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## THE ROLE OF INFLUENCE STRATEGIES IN MANAGING SUPPLY CHAIN NETWORKS IN RUSSIAN AGRI-FOOD BUSINESS

*The use of influence strategies as a research topic has been receiving increasingly more attention lately. However, only a few scientific works have studied influence strategies, and their use, in the context of supply chain networks in the Russian agri-food business. As such networks are of pyramidal-hierarchical structure and possess a focal company which has the power to align the actions of network actors and holds the ability to coordinate the network. In this context, the use of influence strategies represents one of the major elements of supply chain management. Therefore, an intriguing research question arises of how to distinguish among, and deal with, different effects of the influence strategies in order to use them as an effective tool for supply chain management.*

***Keywords:** influence strategies, supply chain networks, Russian agri-food business.*

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## РОЛЬ СТРАТЕГИЙ ВЛИЯНИЯ В УПРАВЛЕНИИ СЕТЯМИ ЦЕПОЧЕК ПОСТАВОК В РОССИЙСКОМ АГРОПРОДОВОЛЬСТВЕННОМ БИЗНЕСЕ

*Применение стратегий влияния в последнее время привлекает все большее внимание исследователей. Исследований стратегий влияния и их применения в контексте сетей цепочек поставок в российском агропродовольственном бизнесе немного. В своем анализе мы обращаемся к изучению опыта предприятия, выступающего центральным звеном такой цепочки поставок. Следует отметить, что поскольку сети цепочек поставок обычно имеют пирамидальную иерархическую структуру, в них существует центральная компания, которая обладает властью по регулированию деятельности всех партнеров в цепочке и координации сети в целом. В этом контексте использование стратегий влияния выступает важнейшим элементом управления отношениями с поставщиками.*

*Мы намеренно выбрали в качестве объекта нашего исследования российскую компанию, поскольку многие иностранные компании в последние годы охотно вкладывают средства в конкурентоспособный российский рынок. Наше эмпирическое исследование основывается на двух сериях экспертных интервью: с группой специалистов и аналитиков в области российского агропродовольственного бизнеса и с группой представителей компаний, в последнее время получавших прямые инвестиции от иностранных партнеров. Интервью проводились с помощью инструментария, сконструированного так, чтобы проверить наши основные исследовательские гипотезы.*

**Ключевые слова:** стратегии влияния, сети цепочек поставок, российский агропродовольственный бизнес.

### **Introduction**

The research topic of the use of influence strategies has been receiving increasingly more attention lately. However, only a few scientific works have studied influence strategies and their use in the context of supply chain networks in Russian agri-food business. We deliberately have chosen Russia since many foreign companies have invested in the last years in this competitive market. Due to its central position in a supply chain network, we focus hereby on the focal company's perspective. Being of pyramidal-hierarchical structure, such networks possess a focal company, which has the power to align the actions of the network partners and holds the ability to coordinate the network.

The actual role that influence strategies play in supply chains and networks has been treated in contrasting ways in the literature. For many decades there has been discussion going on about positive and negative sides of influence strategies. The mere existence of a more powerful firm in supply chain networks gives rise to power-created dependence which can lead to opportunism by partners. This can dissolve many of the relational elements that are necessary for the development of effective supply chain relationships. The negative side of power is seen in exercising coercion, which may reduce the frequency of exchange among actors and hinder conflict resolution as well as creating difficulties in fostering the information flow which threatens successful negotiation of an exchange. However, influence strategies can also have a positive effect on supply chain relationships as they are used as an effective tool in correcting organizational problems, solving conflicts and promoting harmonious interorganizational relationships, which ultimately results in enhanced performance for the supply chain network.

In this context, the use of influence strategies represents one of the major elements of supply chain management (SCM). In this regard, an intriguing research question arises of how to distinguish among and deal with different effects of the influence strategies in order to use them as an effective tool for SCM. This question appears to be an important one. Are there any criteria which determine when influence strategies might have a destructive impact and when they are positive and constructive and can

be used for good purposes? Therefore, there is a need to investigate this phenomenon in order to close the existing gap in the literature and to contribute to the overall understanding on the role of power and influence strategies in supply chains and networks. The aim of our research is to investigate the influence strategies in supply chains and networks and their role for SCM, in order to work out an overall strategy that enables supply chain managers to select an effective mix of managerial mechanisms for coordinating the whole supply chain network.

To fulfill our aim, we conducted both theoretical and empirical analyses. As part of the theoretical analysis we defined the existing gap in the literature and indicated how our research is connected with other areas of research. We also indicated the role of influence strategies and their relevance for chain management concepts by highlighting the importance of the defined research aims and tasks. We discovered the classification of influence strategies by French and Raven (1959)/Raven and Kruglanski (1970) (coercive, reward, expert, informational, legitimate and referent influence strategies) from the sociological point of view and applied it in the setting of supply chain networks and SCM. After reviewing the theoretical concepts we developed our own theoretical model on the role of influence strategies for SCM and a number of research assumptions and hypotheses about the existence, role and use of influence strategies in the context of supply chain networks and their management.

The empirical analysis was conducted in the empirical setting of the Russian agri-food business. After building the theoretical framework and examining the empirical setting we continue with an empirical investigation of it in the context of Russian agri-food business. This part is based on two rounds of expert interviews conducted with experts in the Russian agri-food business and representatives of companies with foreign direct investments in Russian agri-food business. The interviews were conducted on the basis of the designed survey tools which can be found among the appendices of the thesis. The questions correspond with the research assumptions and serve to test them. We analyse the results of these interviews using qualitative methods of research and discuss the results of the contents analysis.

