

An Investigation of Vendor Buyer Dimensions in Automobile Industry

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Abstract:

A thorough understanding of the dimensions of vendor buyer relationships helps the channel members to perform efficiently and effectively. This research article aims to investigate the relationship between various dimensions of vendor-buyer relationships in Indian automobile industry which influences the degree of relationship between partners. Literature revealed that effective relationships between channel members are founded on the basis of various elements like trust, collaboration, commitment and relationship development. The study examines the relationship between vendor and buyer firms in automobile sector in relation to these elements and their overall impact on vendor buyer relationships. The study is descriptive in nature and researcher has used inferential and descriptive statistics to minimize the biasness and errors and to maximize the reliability of the data set of 676 employees which further establishes the association among all elements. The data was analyzed with the help of AMOS (18.0 version). It was derived that trust, commitment and collaboration are found to be highly influencing elements among all and all the elements have significant and positive impact on vendor buyer relationships. The research work will contribute by establishing the conceptual model for vendor buyer relationships which is relevant in SMSEs and large automotive enterprises in India.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The study of relationship from vendor and buyer perspective emerged as a key element of supply chain management (Fischer, 1997). Collaborative relationships are widely studied and supported for smooth functioning and business activities and exchanges (Harland and Knight, 2001).

Earlier Scholars have underlined positive link between vendor buyer relationships and partnerships (Selldin and Olhager, 2007), supply chain cooperation and collaboration (Christopher and Towill, 2002) trust (Buttler, J. K. (1999)), commitment (Dyer & Chu (2000)) and relationship continuity (Routledge et.al., 2008). Nowadays vendor buyer exchanges cannot be understood without elaborating the nature and degree of relationship exists between partners (Leonidoua,

2018).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

a) Vendor buyer relationship

Vendor buyer relationships have been explained differently by distinguished scholars but Lambert and Cooper (2000) have developed that vendor buyer relationships rely on 'Arm's Length Principle'.

Thoben and Jagdev (2000) have explained that vendor buyer collaboration is of three types i.e. extended enterprise type, supply chain type and virtual enterprise type. Extended enterpriser collaborative firms are considered as most integrated form of relationships building than other types.

Spekman and Caraway (2006) stated that the nature of collaborative partnership is undergoing a

tremendous change and has become more responsive and durable with a selected few partners (Cardell, 2002).

More recently, scholars have started to focus on various determinants for achieving effective and efficient vendor buyer relationship in wider context (Cousins and Spekman, 2003 and Christopher and Jutner, 2000).

Palmatier et.al. (2007) have identified various vital elements of inter organizational relationship e.g. commitment and trust (Morgan and Hunt 1994), dependency (Hibbard.et.al, 2001) and relational norms (Macneil, 1980). Hibbard.et.al (2001) established significant correlation between trust and effective commitment with relationship development.

Ivens (2005) stressed trust commitment and satisfaction is considered as benchmarks for analyzing the quality of partner's exchangers and relationships. Duffy and Fearne (2004) reported positive effect of cooperation on performance measurement in partnership relationship. Barratt (2004) revealed that lack of trust and commitment suppresses the degree of collaborative relationships.

b) Trust

Literature has elaborated trust in very different ways and a single definition will not be enough to explain the concept which may lead to explain the trust in all dimensions. Trust can be an expectation where none of the party will exploit others vulnerability (Sako and Helper, 1998) and "the perceived credibility and benevolence of a target of trust" (Doney and Canon, 1997). Wilson (1995) has stated that trust is like fundamental pillars of the successful relationships which may act as an established model for others.

Literature further reveals that trust in long-term relationships is partners' own experience which leads to have repetitive collaborations and partnerships with their partners. Smith and Barclay (1997) have investigated significant and positive relationships between trust and various determinants of long-term orientation between vendor and buyer firms (Krishnan et al. 2006).

Fang and Kriz (2000) have derived a conclusion based on previous literature that trust has emerged as an indispensable factor among vendor and buyer firms which results in establishing long-term relationships and ends in enhancing strong level of commitment for each other.

c) Commitment

Commitment involves dedication, determination, trust and openness in interpersonal relationships. Commitment may be treated as a responsibility that a firm or a partner will have to fulfill for the associated partners (Ivens, 2004). Dwyer et.al. (1987) have concluded that trust is considered as the initial pillar and commitment as the highest stage of any relationship.

