Antecedents and Consequence of Key Account Management Success: a Review, Framework and Research Agenda

Kawsar Ahmmed • Nor Azila Mohd. Noor

Received: 17 April 2013 / Accepted: 12 June 2013

Abstract This paper traces the issue of key account management success which has regarded as a pressing concern of many companies' sales efforts at the organizational business-to-business context. Based on the extensive review of extant literatures, we introduced a theoretical framework that covers the antecedents and consequence of key account management success. We theorized the conditions under which organizational and relational factors influence the success of key account management approach. We endeavor to develop research propositions for each construct and provide necessary suggestions to isolate a platform for future empirical research. Beyond this span, an improved understanding from this framework will help developing policies for successful key account management approach.

Key words Key account management success • Business-to-business relationship • Social exchange theory • Joint working

Assistant Professor of Marketing
Department of Business Administration
Leading University
Sylhet-3100, Bangladesh
Cell Phone: +8801915078285
Email: kahmed.ba@gmail.com

Director of DBA Program
Room no. 09 Ground Floor
Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business
University Utara Malaysia
06010, Sintok, Kedah-Darul Aman
Malaysia
Cell Phone: +60134317615
Email: azila@uum.edu.my

1. Introductions

Selling to customer and making them satisfied through fulfilling their requirements are critical for marketing success because customer needs and expectations continually change over time. The situation is more critical when selling efforts are targeted at the organization's most important customers with their salient features and impact on the supplier business. Accordingly, key account management has become a strategic tool for keeping and maintaining companies' best customers in terms of sales volume, strategic importance, new market entering capabilities, research and development capabilities, innovations etc.

Key account management is a supplier company initiated approach targeted at the most important customers to solve their complex requirements with special treatment that eventually ensures both parties' financial and nonfinancial objectives (Ahmmed and Noor, 2012). In the traditional marketing emphasis is given on exchange and transactional relationship, whereas key account management gives emphasis on wisely selecting the organization's important customers and meeting their requirements with satisfaction (Sharma, 2003). Literatures show that several studies examined the key account management performance and effectiveness. Workman *et al.* (2003) study the intraorganizational drivers that determine the key account management effectiveness. Similarly, Shi *et al.* (2010) examined the drivers and outcomes of global account management strategy. Sharma (2006) studies the success factors in key account. In addition, several studies suggest that key account management success lead to market performance.

Although various studies give emphasis on the key account management (KAM) success, however, deficiency in the academic literatures are available toward developing a comprehensive framework to elevate understanding key account management success and its resulting impact on outcome performance. At the organizational level various organizational factors like decision making ways, managerial issues, account manger's behavior, managerial competences, key account manager role to create values all affect sales team's ability to the recognize key customers needs and requirements properly and serve them successfully (George and Eggert, 2003; Guenzi *et al.*, 2009; Harvey *et al.*, 2003; Jacobides, 2007; Mahlamäki and Uusitalo, 2009; Weeks and Stevens, 1997). On the other hand, as an extension of relationship marketing (McDonald, 2000), various relational factors like bonds, relationship duration, commitment, idiosyncratic investment have greater influence on the key account management success (Claro *et al.*, Hagelaar and Omta, 2003; Ganesan, 1994; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Sin *et al.,* 2002). But, theoretical study that reveals the organizational and relational drivers of key account management success in business-to-business context to deepen knowledge is scant. Additionally, although key account management success generates various dyadic outcomes, existing literatures have no clear direction in this regard. As long as joint working is involved, no research has considered it as the consequence of key account management success. Despite joint working arrangements help cement the buyer's loyalty to the supplier (Homburg *et al.*, 2003).

In response to these critical aspects, this study endeavors to accumulate knowledge from the existing literatures on key account management success, provide a theoretical framework that encompasses organizational and relational factors affecting the key account management success and resulting impact of key account management success on joint working and eventually, outline a theoretical foundation for scholars to devote thinking for future empirical studies.

Toward the end, the paper is organized as follows. In the following sections literatures review on relationship marketing and key account management is provided, followed by key account management success. The theoretical framework of the key account management success is then introduced and research propositions for the study are then given. Finally, contributions and future research directions are provided under the umbrella of discussion.

2. Literature Review

The focus of this paper is to provide a comprehensive framework that incorporates its organizational and relational drivers and joint working as its outcomes. In general success means attainment of target for which a course of actions is performed. In marketing performance is determined by the sales volume, profit margin and return on investment made by the marketer (Ofek and Sarvary, 2003). Choice among brands by the customers (Meyvis and Janiszewski, 2004), attitude towards brand and repeat sales and in case of nonprofit marketing, donations and promotions in non-profits are also used to measure the performance. for the key account management success it is the firm-wide initiative where firms systematically and proactively deliver strategic solutions to multiple contacts at targeted accounts with a purpose of capturing a dominant share over time (Sherman *et al.*, 2003).