## **1. Theoretical background and research framework**

### ***1.1. Notion and classification of influence strategies***

Cartwright (1965) considers influence strategies to be “the methods by which influence may be accomplished” and Dahl (1957) defines them as “a mediating activity by A between A’s base and B’s response”. Many researchers applied the concept of influence strategies in different theoretical and empirical studies by using various classifications of influence strategies. For example, French and Raven (1959) and Raven and Kruglanski (1970) used the following classification: coercive, reward, expert, informational, legitimate and referent.

Coercive influence strategies enable an individual to mediate punishments to others. For example, to dismiss, suspend, reprimand them, or make them carry out unpleasant tasks. It is usually based on the expectation of punishments and/or threats and relies on the belief that punishments will be forthcoming or rewards will be withheld unless the requested behaviour is exhibited (French and Raven 1959; Blau 1964). In

the supply chain network context, coercive influence strategies are reflected in the fear of a network member to be punished if he fails to comply with the requirements of the focal company. However, consistent use of punishments and/or threats may encourage the affected firm to dissolve the trading relationship. Because of this, coercive influence strategies are normally employed when the influenced party's alternatives are limited (Bowersox et al. 1980).

Hunt and Nevin (1974) dichotomized French and Raven's classification into coercive and non-coercive types. While the coercive type of influence strategies arise from punishment and reprimanding efforts, non-coercive types (reward, expert, informational, legitimate and referent) stem from rewards, high quality assistances, exchange of information and expertise, etc. Some other scholars, e.g. Payan and McFarland (2005) also used the classification of influence strategies into coercive and non-coercive (coercive influence strategies: threats, promises; non-coercive influence strategies: rationality, recommendations, information exchange, and requests).

Reward influence strategies depend on the ability of the influencing party to offer, or mediate, rewards to others. It is based on the degree to which the individual can give others a reward of some kind such as recommendations, desired gifts, and increases in pay or responsibility. If a focal company can mediate rewards due to the access to resources which are valuable for other supply chain network actors, then it can make the actors to perform in the way the company desires. A firm's ability to use rewards may increase after rewards have actually been employed, because the perceived probability of the promise to deliver is intensified (Cartwright 1965).

Expert influence strategies are derived from the skills or special knowledge of an individual or a group in a specific subject. This knowledge applies to the restricted area in which the specialist is trained or qualified. The ability to use expert influence strategies depends on the scarcity and the need for these skills in others. It is worth mentioning that this kind of influence strategy may generate a response of trust and credibility. In the case of a supply chain network, the ability of a focal company to use expert influence strategies can be achieved if the network actors perceive or believe that it possesses a special knowledge valuable for them. For example, manufacturers are often expected to have special knowledge about new products and promotion to assist the dealers.

Informational influence strategies stem from the ability to explicate information not previously available and the ability to demonstrate the logic of suggested actions with this information (Raven and Kruglanski 1970). They believe that even though the difference between expert and informational influence strategies is subtle, the influencing party tends to be well-informed, possess up-to-date information and, therefore, can persuade others. The difference between these two kinds of influence strategy could be observed when the influencing party wanting to apply expert influence strategies may develop credibility and trust through image and respect (for example, a doctor has the ability to use influence strategies over his patients), while the influencing party wanting to apply informational influence strategies may not. This kind of influence strategy does not demand to be a professional or an expert, but rather requires possession of new and up-to-date information and provides confidence to the

influencing party in debating. For example, if a retailer has new information about the consumer demands, then it can persuade suppliers to deliver their products and become a part of a supply chain network.

Legitimate influence strategies stem from internalized values which dictate that there is a legitimate right to influence and an obligation to accept this influence. These kinds of influence strategies are based on some kind of a commonly accepted code or standard and usually involve positions and not personal qualities of individuals. It is also called position power and is usually accompanied by various attributes such as uniforms, offices etc. It is based on the belief by one firm that another firm has the right to prescribe behaviour (French and Raven 1959). For instance, in some food markets, a small number of the biggest companies hold a significant share of the market, which allows them to enjoy a powerful position in that market (Glauben and Loy 2011). A focal company in this case should be recognized in the eyes of the network members as having a right to make specific decisions and expect compliance with regard to these decisions.

Referent influence strategies are based on an individual's ability to be attractive for others and build loyalty and depend on the charisma and interpersonal skills of the influencing party. French and Raven define the source of referent influence strategies as "a feeling of oneness... or a desire for such an identity". Identification can be said to occur when an individual accepts influence because he wants to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to another person or a group (Kelman 1958). It is difficult to identify specific instances of pure referent influence strategies in interfirm relationships, since this kind of influence strategy usually occurs in conjunction with some other kinds of influence strategies and plays a stabilizing role (Beier and Stern 1969). In the supply chain context, this kind of influence strategy is observed when network actors want to join a network.

In our study we follow the typology delineated by French and Raven (1959) and Raven and Kruglanski (1970), which includes coercive, legitimate, referent, expert, reward and informational influence strategies. In our view, this classification of influence strategies is the most complete and includes all other mentioned strategies. Depending on the kind of influence the company possesses, the set of managerial mechanisms representing certain influence strategies should be adjusted accordingly: coercive influence strategy, legitimate influence strategy, referent influence strategy, expert influence strategy, informational influence strategy, reward influence strategy (Belaya and Hanf 2009).