Literature investigates commitment as willingness of the exchanging partners for putting maximum effort to maintain and sustain the current relationship with their partners (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). The researchers have empirically derived that pledges, stability and sacrifices leads to building and maintaining commitment among partners (Anderson and Witz, 1992), positive relationships between factors responsible for nurturing commitment (Gudlach et.al. 1995), and significant link between relational norms, commitment and intention among firms (Slobodow et.al., 2008).

Literature has established significant link between trust, commitment and collaboration which further proactively strengthen the degree of relationship among partners (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) and shows positive link between commitment performance and relationship continuity (Jap and Ganesan, 2000).

Morgan and Hunt (1994) have also established a model which proves that trust and commitment are the key mediating constructs in developing and maintaining long-term duration of relationships (Narayandas and Rayan, 2004). De Ruyter et.al. (2001) has supported the findings that trust and commitment are significantly contributing for enhancing the degree of relationship and are positively linked with each other.

d) Relationship Development

Narayandas and Rangan (2004) investigated that trust and commitment as essence of relationship development and considered trust as interpersonal construct and commitment as inter organizational construct which implies that trust is developed between individuals and commitment is a broader concept and occurs between organisations.

Jhonson et.al. (2004) has also revealed that trust plays a mediating and stimulating role to establish cooperation between collaborating parties. Storey et.al. (2005) crashed that for long-term orientation of collaborative relationships, partners are required to convince each other for constant nurturing of their collaborative initiatives.

Spina and Zotteri (2000) have analysed the various developmental stages of partnerships among partners and found that supply chain performance metrics should be analyzed from time to time for enduring and stabilizing long-term collaborative partnerships (Narayandas and Rangan, 2004).

Jap and Anderson (2007) found that partners focus more on factors like dependency, trust, information exchange, commitment and investment in partner's assets during their initial stages of development than their maturity stage whereas Ring and Vande (1994) stressed on repetitiveness of those constructs throughout the cycle of a relationships from build up to maturity stage. Dwyer et.al. (1987) investigates that antecedents of relationship development differs at every stage of relationship and new constructs have been evolved to build the higher degree of inter-organizational relationships.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sample has been selected by listing of selected firms acting as vendors and buyer firms in automobile sector in the database of SIAM, ACMA and FADA organisations. With the help of previous literature and statistical results drawn from pilot survey, researcher has distributed 800 questionnaires.

Data screening techniques and statistical inferences have been used and finally 676 questionnaires were found to be fit for further analysis of current research work. Researcher has checked the reliability, accuracy, and precision of data through statistical techniques and discarded the incomplete, inconsistent or ambiguous responses (Malhotra & Dash, 2011).

Snowball and convenience sampling techniques were used on the population with minimum possible error. The survey was done in Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Chandigarh. The survey required the top and managerial level employees of vendor and buyer firms, most of the firms were involved in manufacturing of automobile components and sub components.

Principal component analysis technique was applied to extract six dimensions of VBR, followed by varimax (orthogonal) rotation (SPSS 18.0 version). The results of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test were found satisfactory (>0.7) (Malhotra & Dash, 2011).

Structural equation modeling (SEM) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were applied on the final data sample by using AMOS 18.0. The current study has achieved the reliability and validity for six dimensions.

The demographics of the study are : data constitutes buyer firms (52.5%) in majority and having mature relationships with their vendor firms. In automobile sector more than 87 per cent of both the firms collectively have more than 10 years of relationship with their respective partners, 50 per cent of the firms are enjoying turnover of more than `400 crore and are in the category of large firms and small-scale industries are meager in number.

The sample size includes 17 percent of small scale industries, 24 percent medium scale firms and 60 percent large scale automobile firms on the basis of

number of employees. During the final survey, 16 percent top management authorities (CEO, DGM and Managing Director etc), 72 percent employees holding managerial positions and 12 percent middle management employees have been interviewed or have filled the questionnaire. The results have been drawn on the perceptions and opinions of these employees.