In the following few sections a brief literature reviews on key account management studies are given. As key account management is one type of relationship marketing with the selected customers, we provide an elaboration on the nexus between relationship marketing and key account management at the outset.

2.1 Relationship Marketing and Key Account Management: A Nexus

From the industrial marketing model it is evident that customer focus is the primary goal of all relationship marketing. Relationship marketing is the concentration of marketing activities and resources on building and maintaining enduring close relationships with buyers and other stakeholders where both linear and constellation relationships exist (Godson, 2010). Here companies assess and select those customers with their present and future profitability and this profitability is measured in an integrated manner through calculating costs of products and services delivered, costs required to attract, sell, serve and retain customer (Krznaric and Popovski, 2001).

According to the Pareto principle, it is immutable business fact that 80% of revenue comes from 20% of marketer's customers (Bunkley, 2008). This notion creates the basis for key account management approach where this strategy acts as the best way of ensuring repeat purchase, additional purchases and referral to other customers like them. McDonald (2000) termed the key account management approach as the natural extension and newer discipline of relationship marketing that focuses on fulfilling customer requirements in the business-to-business contexts. Yip and Madsen (1996) termed it as the new frontier in the field of relationship marketing. Sharma (2006) views key accounts management as the linkage between buyer-seller in a lengthy relational context and weights the formation, cultivate and upholding of stronger bonds with buyers.

The area of coverage in relationship marketing is vast which incorporates all kinds of commercial associations, not just customers (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) whereas key account management confines itself on relationships with the customers of supplying companies (McDonald, 2000).

Accordingly, key account management requires coordination of resources and tools by seller to meet the key customer's future as well as its immediate needs. Thus, the above discussions warrant that key account management evolves from the relationship marketing where perennial interactions taken place between buyer and supplier. On the other hand relationship marketing maintains relationships with multiple stakeholders that have direct or indirect influence on and interest in the marketers activities.

2.2 *Researched on Key Account Management*

Pegram (1972 in Zupancic, 2008) first introduces the term national account in the conference board meeting and explored its importance through relating the part-time or full time jobs with it. The field of KAM is more than 30 years old and the level of professionalization both in research and practice have grown over time (Zupancic, 2008). From Pegram 1972, studies on key account management can roughly be divided into four categories including literatures on 1970th, 1980th, 1990th and 2000th and onward literatures.

The period of 1970th for KAM approach was the incipient stage where it is not considered as a separate discipline in the customer management arena. Key account management literatures of 1970th show the domain's immaturity and deal with the basic things such as it meaning, benefits and importance for the organization (Shapiro and Posner, 1976; Stevenson, 1980; Stevenson and Page, 1979).

The key account management literatures of 1980th provide a professional flavor of the field and deal with the diversities of the term and touch its characteristics, customer aspects, competitive arena and so on. In his study Zupancic (2008) mentions that articles of this period directed the field of key account management towards professionalization. Within the realm of key account literatures researchers have examined characteristics (Shapiro and Wyman, 1981), advantages or values (Reichard, 1985; Stevenson, 1981), compensation package for the national account sales managers (Tubridy, 1986) and process of product management Turner (1990) for key account management.

From the literatures of 1990th on key account management we see the impetus of key account management and its international wandering. The literatures come up with name variety like global account management, strategic account management, national account management, international, key account management, key clients management, major account management, key customers management, and key account management (Coletti and Tubrity, 1987; Dishman and Nitse, 1998; Ojasalo, 2000; Pardo, 1997; Pels, 1992; Shapiro and Moriarty, 1980; Sharma, 1997). From these studies we see the various issues dealt with are formation and compensation of key account marketing team and manager (Castleberry, 1993; Cespedes, 1992; Jaqueline (1992), firm's key accountization process Pardo *et al.* (1995), competitive advantage (Napolitano (1997), psychological, physical, and economic costs act as switching barriers (Sengupta *et al.*, 1997), and challenges of global customer management (Montgomery and Yip, 2000).

The literatures of the period of 2000th and onward bring the field of key account management to the specialization. According to Zupancic (2008), in this decade researches on KAM have become more specific following the period of developing broad aspects of key account management and global account management approaches. In this period basic aspects of KAM for its success, drivers and outcomes of GAM strategies (Homburg *et al.*, 2002; Ojasalo, 2001; Shi *et al.*, 2010; Workman *et al.*, 2003), role of team selling relationships, global account manager, managerial competences and top management role (Francis, 2004; Harvey *et al.*, 2003; Jones *et al.*, 2005; Wilson and Millman, 2003) are studied widely. More specialized studies are even done on who, why and when to implement the key account management strategy by Wengler *et al.* (2006), fitting the western strategy in the developing country's organization by Al-Husan and Brennan (2009), relationship quality by Alejandro *et al.* (2011), account's requirements and pattern of financial returns by Bradford *et al.* (2012) and structure and differentiated services for key buyer/supplier relationships differentiation by Ryals and Davies (2013).