### ***1.2. Effects of coercive influence strategies in supply chain networks***

#### ***1.2.1. Coercive influence strategies***

Researchers have argued that frequent use of coercive influence strategies will lead the influencing party to exploit the target (Bannister 1969; Robicheaux and El-Ansary 1975), e.g. in order to negotiate lower costs, higher quality, reasonable delivery times, and special exigencies (Maloni and Benton 1997), which is seen detrimental for the target of influence (Thompson 1967; Stolte and Emerson 1976). So coercion is the classical case of the negative side of influence strategies. Hunt and Nevin (1974) indicated that coercive influence strategies are related positively to intrachannel

conflict and inversely to dealer satisfaction, whereas non-coercive influence strategies exhibit the opposite relationships. Exercising coercive influence strategies against other members of the supply chain, might have short-term benefits for the focal organisation, but reduces its success in the long-term (Cousins 2002). Therefore, since coercive influence strategies in general are considered to be negatively related to cooperation (Brown et al. 1995; Maloni and Benton 2000; Benton and Maloni 2005), and since it has been demonstrated in the experimental psychology literature that the more intense the punishment, the stronger are the effects on behaviour (Zwick and Chen 1999), we assume that coercive influence strategies will negatively affect cooperation.

However, Stern and E1-Ansary (1992) asserted that channel members may use influence strategies to determine who will undertake which marketing activities, coordinate the performance of these tasks, and manage conflict among themselves. Hamner and Organ (1978) suggested that in such a circumstance punishment (whether intentional or unintentional) is one of the most readily available means for shaping (and maintaining) the behaviour of subordinates. Although punishment does not by itself change motives, it is believed to be effective in changing behavior when used in combination with reward (Ruch 1963). Other authors point out the positive effect of coercive influence strategies in promoting coordination and viewed coercive influence strategies as a mechanism for allowing relatively stable relationships to develop between cooperating social actors (Stern and E1-Ansary 1992; Bachmann 2001).

Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of coercive influence strategies will positively affect coordination (H1a) and negatively affect cooperation (H1b).

### ***1.2.2. Reward influence strategies***

In the literature, the described effects of reward influence strategies on buyer-supplier relationships are mixed (Maloni and Benton 2000; Zhao et al. 2008). Moreover, it is suggested that reward influence strategies have a positive effect when the culture supports cooperative and supportive relationships. Gaski (1986) stated that it is through reward and coercive influence strategies that partner perceptions are managed to create harmonious and enduring interorganizational exchange relationships. If the use of influence strategies is based on genuine rewards, the supplier will be willing to accept them and enter a trustful relationship. If a retailer continuously uses reward influence strategies to give rewards to its suppliers who comply with its quality standards and deliver on time, it can promote cooperation and generate trust in this relationship. Assuming that reward influence strategies are perceived as having an element of coercion, provide extrinsic motivation, which drives suppliers to comply with the requirements, in order to achieve favourable outcomes (Zhao et al. 2008) and since both reward and punishment provoke rapid changes in behavior (Dickinson 2001), they will have a positive effect on coordination.

The overly frequent use of reward influence strategies is likely to damage relational norms (Boyle et al. 1992) and cooperation (Skinner et al. 1992). Therefore, the exaggerated use of reward influence strategies may lead to distrust,

suspicion and eventually abstaining from entering a trustful relationship by a target of influence if unrealistically high discounts or other offered rewards are unusual for the culture or mentality of the latter, they may be associated with corruption or bad purposes. The target of influence may suspect a deceit and abstain from entering a relationship, if rewards are exaggerated or unusual for its culture or mentality. In this case, reward influence strategies will have a negative effect on cooperation.

Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of reward influence strategies will positively affect coordination (H2a) and negatively affect cooperation (H2b).

### ***1.2.3. Expert influence strategies***

Expert influence strategies are considered to be less effective than coercive and reward influence strategies due to being less flexible and unrelated to specific performance of supply chain members (Etgar 1976). Besides, their effectiveness may decline over time. For example, expert advice, once given, may provide the channel member with the ability to operate without such assistance in the future. Another major disadvantage is that it may have a more limited scope of applicability than rewards and penalties. Supply chain members may accept the control of a focal actor but only in specific, well-defined areas of operation. Thus, they might be willing to accept decisions about the introduction of new products if it is perceived to be expert in this field. Yet they may resist the attempts to impose controls over such decision areas as pricing or promotion. We assume that, depending on the characteristics and goals of the participating parties as well as the environment (e.g. highly competitive environment), the target of influence may develop a jealousy towards the influencing party which is considered an expert in a given area and abstain from entering a cooperative relationship, or it may become more attracted to the influencing party which is an expert in a given area and be more motivated to enter a cooperative relationship.

In general, the acquisition of special knowledge or technology in order to achieve a powerful position and the use of expert influence strategies formed in this way will contribute to the positive development of cooperation within a supply chain relationship. However, expert influence strategies are perceived as positive when solicited and given. Offering free advice through an agency and advisory staff as part of project implementation is seen as a valuable incentive for the target of influence to get involved in the project (Davies et al. 2004). Besides, some authors emphasized that consultation and swapping of information might produce expectations of reciprocity and trust (Blau 1964; Coleman 1990). Expert influence strategies could be most effective as an influence tactic when the objectives of the person being influenced match those of the leader (DuBrin 2000).

Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of expert influence strategies will negatively affect coordination (H3a) and positively affect cooperation (H3b).

### ***1.2.4. Informational influence strategies***

Giebels et al. (1998) presented an opinion that in case of a power imbalance there appears to be the difficulty in fostering the information flow which is a precondition for the successful negotiation of an exchange. Gaski (1986) argued that

the use of informational influence strategies involve manipulative aspects. Its use has been defined as seeking 'self-interest with guile' (Williamson 1975) and concerns possession and dissemination of valuable information and is based on deceit and opportunism of the influencing party. Stern and El-Ansary (1988) also supported the statement that informational influence strategies are likely to have a negative effect on coordination in channels of distribution. They argued that channel participants do not necessarily view each other as partners, but rather as rivals. Therefore, the use of informational influence strategies in this case is not well-received. If informational influence strategies are used for manipulative purposes, being based on deceit and opportunism, may destroy or have an overall negative effect on coordination. *The fact that information is shared and exchanged may be convincing for the target of influence, since influencing party does it voluntarily.* However, Payan and McFarland (2005) found that information exchange has a lower likelihood of compliance with the requirements of the influencing party due to being the most unfocused of the influence strategies. Therefore, information exchange lacks specificity as to what needs to be done. The specific action that the influencing party wants the target of influence to undertake remains clouded.

