Janice M. Payan & Richard G. McFarland

Decomposing Influence Strategies: Argument Structure and Dependence as Determinants of the Effectiveness of Influence Strategies in Gaining Channel Member Compliance

Although there is considerable research examining the effects of influence strategies on relational outcomes, research has been silent on the effectiveness of influence strategies in achieving the primary objective: channel member compliance. The authors develop a theoretical model that predicts that noncoercive influence strategies (Rationality, Recommendations, Information Exchange, and Requests) with an argument structure that contains more thorough content result in relatively greater levels of compliance. The model further predicts that coercive influence strategies (Promises and Threats) result in compliance only when target dependence levels are high. The authors develop a new influence strategy, Rationality, which represents a noncoercive strategy with a full argument structure. In general, empirical findings support the theoretical model. However, in contrast to expectations, the use of Recommendations had a negative effect on compliance. *Post hoc* analysis revealed a significant interaction between trust and Recommendations on compliance, thus providing an explanation for this unexpected result. When trust is low, Recommendation strategies are counterproductive. The authors discuss implications of the findings and directions for further research.

Influence strategies are compliance-gaining tactics that channel members use to achieve their desired actions from channel partners (Frazier and Summers 1984). Previous research on influence strategies has demonstrated their importance within channels of distribution. This research has examined many important issues, such as the effect of influence strategies on channel conflict (Frazier and Rody 1991), interfirm agreements (Frazier and Summers 1984), satisfaction (Frazier, Gill, and Kale 1989; Scheer and Stern 1992), relationalism (Boyle et al. 1992), and solidarity (Kim 2000). Researchers have also examined antecedents of influence strategies, including power (Boyle and Dwyer 1995; Venkatesh, Kohli, and Zaltman 1995) and dependence (Frazier, Gill, and Kale 1989; Frazier and Summers 1984; Gundlach and Cadotte 1994). This research is valuable; nevertheless, there is little, if any, existing research that examines the effectiveness of influence strategies in gaining channel member compliance. Given that the purpose of influence strategies is to gain compliance, this is a critical gap in the literature. As a result, there is little advice for channels managers about the effectiveness of the different influence strategies.

This surprising gap in the literature may be explained by the common categorization of influence strategies as either coercive or noncoercive and a corresponding focus on the effects of coercion on relational outcomes. With the recent focus on the importance of relationships in meeting channels objectives (Jap 1999; Morgan and Hunt 1994), it is understandable that channel researchers have focused on relational outcomes. Unfortunately, the impact of these strategies in gaining compliance remains unknown. For example, it is known that, in general, the use of noncoercive influence strategies results in positive relational outcomes and that the use of coercive influence strategies undermines relationships (e.g., Boyle et al. 1992; Frazier and Rody 1991); however, it is not adequately understood whether either achieves its primary objective, namely, compliance with the influence attempt.

The purpose of this article is to develop a comprehensive theory that predicts the effectiveness of influence strategies in gaining channel member compliance. We complement previous research on influence strategies and chan-

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nels relationships and fill the void regarding influence strategies and channel member compliance. We do this by drawing on argument structure theory from the consumer behavior literature and on dependence theory from the marketing channels literature; from these, we develop our own theoretical framework on the compliance-gaining effectiveness of influence strategy.

Our theoretical model takes an expanded view of influence strategies and predicts that the effectiveness of noncoercive influence strategies (i.e., those that are meant to be persuasive) is based on the completeness of their argument structure and that coercive influence strategies (i.e., those based on sanctions or rewards) are effective only when the target is highly dependent on the source of the influence. Argument structure theory posits that the structural content of a persuasive argument is critically related to its effectiveness (Areni 2002; Munch, Boller, and Swasy 1993), whereas dependence theory suggests that the effectiveness of coercive strategies is based on the level of dependence of the target on the source.

In the next section, we review the literature on channels influence strategies, argument structure theory, and dependence theory as the basis for our theoretical model. Following that section, we develop hypotheses on the impact of these influence strategies on compliance. Then, we discuss the research methods and findings and provide implications of these findings. Finally, we note the limitations of the study and suggest future directions for research.

Literature Review

Influence Strategies

Influence strategies are the communicated portion of influence attempts that one channel member uses to gain the compliance of another channel member. Such strategies can be used for simple coordination purposes or for more serious matters such as major interfirm initiatives. Influence strategies are classified as either coercive or noncoercive. Coercive influence strategies motivate compliance on the basis of the influence mechanism of source-controlled rewards and punishments, whereas noncoercive influence strategies operate by changing the attitude of the target about the desirability of the intended behavior (Frazier and Summers 1984, 1986). The predicted outcomes of our conceptual model are based on these two influence mechanisms (which have been confirmed by two meta-analyses conducted on influence behavior in channels of distribution; Johnson, Koenig, and Brown 1985; Johnson et al. 1993).

The underlying phenomenon of source-controlled consequences for desired behavior has been given different labels in channels research, such as contingent (John 1984; Scheer and Stern 1992), economic (Etgar 1978), direct outcome control (Kaulis, Spekman, and Bagozzi 1978), and mediated (Johnson, Koenig, and Brown 1985) influence mechanisms. With this influence mechanism, the underlying action may or may not be desirable to the target, yet the action is undertaken to gain an additional reward or to avoid being punished. With the noncoercive influence strategy, because attitude change must occur for compliance to take place, the more convincing the influence strategy is, the more likely compliance is to occur.

Frazier and Summers (1984) were the first to specify the six most commonly studied influence strategies in marketing channels research. Noncoercive influence strategies consist of Requests,[1] Information Exchange, and Recommendations, whereas coercive strategies consist of Promises, Threats, and Legalistic Pleas. (Note that throughout the article, we capitalize influence strategies to distinguish them from their structural components. For example, an influence strategy may or may not contain a request for a specific action; however, this structural component should not be confused with the influence strategy, which is conventionally referred to as Requests.) Subsequent research has demonstrated that Legalistic Pleas are a special case of Threats (e.g., Johnson et al. 1993). Prestudy interviews with owners and managers of distribution firms confirmed that Legalistic Pleas are perceived as Threats but are rarely used (for definitions of the influence strategies we use in this study, see Table 1). As we subsequently discuss in more detail, on the basis of argument structure theory, it was necessary to add a new noncoercive strategy to this taxonomy. We call this strategy Rationality.[2]

Argument Structure Theory

Argument structure theory from consumer behavior research has demonstrated that advertising messages with more thorough argument structure have a stronger positive impact on consumer beliefs and message acceptance than do those with less thorough argument structure (Areni 2002; Areni and Lutz 1988; Munch, Boller, and Swasy 1993). Aristotle originally described the structure of an ideal argument as a syllogism, and Toulmin (1958) subsequently referred to it as argument structure. Argumentation structure theory and rhetorical discourse present the ideal argument as a complete argument. A complete argument is ideal because it is predicted to have the highest level of influence. The three structural elements of a complete argument are claim, data, and warrant. The claim is an assertion, a request, or a demand put forth for acceptance. The data are information or facts that when linked to the claim offer

[1]Because Requests is devoid of any additional information, such as a discussion about the desirability of the requested action or a discussion of rewards or punishments, the actual influence mechanism of Requests is based on the target's inference. As one reviewer suggested, the target of influence may infer that there is a rational basis for Requests. Alternatively, the target may infer that sanctions would be applied for noncompliance. In this study, we accept the most common classification of requests as noncoercive and assume that the basis for compliance is on an inferred argument rather than on inferred sanctions. Our assumption is supported by our prestudy interviews with owners and managers of distribution firms.