The focus of this paper is what factors lead to key account management success and what its result is. Research on this field is very rare. For example, Sharma (2006) and Zupancic (2008) explore that what factors lead to successful or unsuccessful key account management and what are the impact of successful key account management strategy is still lacking. In mentioning the scarcity of research in KAM, Millman (1996) explores that in the academic field the area of key account management is under researched and its efficacy is only partially understood. Therefore, the specific organizational and relational factors leading to key account management success and its resulting impact on joint working arrangement are not delineated yet.

3. Theoretical Framework and Propositions

Based on the extensive literature review on key account management and the problems stated above, an integrated framework is developed to capture the impact of key account management success on the organizational joint working and various antecedent factors that affect the key account management success.

The basic idea of the proposed framework is that various organizational and relational factors act as driver of successful key account management approach and at the same time KAM success is proposed to have a significant positive impact on the organizational joint working arrangement as shown in the following figure.

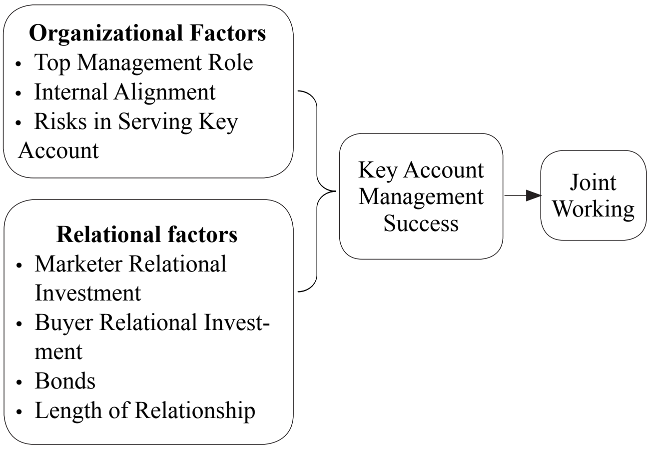

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of Antecedents and Consequence of Key account Management Success

The framework is based on the social exchange theory that grew out of the intersection of economics, psychology and sociology (Lee *et al.*, 2010) and was developed to understand the social behavior of humans in economic undertakings (Homans, 1958). The model views the exchange relationship between key account customers and garments companies as "actions contingent on rewarding reactions from others" (Blau, 1964).

The work of Mills and Clark (1982) mentions that exchange relationships demand repayment within a particular time period, involve exchanges of economic or quasi-economic goods and are motivated by personal self-interest. For example, in the context of key account management relationships, a company makes a contribution to its key account, via its key account management strategy. These contributions may be relational assets, better performance through internal coordination, top management supports and involvement and so on. In turn, an expectation forms for the return of a contribution at a later time which may include profits, enhanced relationship, joint working arrangement or development of trust. The key account receiving a valued contribution develops a sense of obligation and reciprocates with appropriate attitudinal and behavioral responses in the form of personal or social bonds, investment in relational assets, or maintaining relationship for long.

3.1 *Consequence of Key Account Management Success*

In our study we introduce joint action as the consequences of successful KAM approach. Here joint action is defined as the parties in a relationship engage in combined decision-making and problem solving in the business-to-business setting (Homburg *et al.*, 2003). Key account management is typically posited to revenue growth, improved profitability, reduced risk, trust and interdependence, market performance, and introduction of new products and services due to increased trust (Ellram, 1991; Harvey *et al.*, 2003; McDonald, 2000; Senn, 2006; Workman *et al.*, 2003). It is natural that when both parties see that with the key account management success they are able to meet their collective interests, this increases their trust level on each other and take part in various coordinated activities like joint investments, joint working for innovation etc. Mohr and Spekman (1994) find that higher levels of joint working arrangements tend to yield higher sales and ensure financial outcomes. Dwyer *et al.* (1987) suggest that "joint efforts", especially related to performance and planning matters are a key component of relational exchange and may even be essential to partnering success. As the extent and scope of joint activities increase, the firms effectively become partners in an alliance (Heide and John, 1990). Therefore it can be proposed that:

P1: Key account management success is positively related to joint working arrangement.

3.2 *Antecedents of Key Account Management Success*

Organizational factors

Organizational factors include three antecedent variables of key account management success. They are top management role, internal alignment and risks in serving key account.