As noted by Eyuboglu and Atac (1991), depending on the channel environment, informational influence strategies will have different effects on cooperation. Information exchange could have positive effect on cooperation, since it not only conforms to, but elevates the level of relationalism between parties (Boyle et al. 1992) and is based on mutual trust (Baldwin 1971; Raven and Kruglanski 1970). We assume that in an environment, in which participating parties view each other as partners and not as rivals, but rather as allies, informational influence strategies will have a positive effect on cooperation, as it helps to build trust, and enhances positive attitudes toward the long-term channel relationships relationship.

Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of informational influence strategies will negatively affect coordination (H4a) and positively affect cooperation (H4b).

#### ***1.2.5. Legitimate influence strategies***

French and Raven (1959) stated that legitimate influence strategies stem from internalized values which dictate that there is a legitimate right to influence and an obligation to accept this influence. Therefore, in case legitimate influence strategies are perceived by the target of influence as a form of a dictatorship, it may have a negative effect on cooperation. The study conducted by Lee and Low (2008) indicated that legitimate influence strategies showed positive relationships with satisfaction. Effective coordination of exchange relationships has been observed as a positive effect of legitimate influence strategies, as the distribution of power becomes legitimate over time (Frazier and Antia 1995; Kalafatis 2000), and a more standardized business format is applied, such as contracts (Mohr et al. 1996; Lusch and Brown 1996; Jap and Ganesan 2000).

However, intrinsic factors provided by non-mediated (legitimate, referent, expert, informational) influence strategies tend to outweigh extrinsic factors such as rewards and punishments (Brown et al. 1995). As for legitimate influence strategies, it is difficult



to predict the reaction of a target of influence, because the latter may choose not to enter the relationship, if it feels intimidated. Legal sanction based on legal contractual agreement would be perceived as a punishment (Gaski 1986). Boyce et al. (1992) suggested that in the effective operation of an agreement, it is the spirit rather than the written word that is important. The written word becomes significant when things are going very wrong. According to this statement, legal contracts specifying formal written rules and obligations could be a harder form of legitimate influence strategies than cooperative norm, which only refers to 'unwritten' unofficial norms, shared values, rules of conduct, and beliefs that guide actions and behaviours. Regulations and economic incentives play an important role in encouraging changes in behaviour, but although these may change practices, there is no guaranteed positive effect on personal attitudes (Gardner and Stern 1996).

Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of legitimate influence strategies will positively affect coordination (H5a) and negatively affect cooperation (H5b).

#### ***1.2.6. Referent influence strategies***

As for referent influence strategies, since they were ranked highest among other influence strategies in connection to satisfaction (Lee and Low 2008), and since cooperation has been found to go hand in hand with satisfaction (Gaski 1986), we suppose that the use of a positive image and good reputation by a retailer company will positively impress the supplier and will foster the development of cooperation. Dapiran and Hogarth-Scott (2003) emphasized that cooperation comes about through the use of expert and referent influence strategies. Suppliers would also be more willing to comply with the requirements of internationally recognized retailers and fulfill their commands. For example, big multinational retailers usually have an international recognition and a certain level of image when entering foreign countries and suppliers would be more willing to cooperate with partners who have a good and proven reputation. Venkatesh et al. (1995) found recommendations to be more effective than other influence strategies, explaining that strategies based on intimidation usually encounter resistance and thus tend to be less effective. Besides, Payan and McFarland (2005) found that recommendations have a significant, positive impact on trust, therefore, we hypothesize that recommendation will have a positive effect on cooperation.

However, high degrees of identification between dealers and suppliers may be associated with less channel control. Referent influence strategies might not be sufficient to motivate the target to the implementation of certain tasks, since they do not represent an explicit statement of the desired behaviour. Referent influence strategies are seen to be infusing targets with moral purpose and commitment rather than by affecting the task environment, or by offering material incentives and the threat of punishment. Therefore, using them might not be sufficient to animate the target to the implementation of certain tasks.

Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of referent influence strategies will negatively affect coordination (H6a) and positively affect cooperation (H6b).

The formulated research hypotheses H1a-H6b are presented in table 1 and explained in the following section.

**Summary of research hypotheses**

<b>Influence strategies</b>	<b>Effect on coordination</b>	<b>Effect on cooperation</b>
Coercive influence strategies	H1a: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of coercive influence strategies will have a positive (+) effect on coordination.	H1b: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of coercive influence strategies will have a negative (-) effect on cooperation.
Reward influence strategies	H2a: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of reward influence strategies will have a positive (+) effect on coordination.	H2b: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of reward influence strategies will have a negative (-) effect on cooperation.
Expert influence strategies	H3a: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of expert influence strategies will have a negative (-) effect on coordination.	H3b: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of expert influence strategies will have a positive (+) effect on cooperation.
Informational influence strategies	H4a: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of informational influence strategies will have a negative (-) effect on coordination.	H4b: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of informational influence strategies will have a positive (+) effect on cooperation.
Legitimate influence strategies	H5a: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of legitimate influence strategies will have a positive (+) effect on coordination.	H5b: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of legitimate influence strategies will have a negative (-) effect on cooperation.
Referent influence strategies	H6a: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of referent influence strategies will have a negative (-) effect on coordination.	H6b: Within a supply chain network, the perceived use of referent influence strategies will have a positive (+) effect on cooperation.