[2]We developed the influence strategy of Rationality on the basis of an application and extension of argument structure theory. However, it should be noted that Gundlach and Cadotte (1994) examine an equivalent influence strategy in their research, which they call "information persuasion."

TABLE 1
Influence Strategies, Definitions, and Influence Mechanisms

Influence Strategy	Definition	Underlying Influence Mechanism
Rationality	The source presents reasons accompanied with supportive information for a target to comply with a request.	Changes in the perception of the desirability of compliance
Recommendations	The source predicts that the target will be more profitable if the target follows the source's suggestions.	Changes in the perception of the desirability of compliance
Requests	The source simply states the actions it would like the target to take.	Changes in the perception of the desirability of compliance
Information exchange	The source discusses general issues and procedures to try to alter the target's general perceptions without stating a request.	Changes in the perception of the desirability of compliance
Threats	The source threatens the target with a future penalty if the target does not comply with a request.	Source-controlled consequences
Promises	The source promises the target a reward if the target complies with a request.	Source-controlled consequences

evidentiary support for the claim. The warrant is the conclusion or linkage between the data and the claim. An example of a complete argument in a compliance context would be as follows: "I'd like you to promote the product only in these specific sales territories [claim]. This five-year forecast indicates that the target market will continue to grow in these territories [evidence]. Therefore, you would realize more profit if you promoted the product only in these territories [concluding statement or linkage between the evidence and the request]."

Frazier and Sheth (1985) suggest that influence strategies can be defined by whether or not two structural components are present. Thus, their work is useful in aiding the theoretical application of argument structure theory to influence strategies. They state that influence strategies can be weighted or unweighted. Weighted strategies include a discussion about the benefits of the intended action beyond its potential for a future reward or a future punishment, whereas unweighted strategies do not discuss the benefits of the intended actions. An example of an unweighted strategy might be a simple Request: "We would like you to start shipping in full rather than partial truckloads." A weighted strategy would discuss the logical benefits to the target of the intended action: "Your savings associated with shipping in full truckloads will more than offset any potential higher carry costs." Frazier and Sheth also state that strategies can be direct or indirect. Direct strategies include an explicit request for the actions that the source of influence wants the target to take, whereas indirect strategies do not directly discuss the request. (Again, note the difference between the Requests influence strategy and the request structural component.) An example of an indirect strategy would be Information Exchange, in which the source might simply say, "Many of our dealers have had great success with our new just-in-time system." The intention of the strategy is to convince the channel member to implement the new just-in-time system, yet this is not explicitly stated. Table 2 applies Frazier and Sheth's categories to each of Frazier and Summers' (1984) six influence strategies.

TABLE 2
Frazier and Sheth's (1985) Framework Adapted to Frazier and Summers's (1984, 1986) Influence Strategies

Influence Strategies	Weighted	Direct
Noncoercive		
Requests	No	Yes
Information exchange	Yes	No
Recommendations	Yes	Yes
Coercive		
Threats/legalistic pleas	No	Yes
Promises	No	Yes

By decomposing influence strategies into their structural components, we can map argument structure theory onto the structure of influence strategies. The direct request of a direct influence strategy is analogous to the claim in a complete argument, because a claim is an assertion, a request, or a demand put forth for acceptance. In the context of channel compliance, a source issues a request in the hope that the target will agree that compliance with the request is acceptable. In the language of Kelman and Hamilton (1989), the source communicates the specific response desired of the target (the request) in the hope that the target will perceive compliance as "prepotent" or the strongest alternative relative to other possible responses (including noncompliance). Thus, a request corresponds to a claim. Further refinement is required when we map weighted strategies onto the structural elements of data and warrant. A weighted strategy may contain the element of data/evidence (e.g., in the case of Information Exchange), the element of a concluding statement/warrant (e.g., in the case

of Recommendations), or both the evidence and a concluding statement (e.g., in the case of Rationality). Table 3 depicts each of the noncoercive influence strategies and denotes which of the three components of a complete argument are present in each strategy. This table shows that none of the noncoercive influence strategies (i.e., Requests, Information Exchange, and Recommendations) examined in prior studies have a complete argument structure. Thus, it is necessary to add the Rationality strategy, which has complete argument structure.

Dependence Theory

Most research on dependence in a marketing channels context draws on the theoretical work of Emerson (1962), who conceptualized dependence as the level of value that one firm can garner from another firm compared with the value it can garner from alternative firms in achieving its goals. Typically, channel studies include dependence as a precursor to the use of influence strategies (Boyle et al. 1992; Frazier and Rody 1991; Frazier and Summers 1986; Gundlach and Cadotte 1994). However, these studies do not elucidate how dependence and the use of influence strategies operate together to achieve compliance. Kelman and Hamilton (1989) provide some theoretical direction. They define dependence as the extent to which the target perceives the source as instrumental to the achievement of its goals, and they suggest that the target is dependent on the source to the extent that the target perceives that the source can facilitate or impede the target's goals. This perception is formed by (1) the target's perception that the source has the capacity to affect the target's goal achievement, which might take the form of controlling resources or having the ability to apply certain sanctions, and (2) the target's perception that the source will indeed use the capacities at its disposal.

We suggest that if the target perceives itself to be highly dependent on a source firm and the source attempts to communicate that it will apply sanctions in an influence attempt (i.e., Threats or Promises), the effect on compliance will be amplified. Keith, Jackson, and Crosby (1990, p. 31) explain, "When [the target] has a large stake in a relationship (e.g., a significant proportion of sales and profits accrue from the relationship), [the target] is more dependent on [the source] and is more likely to be tolerant of demands [e.g., Threats] made by [the source]." Conversely, it is our position that with the use of noncoercive influence strategies (i.e., Rationality, Recommendations, Information Exchange, and Requests), which are based on persuasion and not on coercion, dependence is not likely to be a major target concern (the use of persuasion gives the target room not to be persuaded).