Top management role in the key account program is defined as the extent to which senior management participate in the key account management (Homburg *et al.*, 2002). Jaworski and Kohli (1993) state that top management reinforcement encourages the individual in the organization to track changing markets, share market intelligence with others in the organization, and be responsive to market needs and thus positively impact on the key account management approach. Francis (2004) argues that senior management have a lead role to play in successful account management, not just in conducting sales account reviews, but also in playing an active part within the key account team. Napolitano (1997) mentions that in the key account management program both top management sponsorship and involvement are critical for its performance. Thus, it indicates that account team will deal the key account customers requirements in a most professional manner when they get the support and active involvement of top management with the KAM approach. Therefore, we hypothesized that:

P2a: Top management support in key account management program is positively related to key account management success.

P2b: Top management involvement in key account management program is positively related to key account management success.

Internal alignment is the degree of formal and informal direct contact among employees across departments and ensures more exchange of market intelligence and responses to it in a concerted fashion (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). It focuses on the similarities and differences among jobs within an organization and relative contribution of jobs to organizational objectives and tries to make a strategic fit among various layers (Kathuria *et al.*, 2007). Internal alignment influences the organizational to be more customers focused and of being sensitive and responsive to key customer needs and requirements. Ojasalo (2001) states that alignment among the operational and strategic capabilities is essential which is positively linked with performance and thus meet the interest of the key account and help to sustain relationship. Thus, people feelings of obligation to common goals and to each other in the key account management team (Workman *et al.*, 2003) and multiple relationships and an appropriate fit with the firm's strategy and the market environment (Jones *et al.*, 2005) contribute to the issue of internal alignment in KAM and influence the success of KAM approach (Guesalaga and Johnston, 2010). Thus, we proposed that:

P3: Internal alignment is positively related to key account management success.

Risks in serving key account can be defined as the risk of achieving and/or not achieving forecast business or revenues from the key accounts and risk of unexpected events in ongoing business that would result in unforeseen costs being incurred by the supplier (Woodburn *et al.,* 2004). Serving the key account successfully is critical as well as risky task for the organization because it demands the performance of additional activities (Workman *et al.*, 2003) and the lack of which make the program a fruitless one. Cardozo *et al.* (1987) discuss opportunity loss risk relating to key account management, meaning that by concentrating scarce resources on a few key customers other customers may receive less attention which may susceptible to competitive action and customer prospecting may be neglected. With the passes of time key account management is becoming more complex and McDonald (2000) states that market information sharing, greater flexibility in response and leveraging market influence are necessary for collaborative relationship that can reduce the external risks. Thus, this study proposed that:

P4: Risks in serving key account is negatively related to the key account management success.

Relational factors

Relational factors for this study include four variables namely marketer relational investment, buyer relational investment, bonds and length of relationship.

Marketer Relational Investment can be defined as the assets that marketer invest and utilize to create a competitive advantage (Sharma, 2006) which are idiosyncratic in nature. Lund (1985) termed it as the costs the marketer electively incurs to build and maintain the relationship in anticipation of future exchanges. These assets are used to build the relationship and complete the transaction with success and which in turn creates superior value for the key accounts necessary for the success of key account management approach (Henneberg *et al.*, 2009; Sharma, 2006). Marketers who invest in relational assets to make the key account management approach success expect to develop the long-term relationship with key accounts, develop buyer dependence, aligns their interests and encourages mutual adjustment (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Anderson and Weitz, 1989, 1992; Heide and John, 1988; Weiss and Kurland, 1997). From the empirical studies it is evident that marketer's investment in relational assets plays a vital role in making the key account management approach success. Eventually, this study proposed the following:

P5: Marketer relational investment is positively related to key account management success.

Buyer Relational Investment can be defined as the investment made by buyer which helps to cement the long-term relationship and thus impact positively on the key account program (Pillai and Sharma, 2003). Buyer's investment in relational assets can be transaction specific, that is, idiosyncratic to the exchange or non-redeployable in other exchange and non-transaction specific (Weiss and Kurland 1997). Buyer's invests in relational assets develops credible commitment (Blau, 1964; Cook and Emerson, 1978) as it supports continuing exchange with supplier. The study of Williamson (1983) states that buyer supports the creation of the mutual reliance relations by investing in specialized assets that has value and this investment acts as incentives for seller to become satisfied. When the level of investment in transaction specific assts increases by the buyers, then the tendency of switching to other supplier's decreases as it leads to increased costs of replacing an exchange partner (Barney and Ouchi, 1986) and thus make the key account management approach success. Therefore it is proposed that:

P6: Buyer relational investment is positively related to key account management success.

In business relationship, *bonds* results in two parties' action in a unified manner toward a desired goal (Callaghan *et al.*, 1995). In marketing, social and personal bonds bring buyers and sellers together in a common cause or emotion and sustain the key account relationship. Perry *et al.* (2002) define social bonds as 'investments of time and energy that produce positive interpersonal relationships between the partners'. It is a relational tool that includes familiarity, friendship and personal confidence and this bond built through the exchange process (Rodriguez and Wilson, 2002). The present study uses bonds that cover both social and personal bonds between the employees of buying and selling company. In the key account relationship greater commitment is required to make the key account management approach success and strong personal bonds lead to a greater commitment to maintain the relationship between buyer and seller (Wilson and Mummalaneni, 1986; Yim *et al.*, 2008). Sharma (2006) explains that a large number of key account relationships are sustained through strong social and personal bond between buyer and seller personnel. Therefore, it is proposed that:

P7: Bonds is positively related to key account management success.