Data further reveal that 70% of the firms are enjoying collaborative partnerships with their partners for more than 20 years and majority of the firms are one component manufacturing. The current research work focus on establishing relationship between trust, commitment, collaboration, partnerships and relationship continuity and development and to examine the impact of six constructs on overall vendor buyer relationships.

3.1 Hypothesis

H1: Trust, commitment, partnership, collaboration and relationship continuity and development are significantly influencing vendor buyer relationship.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The results of 676 questionnaires are further analyzed and second order confirmatory factor analysis has been applied to confirm and establish

the hypothesized model of vendor buyer relationships. Table 1 reports that current study has achieved all the conditions of discriminate validity (i.e. $AVE > MSV$ and $AVE > MSV$) (Hair, Wolfinbarger, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2015) and convergent and content validity, that is, $CR > 0.7$, $AVE > 0.5$, $CR > AVE$ (Hair et al., 2015). Table 1 further depicts that with the help of Cronbach's alpha, the reliability test was run and the results were found significant i.e. cronbach alpha greater than 0.7 for every established construct which indicates that the data set has sound internal consistency within items.

It can be seen from table 1 that operationalized hypothesis was validated with the help of higher order vendor buyer structural equation model. The goodness of fit indices results are reported in table 3 which highlights that hypothesized relationships between all the constructs along with their standardized parameters are confirmed. The value of all the goodness fit indices and CMIN/DF (2.917) (table 3) have achieved their already established benchmarks (values greater than 0.9 or near to 0.9) and found significant for the model. Table 3 has highlighted that vendor buyer relationship model which is found to be good model and is confirmed through higher order confirmatory factor analysis which further validates the six constructs consisting 48 variables of vendor buyer relationship.

Table 1 Reliability and Validity Statistics of Proposed and Final Model for Vendor Buyer Relationship

	Proposed Model				Final Model			
	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Relationship Continuity	0.925	0.607	0.414	0.313	0.923	0.600	0.436	0.323
Trust	0.947	0.693	0.549	0.316	0.946	0.685	0.594	0.329
Commitment	0.921	0.540	0.539	0.344	0.875	0.584	0.574	0.326
Collaboration	0.930	0.572	0.534	0.319	0.910	0.629	0.397	0.297
Relationship Development	0.937	0.624	0.386	0.239	0.926	0.641	0.353	0.206
Partnership	0.831	0.629	0.252	0.159	0.722	0.566	0.397	0.231

Source: - Primary data (AMOS 18.0 version)

For achieving goodness of fit indices and good model, modification indices and improvements have been analyzed and are shown in figure 1. Overall three modification indices have been run and covariances have been established between

respective items and shown in figure1. Figure 1 depicts the value of standardized regression weights for all the constructs is significant and more than 0.6. Hence this condition proves that all the variables are positively loaded on their relevant constructs.

Table 2 Inter item construct correlation matrix

	Relationship Continuity (RC)	Trust (T)	Commitment (C)	Collaboration (COL)	Relationship Development (RD)	Partnership (P)
RC	0.775					
T	0.384	0.828				
C	0.557	0.771	0.764			
COL	0.349	0.630	0.628	0.793		
RD	0.542	0.594	0.529	0.543	0.800	
P	0.284	0.548	0.599	0.630	0.310	0.752

Source: - Primary data (AMOS 18.0 version)

Table 3 Final Model fit for Long Term Vendor Buyer Relationship

Fit indices		Absolute fit indices					Incremental fit indices				
DF	P	CMIN /DF	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	AGFI	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
981	0.000	2.917	0.051	0.039	0.880	0.861	0.910	0.900	0.938	0.932	0.938

Source: Primary Data (Amos 18.0 Output)