**2. Empirical study of Russian agri-food business**

**2.1. Telephone survey A**

To answer our research questions we conducted exploratory expert interviews with the aim of revealing the opinions of experts in the field of Russian agribusiness about relationships of international food retail and processing companies with their suppliers in Russia (farmers in the case of processing companies and processors, and fresh produce farmers in the case of retail companies). The questions were pre-tested on five personal interviews with experts who were not considered in the following sample. The

aim of the pre-test was to test the quality of the formulated questions and to obtain individual reactions to draft materials. The results of the pre-test were used to improve the questionnaire design and contents.

The interviewees were informed about the interviews via email. After receiving their consent, the appointments for telephone calls were given at the agreed time. The email contained an attachment with the questionnaire in three languages (English, German and Russian). We deliberately chose to provide the questions in three languages in order to allow for a broader spectrum of experts to be involved. The translation of the questionnaire was done by the author and cross-checked by two colleagues, who were also fluent in these three languages and had experience in analyzing in-depth interviews, to help achieve reliability (Patton 2002; Hingley 2005). Due to the fact that the majority of the respondents wanted to be treated anonymously and did not give their permission to tape-record the interviews, they were protocolled in written form. We made a thorough selection of the interviewees which were chosen according to their leading positions in order to effectively gather relevant information (Blankertz 1998; Merkens 2000; Patton 1990). Specifically, we employed an expert (concentration) sampling (Fritsch 2007; Patton 1990). The persons chosen were in positions with a high level of concentration of appropriate information. The applied technique makes particular sense in view of the above mentioned research questions.

We intentionally used qualitative methods for conducting this survey. We believe that such methods are the most appropriate for studying food supply chain relationships, since they allow detailed knowledge and insight to be gained as well as understanding and explanation about our research questions (Patton 2002). These research techniques are stated to be especial relevant for conducting exploratory studies with an intention to build theory and allow generalizability of the statements (Miles and Huberman 1994).

The main motivation behind conducting expert interviews was to explore the current situation in Russia in order to be able to refine our theoretical assumptions at this stage of the research. We observe that international retailers and food processors usually export their business concepts, such as supply and quality chain management. Such companies with FDI are influencing SCM concepts in Russian agri-food business at all stages of the chain. Foreign retailers introduce their new procurement and management concepts while working with local food processors, as well as directly with producers. International food processing companies impose their management concepts on Russian producers and motivate them to improve the quality of their supplies. At the same time, a lot of Russian retailers and processors begin to copy the management strategy of foreign companies, so there is a spill-over effect on Russian management.

The interviews lasted from 15 to 60 minutes. The average duration per interview was about 23 minutes. As the results show, most of the respondents chose Russian as the language of the interview (75 %). Only 20 % of them chose German and 5 % — English.

The biggest share in our sample belongs to business consultancy companies (24 %). The interviewees were holding very high positions (partners, project coordinators,

general directors and business consultants). The next big groups in our sample included retail and food processing companies (15 % each).

## **2.2. Telephone survey B**

To answer our research assumptions we conducted a second round of telephone semi-structured in-depth interviews about relationships of international food retail and processing companies with their suppliers in Russia. This time we contacted the companies of foreign origin registered in Russia as companies operating in the area of food processing and food retailing in Russia with at least 10% of foreign direct investment capital. 97 complete telephone interviews were conducted, which represents the response rate of 9,7 %. We made a thorough selection of the interviewees who were chosen according to their leading positions in order to effectively gather relevant information (Blankertz 1998; Merkens 2000; Patton 1990). Specifically, we employed an expert (concentration) sampling (Fritsch 2007; Patton 1990). The persons chosen were in positions with a high level of concentration of appropriate information. The applied technique makes particular sense in view of the above mentioned research questions.

Before contacting the companies from the database, we carried out a thorough pre-test study by contacting 15 experts from the field of agri-food business and conducting telephone conversations with them. This pre-test allowed us to identify potential problems and to revise the proposed questionnaire before starting the actual fieldwork. After receiving their feedback and improving the questionnaire we started the survey. The questionnaire also was designed in 3 languages (Russian, English and German) The interviewees were first informed about the interviews via email. After receiving their consent, the calls were given at the time appointed by the interviewees. Due to the fact that the majority of the respondents wanted to be treated anonymously and did not give their permission to tape-record the interviews, they were protocolled in written form.

One of the first questions which was asked was “Do you feel responsible for coordinating the supply chain of this product (“from the field to the fork”)?”. Two answer options were given “yes” and “no”. By this question we selected the focal companies which were the target of our research.

Among the interviewed companies were two types of companies: processors (89) and retailers (8). Since the questionnaire was offered in 3 languages (Russian, English and German), some interviewees made use of it and chose the language in which they were most sure. As the results show, most of the respondents chose Russian as the language of the interview (97 %). Only 2 % of them chose English and 1 % — German. Duration of interviews was between 10 and 45 minutes. The average duration per interview was about 16 minutes.

The companies from our sample stem from a variety of different Western European and North-American countries. Altogether the number of countries where the head offices of the companies originate from is 27. The biggest share among the interviewed countries belongs to Germany (21,65 %).

There are indeed a large number of German companies operating in Russia in different supply chains. Therefore, the number of those companies which replied to our invitation to participate in the expert interview was also high. The next big group

after Germany is the USA. Again, the number of available companies from this country made it possible that so many of them replied positively to our invitation. Some other important big groups are from France, the Netherlands and Italy. Also Asian countries (China and Singapore) were included.