Length of Relationship means the duration that the relationship between the exchange partners has existed (Palmatier *et al.* 2006) and how the parties regard each other as they pass through various phases (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987). Length of relationship between buyer and seller in the key account relationship let them to know each other and facilitates both parties to interact frequently on various issues like knowledge exchange, making adjustment as necessary for mutual benefits and so on. Wotruba and Castleberry (1993) explore that the length of time the NAM (national account management) program has been in existence appears to impact performance with older programs showing the best performance. Dwyer *et al.* (1987) suggested that each relationship phase represents a major transition of how parties regard one another, and in the different phases, different variables are important in explaining the success of relationships. Therefore, direct experiences from interactions with the supplier should be more powerful predictors of relationship outcomes in lengthy relationships (Jap 1999). This indicates that the length of relationship between seller and key account customer impacts on the KAM success. Therefore, we proposed that:

P7: Length of relationship is positively related to key account management success.

4. Discussion

Drawing on the extant literatures, this theoretical framework describes how organizational and relational factors impact on key account management success and its resulting impact on joint working. This study addresses the quarry of what are the underlying factors that influence key account management success. Regarding this issue, we see that three organizational factors namely top management role, internal alignment and risks in serving the key account influence the company's key account management success. These factors provide key account manager with actionable guidance on how to develop and maintain successful relationship with key account customers. Secondly, relational antecedents namely marketer relational investment, buyer relational investment, bonds and length of relationship develop the relationship sustaining mechanism between buyer and seller that result in higher degree of key account management success. Because, relational factors act as successful predictors of relationship performance in the buyer-seller relationship (Wilson, 1995).

4.1 *Contribution*

From this theoretical framework provided, several implications can be forwarded. The theoretical framework that is provided created a plate form for future empirical study. Secondly, the categorization of antecedent variables and discussion on their individual influence on key account management success indeed uplift our knowledge about which variables influence key account management success in which ways. Thirdly, we introduce joint working as the outcome of key account management success. As a dyadic outcome, inclusion of joint working provides us a new horizon of thinking for KAM success. Fourthly, this study also sheds light to the application of social exchange theory (SET) in the context of key account management approach. As in SET non-governance mechanism is taken as relationship governing means, we have taken 'relationship' as governing norm in key account management relationship (Anderson and Narus, 1984, 1990; Dwyer *et al.*, 1987).

Apart from the above theoretical contribution, this study provides us several managerial implications. Firstly, in applying the key account management approach at the organizational level, management should have the knowledge about which factors influence this approach. From the clear discussion provided here, they can get a clear understanding about the impact of these factors. Although these factors are not all inclusive, management should be vigilant in applying and depending on these variables. Because the context in which they are working is different from case to case. Secondly, development of joint commitment should be fostered so that reciprocal consensus can be ensured to avoid the opportunistic behavior and thus dyadic outcome taken place.

4.2 *Future Research Direction*

Based on the theoretical framework, several future directions can be forwarded. Firstly, although we arrange three categories of variables influence on key account management performance, we don't know which variables exert more influence than other. Thus future empirical research can find out this phenomenon and provide the evidence for more or less influencing variable which are critical for management for decision making in this regard. Secondly, a particular phenomenon is influenced by many forces and factors. In our study we were unable to incorporate all probable variables that influence the level of key account management success. So, future research should include more antecedent variables to test their impact on the key account management success. Thirdly, in addition testing the model with the presence of control variable can be a new research direction. Fourthly, as we did not consider the mediating effect, future empirical research can test whether or not key account management success mediate between its antecedent variables and joint working outcome.

With the present research we were pushed by providing a theoretical framework and some propositions on key account management success. We hope that this research framework and it propositions open several avenues for future empirical study to enrich this emerging body of knowledge and to sufficiently enhance managerial capability.

References

Ahmmed, K., and Noor, N. A. M. (2012), "Key account management: towards a multidimensional definition", *East Asian Journal of Business Management,* Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 5-13.

Alejandro, T. B., Souza, D. V., Boles, J. S., Ribeiro, Á. H. P., Monteiro, P. R. R. (2011), "The outcome of company and account manager relationship quality on loyalty, relationship value and performance", *Industrial Marketing Management,* Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 36–43. doi:10.1016/j.indmarman.2010.09.008

Al-Husan, F. B., and Brennan, R. (2009), "Strategic account management in an emerging economy", *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing,* Vol. 24 No. 8, pp. 611-620.