Hypotheses

In the following section, we develop hypotheses based on a theoretical framework that suggests that noncoercive influence strategies are more or less effective on the basis of the thoroughness of their content and that coercive influence strategies result in compliance only when the target is highly dependent on the source. We depict this theory in Figure 1.

Relative Effectiveness of Noncoercive Influence Strategies on Compliance

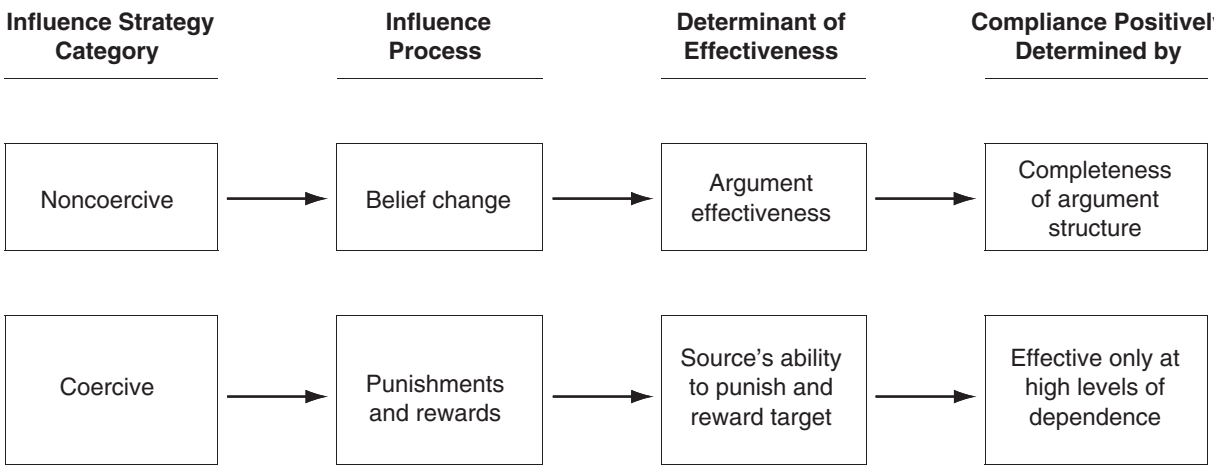
Frazier and Rody (1991) and Frazier and Summers (1984) state that noncoercive influence strategies rely primarily on changing the target's perception. In other words, the source attempts to convince the target that a certain course of action is warranted, and in the process, the target's attitude about the attractiveness of taking that action changes. Presumably, and consistent with attitude theory, when a target's attitude about the attractiveness of taking the action becomes positive, the target is more likely to act. Raven and Kruglanski (1970) theorize that influence behavior that changes perceptions results in positive influence, and presumably compliance, because the accepted logic would become a part of the target's cognitive structure. Together, this implies that noncoercive influence strategies, which are persuasive in nature, are likely to be positively associated with compliance. However, drawing on argument structure theory, we maintain that the thoroughness of the argument associated with the influence strategy is related to its relative effect on compliance. For example, an influence strategy that contains arguments that support a request may be more likely to result in compliance than an influence strategy that contains only a request without any communicated logical support for the request.

Consistent with argument structure theory, we posit that the Rationality influence strategy, which has a more thorough argument structure than the other three noncoercive influence strategies (i.e., Recommendations, Requests, and Information Exchange), has the strongest positive effect on compliance. In other words, we posit that Recommendations, Requests, and Information Exchange have incomplete argument structure, and thus they may lead to a target's faulty inference about the missing portions. Following this logic, Recommendations should have the next strongest

TABLE 3
Noncoercive Influence Strategy Argument Structure

		Weighted	
Influence Strategy	**Direct (Request explicitly stated)**	**Evidence (Data)**	**Concluding Statement (Warrant)**
Requests	Yes	No	No
Information exchange	No	Yes	No
Recommendation	Yes	No	Yes
Rationality	Yes	Yes	Yes

FIGURE 1
Theoretical Framework of Influence Strategy Effectiveness



impact on compliance because two of the three structural components are present, and therefore fewer inferences are necessary with Recommendations than with Requests and Information Exchange influence strategies.

Argument structure theory provides rationale for the relative effectiveness of the noncoercive influence strategies; additional support can be found in the concept of the quality of strong versus weak arguments that is included in the elaboration likelihood model that Petty and Cacioppo (1981) propose. Empirical studies have demonstrated that the central processing of strong arguments results in higher levels of persuasion and compliance than that of weak arguments. Although the specification of argument quality is not always precise across studies, Petty, Cacioppo, and Goldman (1981) suggest that a strong argument provides persuasive evidence (e.g., statistics, data) in support of a claim. Some researchers have suggested that argument quality resides primarily in the structure of the argument; that is, the elaboration likelihood model's strong argument quality consists of a complete argument structure, and weak argument quality consists of incomplete argument structure (Areni and Lutz 1988; Boller, Swasy, and Munch 1990). Thus, the elaboration likelihood model provides additional support for our contention that Rationality is a more effective influence strategy than Recommendations.

Argument structure theory supports our prediction that Rationality and Recommendations are more effective than Requests or Information Exchange strategies because Rationality and Recommendations have more thorough argument structure than do Requests or Information Exchange, and more thorough or complete arguments are more effective. That Recommendations is more effective than Requests is supported by several interpersonal empirical studies that demonstrate that a request in and of itself (whether processed centrally or peripherally) is less effective than if it is accompanied with supportive information (e.g., Folkes 1985; Langer, Blank, and Chanowitz 1978). However, argument structure theory cannot guide us in determining whether Requests is more, less, or equally as effective as the Information Exchange strategy.

Munch, Boller, and Swasy (1993) suggest that an argument devoid of both a claim and a warrant (analogous to Information Exchange) is even more likely to be interpreted inaccurately than an argument that consists solely of a claim (analogous to the Requests influence strategy). A lower likelihood of compliance with the use of Information Exchange versus Requests is due to Information Exchange being the most unfocused of the influence strategies. The Information Exchange influence strategy lacks specificity as to what the source wants the target to do. The specific action that the target wants the source to undertake may remain clouded, whereas with the Requests influence strategy, the desired action the source wants the target to take is explicitly noted. Thus, Information Exchange is likely to result in more faulty inferences than Requests. Therefore, we posit that Information Exchange is likely to be less effective than Requests and thus the least effective noncoercive influence strategy overall. Stated formally:

> H_1: (a) The Rationality influence strategy has a stronger positive influence on compliance than do the other noncoercive influence strategies. (b) Recommendations has the next strongest influence on compliance, followed by (c) Requests. (d) Information Exchange is the least effective noncoercive influence strategy.