Among the companies which were called the majority were from Moscow and Moscow region (81 %). The rest of the cities included St. Petersburg (8 %) as well as some other Russian cities (Samara, Belgorod, Velikiy Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Kaluga, Kaliningrad, Pskov, and Tula). In two cases when the respondents were not able to participate in the expert interview, they recommended us to contact their head offices in Warsaw (Poland) and St. Wendel (Germany). However, the respondents were all well informed about the situation of their company in Russia. Among the respondents were general directors, sales managers, category managers, logistics managers, quality and supply chain managers.

The interviewed respondents chose only one supply chain, with respect to which they were reporting. In our sample we had 13 different supply chains. The most frequently chosen of them were dairy products (15,5 %), vegetable products and plant oils (13,4 %), sweets and confectionary products (11,3 %) and bread and pastry products (11,3 %).

### **3. Findings and discussion**

The comparison of the main results of literature review, content analyses related to the theoretical assumptions regarding the effects of different influence strategies on coordination and cooperation, are presented in the following section (tables 2–7).

*Table 2*

#### **Interconnection of results of literature review and content analyses with respect to coercive influence strategies**

Main results of literature review		Coercive influence strategies are considered to be negatively related to cooperation and positively to coordination and development of stable relationships due to being the most readily available means for shaping behaviour. However, despite short-term benefits, exercising coercive influence strategies might reduce success in the long-term.
Main results of content analysis	telephone survey A	Coercive influence strategies could often have a hidden character and are considered to be not very effective because they show that the company has aggressive intentions, do not allow partners to reach the goal of having long-term relationships due to destructive effects on the motivation. They could be effective in the short-run, but do not solve the problem at its root.
	telephone survey B	Coercive influence strategies generally tend to be the least often used kind of influence strategy, though they are viewed in a positive light due to the fact that they allow competitive selection of partners and could be efficient in relationships with partners of commodity groups of non-strategic character.

**3.1. Coercive influence strategies**

In spite of our assumption that coercive influence strategies can be seen to bring order and discipline into the relationship as well as be effective in changing behaviour, the findings of the content analyses indicate that coercive influence strategies are the least often used kind of influence strategies, though they are viewed in a positive light.

Besides, the content analyses confirmed the fact that coercive influence strategies are viewed as being effective only in the short-run, but do not solve the problem at its root, as it was stated in the literature. According to our general impression the respondents of telephone surveys A and B were reluctant to speak about the use of coercive influence strategies. We assume that this subject could be quite painful to discuss — especially due to the fact that most of the interviewed experts gave their answers from the viewpoint of a focal company. The findings of the content analysis of telephone survey A gave us already some idea that this kind of influence strategy has a hidden character. Therefore, coercive influence strategies could be used in reality more often than the respondents were ready to admit. In spite of our argumentation and expectation that coercive influence strategies play a positive role as a coordination mechanism in the supply chain, they do indeed have negative effects.

**3.2. Reward influence strategies**

Generally we observed that the use of this kind of influence strategy provokes changes in behaviour and motivates the target of influence to act according to the will of the influencing party. The findings of the content analyses indicate that this kind of influence strategy was the second most widely used (after informational influence strategies), which allows us to conclude that reward influence strategies are very well known and attractive for both influencing party and the target of influence.

*Table 3*

**Interconnection of results of literature review and content analyses with respect to reward influence strategies**

Main results of literature review		Reward influence strategies have a positive effect on coordination, since both reward and punishment provoke rapid changes in behaviour. However, the overly frequent use of reward influence strategies is likely to damage relational norms and cooperation.
Main results of content analysis	telephone survey A	People are motivated by full purse and financial stimulation. Reward influence strategies such as investments in production and cooling equipment and financial assistance to producers in the form of credit or leasing are successful for creating long-term relationships with suppliers.
	telephone survey B	The use of reward influence strategies is considered to be very attractive. This kind of influence strategy was the second most widely used (after informational influence strategies). The use of reward influence strategies depends on the availability of resources of the influencing company.

Our assumptions that reward influence strategies result in net benefits for both parties were true. Apparently, it could be due to the fact that the utility which the focal company derived from the achieved compliance is greater than the cost for providing the reward. We also assumed that reward influence strategies may have an element of coercion in them and might, therefore, have the reverse effects on relationships as the coercive influence strategies have. When a focal actor uses reward or coercive influence strategies, it provides extrinsic motivation for the target's commitment. The target is, therefore, driven to comply with the focal actor's requirements, in order to achieve favourable outcomes. Therefore, our assumption that reward influence strategies are perceived as having an element of coercion in them, but only in the reverse manner was correct.

Nevertheless, we think that rewards should be applied in the proper way in order to have a positive effect. Therefore, great caution should be kept when giving rewards, since they might have a reverse or no effect if not adjusted to the expectations of the receiver. The rewards should indicate that they are deserved and announced in advance. In this case rewards might represent the level of rewards the firm expects to receive from a business relationship. If the expected rewards turn out to be below the level of deserved rewards, the target could attempt to search for other more attractive alternatives. If deserved rewards are not repeated, the relationship could probably end quickly. One could also assume that the receiver of the reward may perceive it as a form of bribery or insulting, which could have negative effects.

### **3.3. Expert influence strategies**

The findings of the content analyses indicate also that expert influence strategies are relatively seldom applied. It could be due to the fact that they are not very well

*Table 4*

#### **Interconnection of results of literature review and content analyses with respect to expert influence strategies**

Main results of literature review		Expert influence strategies are less effective than coercive and reward influence strategies due to being less flexible and unrelated to specific performance. However, the use of expert influence strategies might contribute to the positive development of cooperation when the objectives of the target match those of the influencing party.
Main results of content analysis	telephone survey A	Expert influence strategies such as educational or qualification activities are used for Russian suppliers which are motivated and interested in the long-term cooperation. Russian partners need to be accompanied at all steps of the projects; thus, consulting services should be project-bound and constant.
	telephone survey B	Russian suppliers confess their own lack of experience and recognize the expert knowledge of foreign retailers and manufacturers operating in Russia. One of the remarkable things about the use of expert influence strategies is their relatively infrequent use. They are just as seldom used as legitimate influence strategies and a little more often than coercive ones.

known compared to other strategies. Therefore, one should try to use these kinds of influence strategies as much as possible. For example, offering various technical support measures, such as training of employees at company’s headquarters could stimulate both cooperation and coordination in the supply chain. Branded manufacturers, especially those who are specialized in high-quality, tailored products, have the reputation of establishing close and long-term technological and organizational cooperation with their suppliers.