Anderson, J. C., and Narus, J. A. (1984), "A model of the distributor's perspective of distributor-manufacturer working relationships", *The Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 48 No. 4, pp. 62-74.

Anderson, J. C., and Narus, J. A. (1990), "A model of distributor firm and manufacturer firm working partnerships", *The Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 54 No. 1, pp. 42-58.

Anderson, E., and Weitz, B. (1989), "Determinants of continuity in conventional industrial channel dyads", *Marketing Science,* Vol. 8 No. 4, pp. 310-323.

Anderson, E., and Weitz, B. (1992), "The use of pledges to build and sustain commitment in distribution channels", *Journal of marketing research,* Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 18-34.

Blau, P. M. (1964), *Exchange and power in social life*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey.

Barney, J. B. and Ouchi, W.G. (1986), *Organizational Economics*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Bradford, K. D., Challagalla, G. N., Hunter, G. K., and Moncrief III, W. C. (2012), "Strategic account management: conceptualizing, integrating and extending the domain from fluid to dedicated accounts", *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 41–56. doi: 10.2753/PSS0885-3134320105

Bunkley, N. (2008, March 3). Joseph Juran, 103, Pioneer in Quality Control, Dies. *New York Times.*

Cardozo, R. N., Shipp, S. H., and Roering, K. J. (1987), "Implementing new business-to-business selling methods", *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 17-26.

Coletti, J.A. and Tubrity, G.S. (1987), "Effective major account sales management", *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 1-10.

Cook, K. S., and Emerson, R. M. (1978), "Power, equity and commitment in exchange networks", *American Sociological Review,* Vol. 43 No. 5, pp. 721-739.

Callagham, M., Mcphail, J. and Yau, O. H. M. (1995), "Dimensions of a relationship marketing orientation", *Proceedings of the Seventh Biannual World Marketing Congress*. Melbourn, July.

Cespedes, F. V. (1992), "Sales coordination: an exploratory study", *The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 13-29.

Claro, D. P., Hagelaar, G., and Omta, O. (2003), "The determinants of relational governance and performance: How to manage business relationships?", *Industrial Marketing Management* Vol. 32, 703– 716. doi: 10.1016/j.indmarman.2003.06.010

Dishman, P., and Nitse, P. S. (1998), "National accounts revisited: new lessons from recent investigations", *Industrial Marketing Management,* Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 1-9.

Dwyer, F. R., Schurr, P. H., and Oh, S. (1987), "Developing buyer-seller relationships", *The Journal of Marketing,* Vol.51 No. 2, pp. 11-27.

Ellram, L.M. (1991), "Supply chain management: the industrial organization perspective", *The International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management,* Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 13-22.

Francis, K. (2004), "Should senior managers be actively involved in sales account management", *Management Services,* Vol. 48 No. 11, pp. 20-21.

Ganesan, S. (1994), "Determinants of long-term orientation in buyer-seller relationships", *The Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 58 No. 2, pp. 1-19.

Georges, L., and Eggert, A. (2003), "Key account managers' role within the value creation process of collaborative relationships", *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing,* Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 1-22.

Godson, M. (2010), *Relationship Marketing*, Oxford University Press Inc, New York.

Guenzi, P., Georges, L., and Pardo, C. (2009), "The impact of strategic account managers' behaviors on relational outcomes: An empirical study", *Industrial Marketing Management,* Vol. 38 No. 3, pp. 300-311.

Guesalaga, R., and Johnston, W. (2010), "What's next in key account management research? Building the bridge between the academic literature and the practitioners' priorities", *Industrial Marketing Management* Vol. 39, pp. 1063–1068. doi: 10.1016/j.indmarman.2009.12.008

Harvey, M., Myers, M. B., and Novicevic, M. M. (2003), "The managerial issues associated with global account management: A relational contract perspective", *Journal of Management Development,* Vol.22 No. 2, pp. 103-129.

Heide, J. B., and John, G. (1988), "The role of dependence balancing in safeguarding transaction-specific assets in conventional channels", *The Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 52 No. 1, pp. 20-35.

Heide, J.B. and John, G. (1990), "Alliances in industrial purchasing: the determinants of joint action in buyer-supplier relationships", *Journal of Marketing Research,* Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 24-36.

Henneberg, S. C., Pardo, C., Mouzas, S., and Naude, P. (2009), "Value dimensions and relationship postures in dyadic'Key Relationship Programmes", *Journal of Marketing Management,* Vol. 25 No. 5-6, pp. 535-550.

Homans, G.C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 63 No. 6, pp. 31-41.

Homburg, C., Giering, A., and Menon, A. (2003), "Relationship characteristics as moderators of the satisfaction-loyalty link: findings in a business-to-business context", *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing,* Vol.10 No. 3, pp. 35-62. doi: 10.1300/J033v10n03_02

Homburg, C., Workman, J. P., and Jensen, O. (2002), "A configurational perspective on key account management", *The Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 66 No. 2, pp. 38-60.