Coercive Influence Strategies and Compliance

Influence strategies based on the influence mechanism of source-controlled consequence (i.e., Threats and Promises) offer threats of future penalties for lack of compliance or promises of future incentives for compliance (Frazier and Summers 1986). A target of influence in a dyadic channels relationship is likely to comply with these coercive influence strategies only if the attainment of the rewards or the avoidance of penalties can be administered by the source of influence and only if the rewards or penalties are important to the target in achieving its desired goals. "Dependence

refers to a firm's need to maintain the business relationship in order to achieve desired goals" (Frazier 1984, p. 69). If the target can leave the relationship easily or with few consequences (and obtain equivalent rewards or avoid equivalent penalties more cheaply elsewhere), dependence is low, and the impact of coercion is dulled (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987).

When the importance of a relationship is low, the value of complying with coercive influence strategies should logically be lower as well. Firms stay in poor relationships only if there are no viable alternatives, that is, when dependence is high. This suggests that at lower levels of dependence, the use of coercive influence strategies is ineffective. The target of influence is likely to comply with coercive influence strategies only when it is forced to do so because of its dependence on the source of coercive influence strategies. Thus:

H_2: There is a positive interaction between dependence and the coercive influence strategies of (a) Threats and (b) Promises on compliance.

Method

Research Context and Sample

We obtained the names and addresses of 6049 owners and managers of distribution firms of specialty tools and fasteners in the United States (Standard Industrial Classification codes 5072-05 and 5072-13). Because it was likely that many of the people included in this list were not directly involved in channel management, it was necessary to screen them to ensure that the final sample included only key informants who were the primary decision makers in their firms and who were the most knowledgeable about their firm's interactions with suppliers. We mailed prestamped return postcards that asked the owners and managers about their knowledge regarding the topics covered in the study. A total of 1038 people, who constituted our sample of key informants, indicated that they were knowledgeable about the topics in the study. These respondents were mailed a questionnaire and a return envelope. In line with the survey methods that Dillman (2000) suggests, we sent a reminder postcard seven working days after the initial questionnaire mailings. A total of 363 usable surveys were returned.

As an additional competency check to ensure that our respondents were indeed key informants, we included two items in the survey as informant competency checks. The two items asked (1) how much the informant knew about his or her firm's perspective on the study topics and (2) how much the informant knew about specific experiences with the source firm. Of the informants, 99% had knowledge about their firm's perspective, and 98.2% had knowledge about experiences with the source firm. Thus, we eliminated seven cases from the database for the purpose of testing the hypotheses, which left 356 usable survey responses for analysis.

To check for nonresponse bias, we mailed 150 letters and prestamped return postcards to a random list of nonrespondents. Of these postcards, 32% were returned. We did not find any significant differences between respondents and nonrespondents. In addition, in line with Armstrong and Overton's (1977) guidelines, we found no significant differences between early and late responders.

Measures

For details of all scale items, see the Appendix. Participants responded to five-point Likert-type scales for all variables. The reliability for all scales exceeds the recommended cutoff criteria: Cronbach's alpha > .70 (Nunnally 1978), composite reliability > .70 (Fornell and Larcker 1981), and variance extracted > .50 (Hair et al. 1998). For summary statistics and the correlation matrix for all scales, see Table 4. We measured the scales for the influence strategies on the basis of the frequency of usage for each influence strategy over the past year. The scales were anchored by 1 ("never") and 5 ("very often"). We drew measures for Threats, Promises, Information Exchange, and Recommendations from Venkatesh, Kohli, and Zaltman's (1995) work and for Requests from Boyle and colleagues' (1992) work. We based the Rationality items on Gundlach and Cadotte's (1994) information persuasion scale. We made minor adjustments to the scales to conform to the context of interest.

TABLE 4
Correlation Matrix and Summary Statistics

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Rationality	1.00							
2. Recommendations	.45	1.00						
3. Requests	.23	.00	1.00					
4. Information exchange	.33	.19	.33	1.00				
5. Threats	–.03	–.09	.12	.03	1.00			
6. Promises	.37	.47	–.04	.17	.06	1.00		
7. Dependence	.18	–.05	.17	.18	.00	.04	1.00	
8. Compliance	.21	–.07	.20	.13	.09	.04	.43	1.00
Mean	2.73	2.96	2.52	2.21	2.01	2.82	3.25	3.27
Standard deviation	.85	1.07	.93	.84	1.21	1.10	1.01	.77
Composite trait reliability	.80	.91	.83	.79	.95	.90	.78	.88
Variance extracted	.58	.78	.63	.56	.87	.75	.55	.71

Notes: Correlations greater than ±.11 are significant at $p < .05$.

On the basis of current research and consistent with our hypotheses, we used a measure of dependence that was designed to reflect the criticality/scarcity of the source of supply (Andaleeb 1996; Kumar, Scheer, and Steenkamp 1998). We used the target's perception of his or her dependence on the source because it is this perception, rather than the source's perception, that affects the target's compliance decision. Kelman and Hamilton (1989) suggest that a target makes a quick "visceral" assessment of its dependence on the source as a precondition for compliance. We adapted dependence items from Kumar, Scheer, and Steenkamp's (1998) work as a reflective measure. This five-point Likert-type scale was anchored by 1 ("very strongly disagree") and 5 ("very strongly agree").

Compliance refers to the target acting in accordance with an influence attempt from the source. We asked respondents to assess how frequently they complied with the influence strategies that the source used over the past year (i.e., the same period of time that respondents provided information on influence strategy usage). These scales were anchored by 1 ("never") and 5 ("very often"). We borrowed and modified the items from Hunt, Mentzer, and Danes's (1987) multi-item measure of compliance probability. Whereas their scale measures the probability or intention to comply, we adapted the scales to reflect actual compliance rather than an estimate of the probability of future compliance. (This distinction is important and is analogous to the distinction between a behavioral intention and actual behavior, which are often not highly correlated.)

Before developing the pretest questionnaire, we conducted interviews with dealer principals and domain experts to ensure the development of appropriate measures. We paid particular attention to the development of the compliance and Rationality measures. Next, we pretested the questionnaire with 460 owners and managers of distribution firms of specialty tools and fasteners who we did not include in the final study. We asked each owner or manager to respond to the questionnaire and to indicate any instructions or questions that they believed were confusing. We received 126 responses, of which 107 were usable (a response rate of 23%). On the basis of these responses, we shortened the questionnaire and eliminated several open-ended questions. At this stage, we determined that the questionnaire was ready for the final study.