When managers have specialized knowledge, they have the potential for using expert influence strategies. The way expert influence strategies are exercised is critical in forming the perceptions of the recipient. Expert advice given in an authoritative manner will probably have a negative effect. Also withholding expertise in time of need could be perceived negatively. Therefore, one should be careful in the way one exercises the expert influence strategies.

**3.4. Informational influence strategies**

The content analyses showed that informational influence strategies are the most often used and the most popular among the respondents and are seen as being effective for maintaining harmonious relationships and successful for creating long-term partnerships.

*Table 5*

**Interconnection of results of literature review and content analyses with respect to informational influence strategies**

Main results of literature review		Informational influence strategies have a negative effect on achieving compliance with the requirements of the influencing party due to being unfocused and due to lack of specificity as to what needs to be done. Information influence strategies might have a positive effect on cooperation due to promoting relationalism between parties.
Main results of content analysis	telephone survey A	Informational influence strategies such as business talks, collaborative discussions, persuasive arguments, technical assistance programs, transfer of know-how and innovative technologies are effective for maintaining harmonious relationships and successful for creating long-term partnerships.
	telephone survey B	Informational influence strategies are the most often used and the most popular among the respondents kind of influence strategies. The number of respondents using these strategies with their suppliers was higher than with their buyers.

Our assumptions with respect to the effect on coordination were based on the following arguments. We considered informational influence strategies to be unfocused with respect to coordination of activities. Even though one might believe that information might serve as a mechanism to improve coordination, the target of influence might not necessarily respond positively to the coordination attempts of the focal actor due to the absence of formulated tasks. This strategy could be viewed to be



a subtle form of influence in which the target is not requested to act in a certain manner, but should make own conclusions about what to do. Therefore, informational influence strategy lacks specificity about what needs to be done. The specific action that the target needs to perform remains undefined.

Being a kind of communication, informational influence strategies could have a positive effect on cooperation, since ability to communicate (even without commitment) is typically found to foster cooperation. Another aspect worth mentioning when explaining the positive effect of informational influence strategies on cooperation is the fact that possession of new and up-to-date information provides confidence to the focal company in debating and, thus, increases its persuasive capabilities, which, in turn, may increase cooperation. In both samples of our survey the informational influence strategies affected cooperation positively, as expected. Therefore, it is highly advisable to use informational influence strategies in relationships with suppliers and with buyers due to their positive effects on both coordination and cooperation.

### **3.5. Legitimate influence strategies**

The content analyses showed that informal legitimate influence strategies are less preferred than formal and written agreements and contractual arrangements. It could be due to the fact that the use of informal methods requires a certain level of trust, which could be lacking in Russia.

*Table 6*

#### **Interconnection of results of literature review and content analyses with respect to legitimate influence strategies**

Main results of literature review		Legitimate influence strategies might have a negative effect on cooperation due to being perceived by the target as a form of a dictatorship. On the other hand, regulations and sanctions based on legal contractual agreements might be perceived as a punishment and, thus, play an important role in encouraging changes in behaviour.
Main results of content analysis	telephone survey A	Due to the mentality and cultural heritage in Russia, it is not recommended to rely on promises made in an oral or informal way. It is better to write all business agreements down in order to make sure that the contractual arrangements are fulfilled.
	telephone survey B	Business relationships generally tend to be more based on written contracts than on informal agreements. Referring to legal agreements and obligations, using short and long term contracts were the most preferred among other legitimate influence strategies. Informal legitimate influence strategies are almost not used.

We viewed legitimate influence strategies for their formal nature and clear legal basis as one of the mechanisms which can be applied to the governance and coordination of suppliers. Legitimate influence strategies generally could be thought of as a way to reduce uncertainty about behaviours and outcomes by providing formal rules and

procedures to govern the relationship. The target of influence has to take into account the legal and economic consequences of violating explicit written contracts. Since the legitimate influence strategies originate from a given position or existing norms or laws, the supplier may take the protection offered by a legitimized powerful position of the retailer for an additional advantage. This could imply the positive result of this kind of influence strategies. Since legitimate influence strategies present clear guidelines, specify the rights and obligations of both parties and refer to the cost of violating norms or statutes for a target, we assumed that they would improve coordination.

However, in some cases the target of influence may view legitimate influence strategies as vague with respect to the necessity of compliance and may resist. When the suppliers perceive the cost of compliance as excessive, they may decide to dissolve the relationship even though the focal actor wins its legal point. Besides, references to legal contracts or informal agreements may appear insulting to the target and imply unfavourable relations in the future. Hence, use of legitimate influence strategies could also increase conflict and result in legal costs for both parties. In addition to these aspects, one must consider the cultural and country specific legal environment and formed attitudes of supply chain actors towards legitimacy in general. It could be that they have a negative reaction to the use of legitimacy in general and resist it by all means. Therefore, the use of legitimate influence strategies might have no effect or have a negative effect in this specific environment.

### **3.6. Referent influence strategies**

The content analyses showed that referent influence strategies are the third most often used kind after informational and reward influence strategies and that strategies specifying the outcomes of the action are more preferred than vague hints and approval or disapproval of the target's actions or intentions.

