundamental dimensions of value creation. The authors also indicate that the two value drivers operate at three different levels, which are the core offering, the sourcing process, and the customer operations. We can note six different value drivers by crossing value dimensions and value levels: core offering benefits (product quality, delivery performance), core offering costs (direct costs), sourcing process benefits (service support, personal interaction), sourcing process costs (acquisition costs), customer operations benefits (supplier know-how, time to market), customer operations costs (operation costs).

Scheer, Miao, and Garrett (2010) interpret Ulaga and Eggert's (2006) value drivers as a supplier's capabilities which can generate a customer's dependence. According to Frazier (1983) dependence is a firm's need to maintain its relationship with an exchange partner in order to achieve its desired goals, which is a factor even in successful buyer-seller relationships (Davis and Mentzer 2006) and is critical to establishing stronger supply chain linkages (Cheng and Grimm 2006).

Emerson (1962) conceptualizes dependence as arising from both positive and negative motivations. That is, a buyer's dependence arises from motivational investment in goals mediated by a supplier and the inability to achieve those goals through alternatives (positive motivation). A buyer's dependence also arises from consideration of new costs that will be incurred if the current relationship ends (negative motivation).

Consistent with Emerson (1962) Scheer et al. (2010) suggests a bi-dimensional dependence model that incorporates two independent dimensions reflecting positive and negative motivations. Benefit-based dependence – the need to maintain the relationship because of the irreplaceable net benefits that result from the ongoing relationship – focuses on manifest, presently-realized positive relational benefits. In contrast, cost-based dependence – the need to maintain the relationship because of the new costs that will be incurred if the relationship ends – focuses on the latent, currently dormant negative factors that would be realized in the future upon relationship termination.

Scheer et al. (2010) suggest that supplier capabilities motivate customer commitment by generating customer dependence. The authors propose that customer dependence plays a critical mediating role in enabling the supplier to convert its capabilities into competitive advantage. That is, supplier capabilities motivate customer commitment through diverse mediating mechanisms, some of which directly enhance the supplier's value to the customer (benefit-based dependence) and others which build