Because we are exploring the relative effectiveness of each influence strategy, it is imperative that our measures demonstrate discriminant validity and appropriate factor structure. Therefore, we initially ran an exploratory factor analysis on the influence strategy measures. On the basis of a baseline eigenvalue of 1.0, we arrived at a six-factor solution using oblique rotation. As we show in Table 5, the six influence strategies have good factor structure.

Next, we analyzed all measures in a single confirmatory factor analysis model using LISREL 8.54 (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1996). Model fit exceeded the standard cutoffs for acceptable fit: $\chi^2 = 336$, degrees of freedom = 224; root mean square error of approximation = .038; nonnormed fit index = .98; and comparative fit index = .98. Convergent validity is indicated when the path coefficients (loadings) for each latent-trait factor to their manifest indicators are statistically significant. All items loaded significantly on their corresponding latent factors. Using the procedure that Fornell and Larker (1981) recommend, we obtained discriminant validity for all pairs of measures. To test for unidimensionality, we analyzed each construct as a one-factor scale, using confirmatory factor analysis (Gerbing and Anderson 1988). In each case, the single-factor model had an acceptable fit (i.e., root mean square error of approxima-

TABLE 5
Exploratory Factor Analyses of the Influence Strategies

	Factors					
Items	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Rationality 1	.710					
Rationality 2	.869					
Rationality 3	.630					.113
Recommendations 1		.732				.101
Recommendations 2		.927				
Recommendations 3		.908				
Requests 1		–.119	.689			
Requests 2			.837			
Requests 3			.822			
Information exchange 1	.160			.615		
Information exchange 2				.853		
Information exchange 3				.756		
Threats 1					.920	
Threats 2					.985	
Threats 3					.904	
Promises 1						.829
Promises 2						.838
Promises 3						.902

Notes: For clarity, we include only factor loading greater than ±.100.

tion < .08, comparative fit index > .95), which indicates that the constructs are unidimensional.

Results

We used multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses (Cohen et al. 2003). To avoid problems with multicollinearity, we mean-centered the exogenous variables, as Cohen and colleagues (2003) recommend. The variance inflation factors indicate that multicollinearity is not a threat to the conclusions of the study. To test the interaction hypotheses, we conducted an interaction regression. However, there is some controversy in the literature regarding the interpretation of main effects in an interaction regression equation because the beta coefficients represent conditional relationships for the independent variables in the estimated model, whereas with a main effects–only model, the coefficients represent the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable across all levels of the other independent variables (Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan 1990). Thus, to test H_1, we conducted a main effects–only model, which we specify in Table 6. To test H_2, we specified a second interaction regression model, following Cohen and colleagues' (2003) guidelines. The results of the two regression models appear in Table 6, and we specify them in the following equations. The main effects model explains 24% of the variation in the dependent variable ($F_{(7, 348)} = 15.9$, $p < .000$), and the interaction model explains 28% of the variation in the dependent variable ($F_{(9, 346)} = 17.2$, $p < .000$). We specified the main effects model as follows:

$$(1)\quad \text{Compliance} = \alpha_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \beta_6X_6 + \beta_7X_7 + \varepsilon_1,$$

where

X_1 = Rationality,
X_2 = Recommendations,
X_3 = Requests,
X_4 = Information Exchange,
X_5 = Dependence,
X_6 = Threats, and
X_7 = Promises.

The interaction model was specified as follows:

$$(2)\ \text{Compliance} = \alpha_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \beta_6X_6 + \beta_7X_7 + \beta_8X_6X_5 + \beta_8X_7X_5 + \varepsilon_1.$$

Relative Impact of the Noncoercive Influence Strategies on Compliance

The student t-test for each beta coefficient in the estimated regression model represents the probability that the coefficient is statistically different from zero and thus meaningful. To test for the relative magnitude of the regression coefficients, we conducted statistical comparisons between each pair of beta coefficients in accordance with the test procedure for multiple regression analysis using SAS 8.02 (for a summary of the results of these tests, see Table 7).[3] Follow-

[3]In accordance with the suggestion of a reviewer, we tested for the equivalence of the distributions for each measure. The chi-

TABLE 6
Results of Multiple Regression Analyses (on the Dependent Variable "Compliance")

Independent Variable	Hypotheses	Standardized Coefficient	t-Value	Hypotheses Supported?
Main Effects Model				
Rationality	H_{1a}	.224	3.80**	Yes
Recommendations	H_{1b}	–.166	–2.81**	No
Requests	H_{1c}	.090	1.76*	Mixed support
Information exchange	H_{1d}	.013	.25	Mixed support
Dependence		.391	8.18**	
Threats		.045	.95	
Promises		–.029	–.52	
Model Fit		Adjusted R^2 = 24%	$F_{(7, 348)} = 15.9$	
Interaction Effects Model				
Rationality		.232	4.04**	
Recommendations		–.170	–2.94**	
Requests		.083	1.66*	
Information exchange		.000	.00	
Dependence		.418	8.92**	
Threats		.083	1.79*	
Promises		–.019	–.34	
Threats × dependence	H_{2a}	.100	2.19**	Yes
Promises × dependence	H_{2b}	.028	.61	No
Model Fit		Adjusted R^2 = 28%	$F_{(9, 346)} = 17.2$	

*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.

TABLE 7
Paired Tests for the Equivalence of the Standardized Beta Coefficients (Test of H_1)

Null Test Hypotheses	F-Statistic (degrees of freedom = 1, 346)	*p*-Value	Reject Null?	Conclusion	H_1 Supported?
$\beta_{Rationality} = \beta_{Recommendations}$	18.24	.0001	Yes	$\beta_{Rationality} > \beta_{Recommendations}$	Yes
$\beta_{Rationality} = \beta_{Requests}$	4.05	.0451	Yes	$\beta_{Rationality} > \beta_{Requests}$	Yes
$\beta_{Rationality} = \beta_{Information\ exchange}$	7.75	.0056	Yes	$\beta_{Rationality} > \beta_{Information\ exchange}$	Yes
$\beta_{Recommendations} = \beta_{Requests}$	11.57	.0007	Yes	$\beta_{Recommendations} < \beta_{Requests}$	No
$\beta_{Recommendations} = \beta_{Information\ exchange}$	18.24	.0001	Yes	$\beta_{Recommendations} < \beta_{Information\ exchange}$	No
$\beta_{Requests} = \beta_{Information\ exchange}$	.93	.3366	No	$\beta_{Requests} = \beta_{Information\ exchange}$	No