*Table 7*

#### **Interconnection of results of literature review and content analyses with respect to referent influence strategies**

Main results of literature review		Referent influence strategies are expected to foster the development of cooperation due to positive image and reputation of the influencing party. However, they might not be sufficient to motivate the target to the implementation of tasks due to the missing specificity about the desired behaviour.
Main results of content analysis	telephone survey A	Referent influence strategies such as emotional appeals, identification with the company, approval or disapproval of partners' actions are seen as not being very efficient in Russian agri-food business due to traditional perceptions and cultural heritage.
	telephone survey B	Referent influence strategies are the third most often used kind after informational and reward influence strategies. Strategies indicating the positive effects of the desired course of actions were preferred more than strategies requesting the target to accept ideas without explaining the expected consequences.

According to our assumptions, referent influence strategies could be seen as a mechanism of infusing targets with moral purpose and commitment rather than by affecting the task environment, since they do not offer material incentives and the threat of punishment. Referent influence strategies are designed in such a way as to match the target's intangible, subconscious needs for status, security and attention with the goal to achieve compliance on a specific issue. Since referent influence strategies are stemming from the image and reputation, it is evident that the strength of the motivation to comply with this kind of influence strategies would be based on the strength of the image and attractiveness of the relationship.

In general, referent influence strategies could be viewed as having a fundamental impact on the followers' perceptions and beliefs without containing explicit description of tasks. For these reasons we assumed that the behavioural part might not be affected. However, our assumptions were wrong, since referent influence strategies turned to have a positive effect on coordination in both models despite the lack of specificity of the desired behavior of the target.

### **Conclusions**

We reviewed the relevant literature on the concept of influence strategies and brought clarification to this vague and poorly conceptualized concept. The arsenal of the literature we focused on included not only managerial and economic publications, but also from the area of sociology, psychology, philosophy, etc. We made a thorough review and conducted an email survey of academic scholars all over the world working in the area of power and influence strategies. We have examined different definitions and classifications of power and influence strategies (coercive, reward, expert, legitimate, referent). Using this classification we have found that influence strategies have many multi-faceted effects on coordination and cooperation in supply chain relationships. Due to space limitations we only included selected findings. We clearly highlighted the existing gap in the literature, namely, the unclarified place and role of the concept of influence strategies in supply chains and supply chain networks (figure 1).

The use of influence strategies is an important managerial issue. The majority of research conducted to date has assumed that: influence strategies are irrelevant and not suitable for being used in the SCM context; their use is based on the power asymmetry and the abuse of power and leads to negative effects; trust is a better alternative for improving supply chain relationships. The studies dealing with relational constructs in supply chain relationships have paid attention to other constructs such as trust, commitment, relationship quality etc. Our study disproves the above mentioned statements and offers a new perspective on the role of influence strategies for SCM. Power asymmetry is a natural state for any relationship including supply chain relationships. To believe that power asymmetry is bad is not correct. More powerful leaders in supply chain networks known as 'chain captains' can use the power advantage for the good of the whole network. In fact, our findings document the concept that influence strategies could have a profound impact on the improvement of coordination and cooperation in supply chain networks. Influence strategies can have both positive and negative effects on coordination and cooperation within supply chain relationships

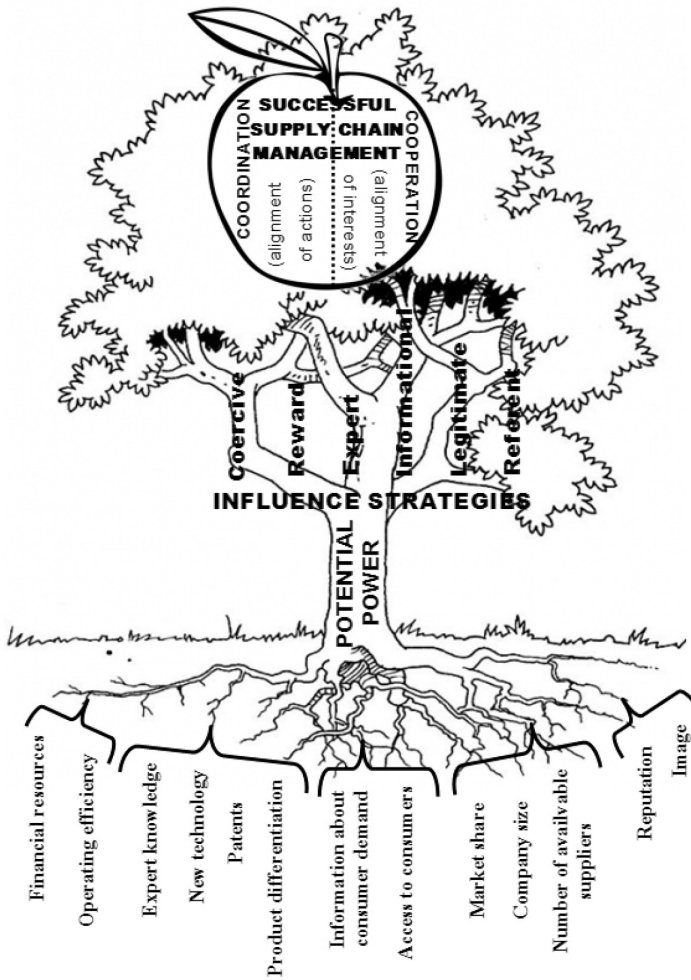


Figure 1. *Conceptual framework of the relevance of influence strategies for supply chain management*

and could be used to coordinate and to foster collaboration without exploitative or abusive consequences. The study opens up a new perspective on the concepts of power and influence strategies as behavioural concepts for the purposes of managing supply chain networks.

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