Jacobides, M. G. (2007), "The inherent limits of organizational structure and the unfulfilled role of hierarchy: Lessons from a near-war", *Organization Science,* Vol.18 No. 3, pp. 455-477.

Jap, S. D. (1999), "Pie-expansion efforts: collaboration processes in buyer-supplier relationships", *Journal of marketing research,* Vol.36 No. 4, pp. 461-475.

Jaqueline, P. (1992), "Identification and management of key clients", *European Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 26 No. 5, pp. 5-21.

Jaworski, B. J., and Kohli, A. K. (1993), "Market orientation: antecedents and consequences", *The Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 57 No. 3, pp. 53-70.

Jones, E., Brown, S. P., Zoltners, A. A., and Weitz, B. A. (2005), "The changing environment of selling and sales management", *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 105-111.

Kathuria, R., Joshi, M. P., and Porth, S. J. (2007), "Organizational alignment and performance: past, present and future", *Management decision,* Vol. 45 No. 3, pp. 503-517.

Krznaric, D. and Popovski, G. (2001). *Key Account Management in an International Context: KAM as a tool for improving and sustaining competitive position – the case of Volvo CE* (Master's Thesis). Göteborg University, Sweden.

Lee, J. W. C., Mohamad, O., and Ramayah, T. (2010), "Outsourcing: is the social exchange theory still relevant in developing countries?", *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing,* Vol. 4 No. 4, pp. 316-345.

Lund, M. (1985), "The development of investment and commitment scales for predicting continuity of personal relationship", *Journal of Social and Personal relationships,* Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 3-23.

Mahlamäki, T. and Uusitalo, O. (2009). *Factors affecting key account manager performance*. Paper presented at the 9th conference of Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy. Melbourne, Australia.

McDonald, M. (2000), "Key Account Management-A Domain Review", *The Marketing Review,* Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 15-34.

Millman, T. F. (1996), "Global key account management and systems selling", *International Business Review,* Vol. 5 No. 6, pp. 631-645.

Mills, J. and Clark, M. S. (1982), "Exchange and communal relationships", *Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 3, 121-144.

Mohr, J., and Spekman, R. (1994), "Characteristics of partnership success: partnership attributes, communication behavior, and conflict resolution techniques", *Strategic Management Journal,* Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 135-152.

Montgomery, D. B. and Yip, G. S. (2000), "The Challenge of Global Customer Management", *Marketing Management,* Vol. 9 No. 4, pp. 22-29.

Morgan, R. M., and Hunt, S. D. (1994), "The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing", *The Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 58 No. 3, pp. 20-38.

Napolitano, L. (1997), "Customer-supplier partnering: a strategy whose time has come", *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 1-8.

Ofek, E., and Sarvary, M. (2003), "RandD, marketing, and the success of next-generation products", *Marketing Science*, Vol. 22, pp. 355-370.

Ojasalo, J. (2000), "The episodic, phase and state approaches to customer relationships. In Van Gorp Cooley, F. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the International Marketing Educators' Conference on Marketing in a Global Economy* (pp. 363-70). Buenos Aires: American Marketing Association.

Ojasalo, J. (2001), "Key account management at company and individual levels in business-to-business relationships", *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing,* Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 199-220.

Palmatier, R. W., Dant, R. P., Grewal, D., and Evans, K. R. (2006), "Factors influencing the effectiveness of relationship marketing: a meta-analysis", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 70 No. 4, pp. 136–153.

Pardo, C. (1997), "Key account management in the business to business field: the key account's point of view", *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 17-26.

Pardo, C., Salle, R., and Spencer, R. (1995), "The key accountization of the firm", *Industrial Marketing Management,* Vol. 24 No. 2, pp. 123–134.

Pels, J. (1992), "Identification and management of key clients", *European Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 26 No. 5, pp. 5-21.

Perry, C., Cavaye, A., and Coote, L. (2002), "Technical and social bonds within business-to-business relationships", *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing,* Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 75-88.

Pillai, K. G. and Sharma, A. (2003), " Mature relationships: why does relational orientation turn into transaction orientation?", *Industrial Marketing Management,* Vol. 32 No. 8, pp. 643–651. doi:10.1016/j.indmarman.2003.06.005

Reichard, C. J. (1985), "Industrial selling: beyond price and persistence", *Harvard Business Review,* Vol. 63 No. 2, pp. 127-133.

Rodríguez, C. M., and Wilson, D. T. (2002), "Relationship bonding and trust as a foundation for commitment in US-Mexican strategic alliances: A structural equation modeling approach", *Journal of International Marketing,* Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 53-76.