ing this approach, H_{1a} is supported because Rationality has the largest positive impact on compliance (standardized coefficient = .224, t-value = 3.80, $p < .01$) among the four noncoercive influence strategies, and we reject the null test hypotheses that the beta coefficient for Rationality is equal to the beta coefficients for Recommendations, Requests, and Information Exchange. Contrary to expectations, Recommendations has a negative effect on compliance (standardized coefficient = –.166, t-value = –2.81, $p < .01$), and not surprisingly given this negative value, the tests results we present in Table 7 indicate that the beta coefficient for Recommendations is significantly less than the other three (positive) beta coefficients. Thus, H_{1b} is not supported. Given this result, we conducted further analysis to determine whether any intervening factors could explain the negative relationship between Recommendations and compliance. We discuss this analysis in the "*Post Hoc* Analysis" section. Requests has the next strongest influence on compliance (standardized coefficient = .09, t-value = 1.76, $p < .05$), followed by Information Exchange (standardized coefficient = .013, t-value = not significant). Although we have concluded that the effects of Requests and Information Exchange are significantly less than the effect of Rationality on compliance, on the basis of the test results, we cannot conclude that the difference between the beta coefficients of Requests and Information Exchange is significant (see Table 7). Thus, there is mixed support for H_{1c} and H_{1d}. With the exception of Recommendations, there appears to be evidence that the argument completeness of noncoercive influence strategies is related to their effectiveness in gaining compliance. At a minimum, we can conclude that the Rationality strategy, which has a complete argument structure, is significantly more effective than noncoercive influence strategies that have less complete argument structure.

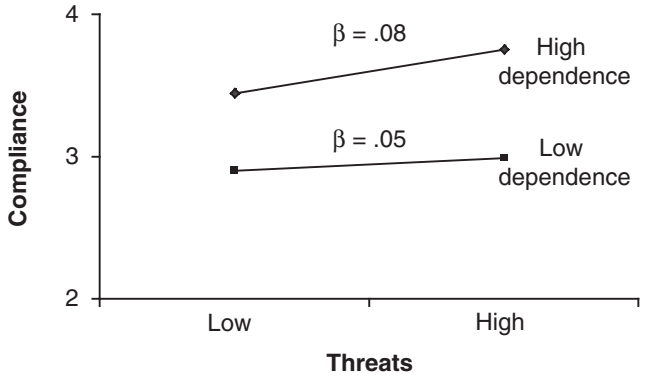
The Interaction Between Coercive Influence Strategies and Dependence on Compliance

In line with Cohen and colleagues' (2003) guidelines, we estimated the interaction effects between the coercive influence strategies and dependence on compliance using multiple regression analysis. The interaction between Threats and dependence is significant (standardized coefficient = .10, t-value = 2.19, $p < .01$), indicating that the effect of Threats on compliance varied across levels of dependence. We conducted simple slope tests to explore the form of the interaction (see Cohen et al. 2003). This test involves estimating the slope of the relationship between Threats on compliance at high and low levels of dependence (i.e., one standard deviation above for high and one standard deviation below for low). We plot the results using the unstandardized estimates and intercepts in Figure 2 (Cohen et al. 2003). This analysis indicates that Threats has a positive impact on compliance when dependence is high ($\beta = .08$, t-value = 3.71, $p < .01$) but is not significantly related to compliance when dependence levels are low ($\beta = .05$). Thus, H_{2a} is supported. The interaction between Promises and dependence on compliance is not significant; thus, H_{2b} is not supported.

Post Hoc *Analysis*

Generally accepted theory holds that the use of Recommendations should be positively related to relational outcomes, and most authors would assume that the use of Recommendations is also positively associated with compliance. Yet we found that the use of Recommendations has a significant, negative impact on compliance. On reviewing the literature further, we found that such results may not be as unexpected as most researchers in the field would traditionally assume. Many published studies that have conducted empirical analyses with the Recommendations influence strategy have had unexpected results. The first study largely

FIGURE 2
Threats × Dependence on Compliance Interaction



squared test for differences between all measure distributions was 14.65 with 8 degrees of freedom, which is not significant at a *p*-value of .05, indicating that the distributions are equivalent.

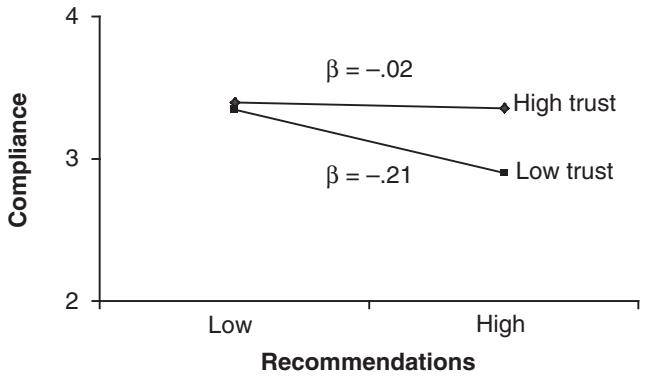
responsible for the subsequent examination of influence strategies also had unexpected results with Recommendations. Frazier and Summers (1984) found that Recommendations correlated negatively with Information Exchange and positively with Promises, Threats, and Legalistic Pleas. Furthermore, they found that Recommendations negatively correlated with interfirm agreements. Frazier and Summers (1986) found that the use of Recommendations was negatively related to accommodative intentions. Boyle and colleagues (1992) found that Recommendations had a negative correlation with relationalism. Frazier and Rody (1991) found that Recommendations fell into the same group (factor) as Promises, Threats, and Legalistic Pleas for both supplier and dealer samples. These findings indicate that an additional intervening variable may be causing these unexpected results.

Our application of argument structure theory to influence strategies, the addition of the Rationality influence strategy to the influence strategy taxonomy, and Rationality's distinction from the Recommendations strategy provide a promising explanation for both our findings and prior unexpected empirical findings regarding the Recommendations influence strategy. Unlike the Rationality influence strategy, in which a complete argument is given in support of the desired behavior, Recommendations provides a request and a concluding statement without evidence to support it. Thus, it is incumbent on the target to trust that this evidence exists and that there is truth in the source's concluding statement, or the target must trust that the source is behaving benevolently toward the target in making its Recommendations. Thus, there is a theoretical rationale that trust is potentially important for the successful use of Recommendations.