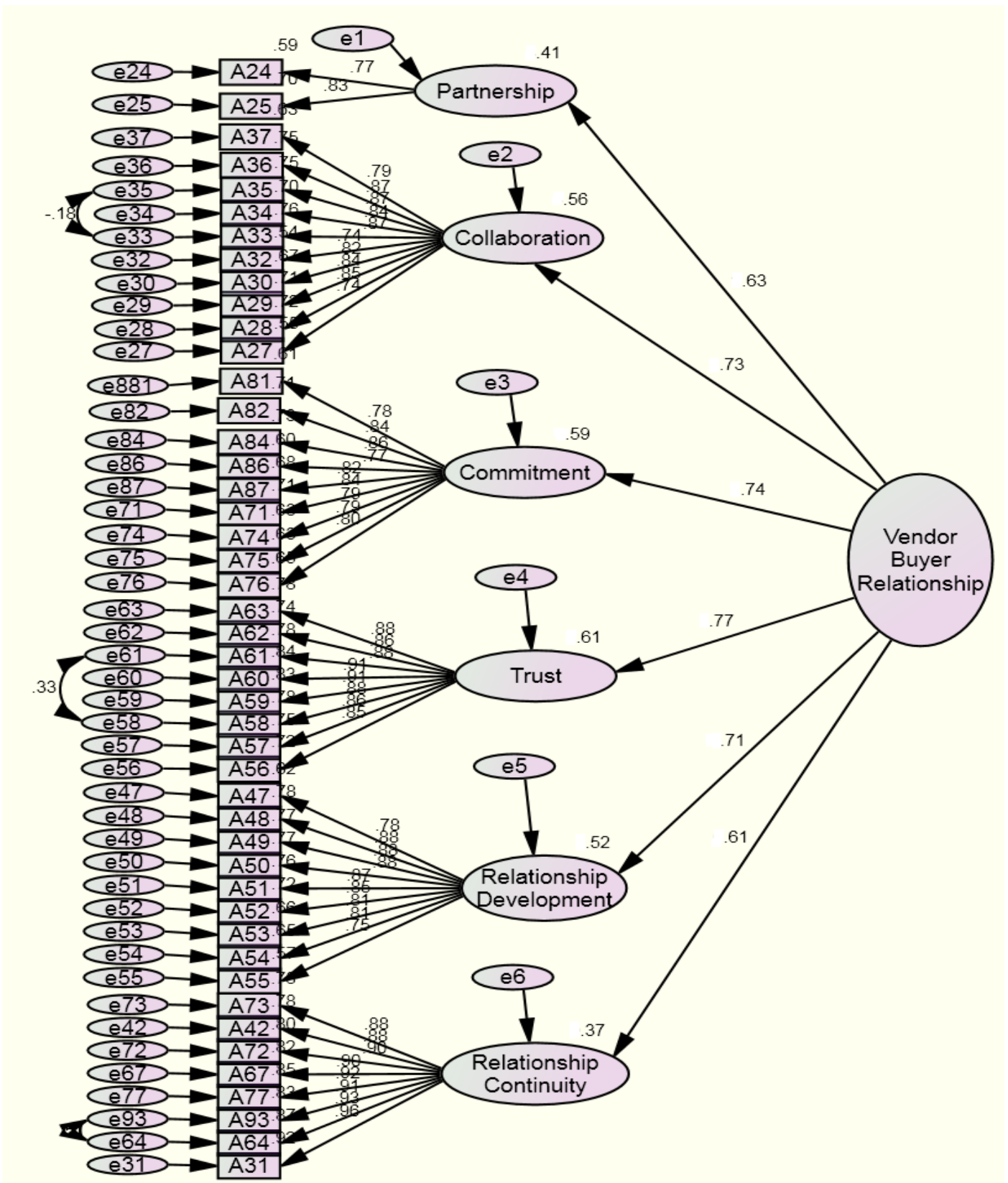


Figure 1 Second order measurement model of VBR

Source: Primary data (AMOS 18.0 version)

Figure 1 depicts that trust (0.77), commitment (0.74) for developing and maintaining relationships and collaboration (0.73) have maximum contribution between vendor and buyer firms followed by

relationship development, partnerships and relationship continuity. Figure 1 highlights the fact that all the constructs are highly correlated and positively linked with each other. Trust and commitment builds the pillars and higher stages of relationships between collaborative partners and collaboration helps the partners to convert their ongoing/short-term business contracts or exchanges into long term relationships. Relationship continuity has the least contribution which implies that in the lack or absence of other constructs, no relationship can exist for longer duration.