Ryals, L. J. and Davies, I. A. (2013), "Where's the strategic intent in key account relationships?", *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing,* Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 111–124. doi.org/10.1108/08858621311295254

Sengupta, S., Krapfel, R. E., and Pusateri, M. A. (1997), "Switching costs in key account relationships", *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 9-16.

Senn, C. (2006), "The executive growth factor: how Siemens invigorated its customer relationships", *Journal of Business Strategy,* Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 27-34.

Shapiro, B.P. and Moriarty, R.T. (1980), "National Account Management", MSI Report, No. 80-104, MSI, Cambridge, MA.

Shapiro, B. P., and Posner, R. S. (1976), "Making the major sale", *Harvard Business Review,* Vol. 84 No. 7/8, p. 140.

Shapiro, B. P. and Wyman, J. (1981), "New ways to reach your customers", *Harvard Business Review,* Vol. 59 No. 4, pp. 103-110.

Sharma, A. (1997), "Who prefers key account management programs? An investigation of business buying behavior and buying firm characteristics", *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 27-39.

Sharma, A. (2006), "Success factors in key accounts", *The Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing,* Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 141-150.

Sharma, N. (2003), "The role pure and quasi-moderators in services: an empirical investigation of ongoing customer-service-provider relationships", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 253-62.

Sherman, S., Sperry, J., Reese, S., and Reese, S. J. (2003), *The seven keys to managing strategic accounts*, McGraw-Hill Inc., New York.

Shi, L. H., White, J. C., Zou, S. and Cavusgil, S. T. (2010), "Global account management strategies: drivers and outcomes", *Journal of International Business Studies,* Vol. 41 No. 4, pp. 620–638. doi:10.1057/jibs.2009.26.

Sin, L. Y. M., Tse, A. C. B., Yau, O. H. M., Lee, J. S. Y., and Chow, R. P. M. (2002), "The effect of relationship marketing orientation on business performance in a service-oriented economy", *Journal of Services Marketing,* Vol.16 No. 7, pp. 656-676.

Stevenson, T. H. (1980), "Classifying a customer as a national account", *Industrial Marketing Management,* Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 133-136.

Stevenson, T. H. (1981), "Payoffs from national account management", *Industrial Marketing Management,* Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 119-124.

Stevenson, T. H., and Page, A. L. (1979), "The adoption of national account marketing by industrial firms", *Industrial Marketing Management,* Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 94-100.

Tubridy, G. (1986), "How to pay national account managers", *Sales and Marketing Management,* Vol. 136 No. 13, pp. 50-53.

Turner, P. (1990), "Product management for major accounts–

an opportunity to differentiate", *European Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 24 No. 5, pp. 30-40.

Weeks, W. A., and Stevens, C. G. (1997), "National account management sales training and directions for improvement: a focus on skills/abilities", *Industrial Marketing Management,* Vol. 26 No. 5, pp. 423-431.

Weiss, A. M., and Kurland, N. (1997), "Holding distribution channel relationships together: The role of transaction-specific assets and length of prior relationship", *Organization Science,* Vol. 8 No. 6, pp. 612-623.

Wengler, S., Ehret, M., and Saab, S. (2006), "Implementation of key account management: who, why, and how? An exploratory study on the current implementation of key account management programs", *Industrial Marketing Management,* Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 103-112.

Williamson, O. E. (1983), "Credible commitments: using hostages to support exchange", *American Economic Review,* Vol. 73 No. 4, pp. 519-540.

Wilson, D. T. (1995), "An integrated model of buyer-seller relationships", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 335-345.

Wilson, K., and Millman, T. (2003), "The global account manager as political entrepreneur", *Industrial Marketing Management,* Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 151-158.

Wilson, D. T., and Mummalaneni, V. (1986), "Bonding and commitment in supplier relationship: a preliminary conceptualization", *Industrial Marketing and Purchasing,* Vol. 1 No. 3, pp. 44-58.

Woodburn, D., Holt, S. and McDonald, M. (2004). *Key customer profitability: Making money in strategic customer partnerships.* The Cranfield Key Account Management Best Practice Club, Cranfield.

Workman, J. P., Homburg, C., and Jensen, O. (2003), "Intraorganizational determinants of key account management effectiveness", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 3-21.

Wotruba, T. R., and Castleberry, S. B. (1993), "Job analysis and hiring practices for national account marketing positions", *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 49-49.

Yim, C. K., Tse, D. K., and Chan, K. W. (2008), "Strengthening customer loyalty through intimacy and passion: Roles of customer-firm affection and customer-staff relationships in services", *Journal of marketing research,* Vol. 45 No. 6, pp. 741-756.

Yip, G. S., and Madsen, T. L. (1996), "Global account management: the new frontier in relationship marketing", *International Marketing Review,* Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 24-42.

Zupancic, D. (2008), "Towards an integrated framework of key account management", *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing,* Vol. 23 No. 5, pp. 323-331.