To test this *post hoc* hypothesis, we added trust and the interaction between Recommendations and trust as exogenous variables to the interaction model we specified in Equation 2. The main effect of trust (standardized coefficient = .115, t-value = 2.14, $p < .01$) and the interaction term (standardized coefficient = .089, t-value = 1.73, $p < .05$) were significant. We conducted simple slope tests to explore the form of the interaction, following the procedure that we discussed previously. We plot the results using the unstandardized estimates and intercepts in Figure 3. This analysis indicates that the use of Recommendations is not significantly related to compliance when trust levels are high ($\beta = -.02$) but that there is a negative impact on compliance when trust is low ($\beta = -.21$, t-value = –3.56, $p < .01$). Thus, our *post hoc* analysis suggests that the use of Recommendations is counterproductive when trust is low.

Although additional interactions were not predicted or indicated because of mixed findings (as in the case of Recommendations), we conducted further exploratory analyses for possible interactions to provide a richer examination of the data. We did not find any significant interactions between dependence and the remaining influence strategies (other than the significant interaction reported between dependence and Threats) or between dependence and trust. We found a significant interaction between trust and Recommendations (as we discussed previously) and between trust and Requests; however, trust did not significantly interact with the other influence strategies. Given no a priori expectations for an interaction between trust and Requests, this finding should be viewed with caution.

FIGURE 3
Recommendations × Trust on Compliance Interaction



Discussion

This study advances Frazier and Sheth's (1985) and Frazier and Summers's (1984, 1986) work on influence strategies. Argument structure theory holds that the more complete the argument structure of the communication that occurs in an influence attempt, the more effective is the communication. A complete argument structure in rhetorical discourse (Toulmin 1958) consists of (1) a request, (2) evidence, and (3) a concluding statement that links the evidence with the request. We categorize noncoercive influence strategies (i.e., Recommendations, Information Exchange, and Requests) on the basis of the number of elements of a complete argument that the strategy contains. Specifically, we note that Recommendations includes two elements, the request and a concluding statement that links the evidence and the request; Information Exchange contains only one element, evidence; and Requests contains only one element, the request. As a result of the application of this theory, we add a fourth noncoercive influence strategy, Rationality, because it contains all three elements of a complete argument structure.

In support of our theory, we find that use of the Rationality influence strategy is more likely to result in compliance than is the use of influence strategies that contain only one or two of these elements. However, contrary to our expectations, we find that Recommendations has a negative effect on compliance (*post hoc* analysis found an interaction between Recommendations and trust). As we expected, Requests, which includes only one element of a complete argument, has a small yet positive impact on compliance. Finally, we find that Information Exchange has the least (i.e., not significant) association with compliance. In summary, there is some support for the contention that the completeness of noncoercive influence strategies is related to their effectiveness in gaining compliance. However, the pattern of results suggests that compliance effectiveness

depends more on whether all three elements of a complete argument structure are present or not than on the number of elements (i.e., two of three elements versus one of three elements) that make up a complete argument structure. In other words, compliance effectiveness may be enhanced if all three elements of a complete structure are present, but if any of the three elements are not present, a firm may make inferences about the missing elements of the argument structure before deciding to comply or not to comply with another influence attempt. Any inferences about the missing elements of a complete argument structure may be realistic or faulty inferences that are affected by other relationship variables (e.g., lack of trust).

This study finds no main effects for Threats and Promises on compliance. A stream of prior research that suggests that the use of Threats and Promises is damaging to interfirm relationships and our findings that Threats and Promises are ineffective might lead managers to avoid the use of these influence strategies altogether. However, at least two conditions suggest that the use of these strategies are appropriate. First, this study suggests the use of Threats is defensible when the target of influence is highly dependent on the source. Second, Scheer and Stern (1992) suggest that the use of Threats and Promises is not damaging to interfirm relationships if compliance leads to positive target performance.

Finally, we found that the use of Recommendations is negatively related to compliance, and we provided a *post hoc* explanation for this finding based on the significant interaction between Recommendations and trust. As we discussed previously, a review of the literature found many studies in which the use of Recommendations resulted in unanticipated outcomes (often significant in the nonhypothesized direction). The application of argument structure theory to influence strategies has demonstrated that Recommendations has only two of the three structural components that constitute a complete argument. Only with this theoretical advance can we explain these many unexpected previous findings. Recommendations is, in essence, advice without evidentiary support. Thus, when trust is low, it is likely that the target will view that advice as one-sided in the source's favor. We believe that this finding is a major contribution, particularly in light of the many unexplained and unexpected results across prior studies.

Several points regarding the role of dependence and the effectiveness of influence strategies in gaining compliance should be noted. First, Gundlach and Cadotte (1994, p. 525) suggest that "increasing dependence between exchange partners promotes cooperation rather than conflict" (and presumably compliance), and Frazier (1984) argues that dependence should be a direct antecedent of outcome variables. We find that dependence has a significant main effect on compliance. Indeed, our results indicate that dependence had a larger main effect on compliance than did any of the influence strategies. The size of the direct, positive effect of dependence on compliance in this study and the significant dependence moderation of the effect of one influence strategy (Threats) on compliance (discussed subsequently) show that dependence is a strong determinant of compliance. This provides further evidence that increasing dependence between channel members can be beneficial under some circumstances.

Second, channel studies have found that the frequency of coercive strategy usage is inversely related to target dependence (e.g., Frazier and Rody 1991; Frazier and Summers 1986). This may be due to the perception that the use of noncoercive influence strategies is ineffective under low target dependence. Thus, the source might rely on coercive strategies more frequently as a perceived "last resort." However, in conditions of low target dependence, a relatively frequent use of coercive strategies may not lead to compliance. Indeed, our results indicate that the use of coercive strategies under low dependence levels is ineffective. Thus, both the literature and our findings indicate that when target dependence is low, the source is more likely to use coercive influence strategies but that these strategies are also more likely to be ineffective. This issue has important managerial implications.

In summary, this study makes several important contributions. We emphasize that the effectiveness of channels' influence strategies in gaining compliance (their fundamental purpose) has not been the focus of prior published research. For that reason, this study provides fruitful avenues for further research and useful guidelines for channel managers. We presented a comprehensive theory that decomposes noncoercive influence strategies into three structural components and that argues that the relative effectiveness of a noncoercive influence strategy depends on the completeness of the influence strategy's argument structure. There is evidence that influence strategies with more complete argument structure are more effective than influence strategies with less complete argument structure. This theory, which is confirmed by our empirical findings, demonstrates the necessity for the inclusion of the Rationality influence strategy to the existing influence strategies taxonomy. Our theory suggests and finds support for an interaction effect between coercive influence strategies and dependence. Finally, the many counterintuitive empirical findings of the Recommendations influence strategy (including our preliminary findings of a negative direct effect for Recommendations on compliance) can be explained by a previously unidentified interaction between trust and Recommendations. This result and our findings of the importance of dependence on compliance outcomes provide additional support for the importance of the cooperative-based governance of channel relationships.