Partnership play a significant role in transforming short term contracts into long term orientation programs which includes repetitive behaviour and transactions of both the partners for exchanging goods and services among themselves. In nutshell it can be said that all the six constructs have significant and positive influence on overall vendor buyer relationship model. Trust and commitment has the highest influence whereas partnerships and relationship continuity constructs has the least impact on vendor buyer relationships.

V. FINDINGS

The findings point out that association between vendor and buyer firms become durable with collective collaborative efforts, willing to show higher commitment for each other and nurturing trust. The trust level is enabled by commitment, fair treatment and through effective collaborative planning and functions for capitalizing the common objectives. It is revealed that building partnerships leads to the development of trust and hence ends in commitment for preserving and upholding the vendor buyer relationships. It is found that sharing the responsibilities, jointly forecasting the sales and demand and finding it difficult to replace their respective partner's leads to strengthen the degree of their relationships. Further the study reveals that showing willing to invest in partner's assets nurtures commitment and long term relationship among vendor buyer firms.

These findings of the current study support the already established findings in the related fields. The results show that all the correlated constructs

are significantly representing the final VBR model. The objective of the study was to examine the influence of trust building, collaboration, commitment, relationship development and partnerships on VBR and to investigate the most influential construct among all. This research has also recognised that the relationship development and continuity depends upon the degree of trust and commitment which further stimulates the collaborative partnerships.

VI. DISCUSSIONS

Shan, Walker, & Kogut (1994) investigate that existence of trust and commitment leads to the development of sustained relationships among partners. Collaboration and trust can result in building commitment among partners. The results further reveal that collaboration, trust and commitment directly influences the duration and continuity of the relationships which also supporting the existing theoretical investigations (Anderson and Witz, 1992). Janowicz and Noorderhaven (2009) reported that trust and collaboration leads to expedite information sharing which acts as a stimulating factor for intensifying commitment and continuity among channel partners. VBR has greater bearing of realistic functioning of trust building activities than the duration of relationship which implies the repetitive behavior of partners in same manner. This specifies that personal connections are more concerned with the activities and functions which shared and perceived by the partners than the professional contractual partnership duration. This implies that how trust and collaboration can be developed and not exchanged liked products, and have their significant impact on enlargement of relationships (Shin, Ishman, and Sanders (2007)).

VII. CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Contribution

Literature investigates that how collaboration, commitment and trust influence the dimensions of partnerships and relationships and how all the constructs are significantly contributing to improving and expanding the relationships. In addition to the findings of Shin et al. (2007), the

results recommend that in relationships, the degree of relationships can be stimulated mainly through developing collaborating behaviour, trust and commitment. This indicates that the organisations have to manage developments and coordination which leads to nurture relationship continuity at intra and inter level (Janowicz-Panjaitan & Noorderhaven, 2009). The researcher have been able to identify the most significant and influential construct among supply chain partners among all the six dimensions of partners' relationship framework (Cai, Jun, & Yang, 2010).

Practical Implication

The findings of current study recommend two noteworthy implications for organisations. First, inter-personal and inter-organizational connections between Indian automobile organisations are the key drivers of for emerging and sustaining trust, commitment and establishing collaboration between partners. It is not the contractual written document which strengthens the duration of the relationship for a period of time but its trust and commitment building activities which increase the quality of relationships. Secondly, firms must focus on routine business dealings and sharing routine activities with their partners and should take corrective measure of everything on time. Therefore for running successful relationships, firms should emphasize on the degree of trust, commitment and collaboration among partners which further enhance the degree partnerships.

Future Directions

The empirical results of current study indicate that trust, commitment and collaboration are considered as indispensable factors for the long term orientation of the relationships and have considerable impact on relationships. More constructs like information sharing and financial aspects can be considered or introduced to the model for examining the degree of VBRs to a broader extent. Also, the study of moderating and mediating role of one construct on another construct can provide thoughtful understanding of relationships.

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