Limitations and Further Research

Because our sample consists of a single industry, the results may have limited generalizability. However, this limitation should be somewhat tempered because every respondent represented a unique firm. In addition, our study is based on cross-sectional data. Several researchers have noted that there is a need for longitudinal studies to advance the understanding of the impact of cumulative interactions between firms in forming long-term relationships (e.g., Geyskens, Steenkamp, and Kumar 1998; Jap 1999). Future longitudinal studies should also examine the sequential use of influence strategies. It is possible that certain sequences of influence strategies have differential effects. Further-

more, it is logical to assume that in at least some cases, the use of coercive strategies is a desperate attempt used only after other influence attempts have failed. To the extent that this is true, cross-sectional studies may underrepresent the effectiveness of coercive influence strategies.

As we have noted, the target must go through an inference-making process when a source uses Requests. We suggest that the target infers that the source has a logical rationale for the request. This point of view is consistent with the many studies that label Requests as noncoercive (see n. 1). However, the target might also infer that sanctions would result for noncompliance. Indeed, the latter assumption was the basis for Frazier and Summers's (1984) original conception of Requests. Further research should attempt to operationalize Requests that are associated with assumed logical rationales and those that are based on coercion.

Individual influence strategies should be examined in more detail. For example, we examine the nature of some influence strategies on the basis of the thoroughness of their information. The nature of the request is also likely to have an effect on compliance. The more the source asks for (i.e., the greater the imposition of the request), the less likely the target is to comply (Bagozzi, Yi, and Baumgartner 1990). In other words, if a manufacturer asks a dealer to double inventory levels, the dealer is less likely to comply than if the manufacturer makes a minor request, such as a temporary change in delivery schedules. Mohr, Fisher, and Nevin (1996) note that the media by which an influence attempt is communicated (e.g., face-to-face, telephone, e-mail, written) and other communications facets (e.g., frequency, bidirectionality, formality) can have an effect on influence strategy outcomes. Therefore, we suggest, as does Kim (2000), that there is a need to examine more thoroughly the specific details of influence strategies and the nature of communication in which they take place. An episodic study design would be helpful for examining these topics.

As one reviewer suggested, because our dependent measure for compliance is based on a global level and because influence strategies are measured according to the frequency of their use, it is possible that the dependent variable is underaccounting for the relative effectiveness of effective strategies that are used infrequently. Similarly, strategies that are used frequently may be overaccounted for in terms of their relative effectiveness on the dependent measure. We offer two solutions for addressing this issue in further research. First, an episodic study design that examines a single influence attempt and a single compliance outcome would unambiguously and directly determine the effectiveness of each influence strategy on a strategy-by-strategy basis. Second, more precise measures of compliance could be developed by asking respondents both how frequently an influence strategy has been used and how likely they would be to comply with that influence strategy if it were used.

Note that as with prior channel studies, we examine the use of influence strategies on an individual basis rather than in conjunction with one another. As Frazier (1999) suggests, examining the use of influence strategies in conjunction with one another is an important avenue for further research. Certain combinations or mixes of influence strategies may yield different levels of effectiveness. For example, an extension of our argument structure rationale for the effectiveness of influence strategies might suggest that a Threat or Promise used in conjunction with Rationality is more effective. Threats and Promises do not include a rational argument on their own, and thus whether they are more effective when used with a rational argument should be investigated.

Several final recommendations can be made in light of our findings. First, the Rationality influence strategy should be included in further influence strategy research, given its unique factor structure and differential impact on compliance. Second, we found that Recommendations has a negative impact on compliance when trust is low; thus, the relationship between noncoercive influence strategies with incomplete argument structure and trust should be investigated further. Third, we found that Threats were effective only at high levels of dependence and that Promises were completely ineffective. Because coercive influence strategies may be used more frequently in certain situations than in others (i.e., when all other tactics have failed or when a target has initially agreed to comply and then has second thoughts) and because using coercive strategies more frequently may render them less effective, further research should examine the use of coercive influence strategies on a longitudinal basis.

APPENDIX
Scale Items, Reliabilities, and Item Loadings

Rationality (α = .80)[a]
1. Made a case based on sharing specific information or data that your firm should comply. (.79)
2. Made a case based on sharing market research related to their request that you should comply. (.74)
3. Made a case based on past experience with similar issues that you should comply. (.75)

Recommendations (α = .91)[a]
1. Provided a picture of the anticipated positive impact to your firm that his or her recommended course of action will have. (.83)
2. Predicted positive consequences from the environment (e.g., that your firm would be more profitable) if you complied with their request. (.95)
3. Suggested you would be more successful financially if you followed their advice. (.86)

Requests (α = .83)[a]
1. Asked you to accept new ideas without specifying rewards or penalties. (.71)
2. Inquired if you would be willing to comply with a request without mention of rewards or penalties. (.81)
3. Shared a desire for your firm to make specific changes without incentives. (.85)

APPENDIX
Continued

Information Exchange (α = .79)[a]
1. Provided you with market information without indicating what your firm should do. (.63)
2. Presented competitive information without indicating any action that needed to be taken. (.82)
3. Shared information about his or her company without explanation about his or her objective(s) in sharing this information. (.78)

*Threat*s (α = .95)[a]
1. Indicated that there would be a penalty for noncompliance. (.92)
2. Threatened to discontinue specific benefits for noncompliance. (.97)
3. Stated that your firm would lose preferential status for noncompliance. (.91)

Promises (α = .90)[a]
1. Offered an incentive for compliance with their request. (.85)
2. Promised your firm a reward for your firm's cooperation. (.85)
3. Indicated how they would reward your firm's conformance with a request. (.90)

Dependence (α = .78)[b]
1. The work we do with this supplier is very important to our success. (.76)
2. There are few firms that could provide us with comparable output to what we obtain from this supplier. (.75)
3. Our total costs of switching from this supplier to a competing firm would be costly. (.71)

Compliance (α = .84)[a]
1. We accommodate what this supplier would like for us to do. (.82)
2. When this supplier asks us to change, we adjust accordingly. (.80)
3. My firm accommodates the desires of this supplier. (.91)

[a]We used a five-point Likert-type scale for these measures, anchored by 1 = "never" and 5 = "very often."
[b]We used a five-point Likert-type scale, anchored by 1 = "very strongly disagree" and 5 = "very strongly agree."
Notes: α = Cronbach's alpha scale reliability. We report standardized item loadings in parentheses following each item.

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