

A Strategic SRM Framework Integrating RDT and TCT for SMES in Cross-Border E-Commerce

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Abstract

The rapid growth of cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) has expanded global market access for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), but it has also introduced significant challenges in managing supplier relationships. This study investigates how CBEC SMEs can enhance Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) to improve delivery performance. Drawing on Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) and Transaction Cost Theory (TCT), the research develops a conceptual framework that connects key supplier challenges, including overdependence, poor communication, lack of contractual governance and absence of performance monitoring with structured SRM mechanisms. A qualitative research approach is adopted, supported by a semi-structured interview with the CEO of a Chinese CBEC SME to illustrate common governance failures and their operational consequences. The proposed framework identifies four core mechanisms: supplier diversification, communication structuring, long-term contracting, and performance-based evaluation, each associated with measurable performance indicators. The study contributes to both theory and practice by integrating RDT and TCT into a conceptual framework that addresses the combined problems of external dependency and coordination inefficiency. It offers SMEs a structured governance strategy while advancing the theoretical integration of RDT and TCT in supply chain contexts. The study clarifies how CBEC SMEs experience supplier dependence and coordination challenges, and how structured SRM mechanisms can be designed to address these issues.

Keywords: Supplier Relationship Management (SRM), Resource Dependence Theory (RDT), Transaction Cost Theory (TCT), Cross-Border E-Commerce (CBEC), Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Introduction

The cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, driven by the rise of online platforms, which have opened up global markets to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Global expansion presents both substantial opportunities and challenges. It provides SMEs with access to global value chains, such as high-quality information (Epede & Wang, 2022), but they face barriers such as supplier relationship management difficulties (Karmaker et al., 2022). These challenges are particularly critical in global supply contexts, where delays, inconsistent communication, and

limited supplier responsiveness can disrupt order fulfillment. As such, there is a growing need for SMEs to develop robust Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) mechanisms to maintain delivery performance.

However, despite the growing interest in SRM, existing research remains limited in two critical ways. Most studies focus on large or manufacturing firms, offering little insight into how CBEC SMEs manage supplier dependence and coordination challenges. In addition, RDT and TCT are often applied in isolation, leaving a gap in explaining how SRM can address both dependence-driven vulnerabilities and transaction-related risks simultaneously. This study builds its theoretical foundation on two complementary perspectives: Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) and Transaction Cost Theory (TCT). RDT explains how organizations manage interdependencies by securing critical resources through strategic partnerships (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), while TCT emphasizes the costs associated with negotiating, monitoring, and enforcing supplier relationships (Williamson, 1981). Integrating these perspectives offers a dual lens for understanding how structured SRM practices help SMEs reduce resource dependence and improve coordination efficiency.

Building on this theoretical foundation, the study examines how SMEs in the CBEC sector strengthen their SRM practices to enhance delivery performance. The analysis focuses on mechanisms such as supplier diversification, long-term contracting, and performance-based evaluation, which serve as practical components of SRM that structure supplier interactions and govern supply chain relationships. Through this analytical lens, the study explains how effective SRM can simultaneously reduce supply dependency and minimize coordination-related costs. The findings are expected to contribute to both academic scholarship and SME practice by providing a framework for developing more resilient and cost-efficient supplier management strategies in global markets.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do CBEC SMEs encounter supplier relationship challenges related to dependence and coordination?

RQ2: How can RDT and TCT be integrated into a structured SRM framework that addresses these challenges?

The remainder of this study is organized into several sections. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on SRM, RDT, and TCT. Section 3 outlines the research methodology. Section 4 presents the case illustration and the conceptual SRM framework. Section 5 discusses the theoretical and practical implications. Section 6 concludes the study with final remarks and recommendations for future research.

Literature Review

Supplier Relationship Management (SRM)

Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) has evolved from a narrow procurement activity focused on ordering process and performance management to a strategic tool for competitive advantage (Jain, 2023). This transformation has been driven by globalization, and increasing supply chain risks (Zhao, 2025). It is now recognized as a strategic practice aimed at building strong supplier partnerships to streamline sourcing, reduce risks, and enhance competitiveness (Mafanele et al., 2025). SRM can be seen as the systematic management of interactions with suppliers to ensure not only efficiency and reliability in transactions but also

long-term collaboration and shared benefits. In this sense, suppliers are no longer viewed as temporary providers of goods and services, but as strategic partners whose capabilities and performance directly shape the firm's long-term competitiveness.

Beyond operational efficiency, modern SRM programs also contribute to risk management and sustainability by diversifying sources, ensuring ethical sourcing, and promoting resilience in global supply chains (Zhao, 2025). Simultaneously, SRM also plays a critical role in enabling supplier-led innovation by fostering supplier innovativeness, strengthening collaboration, and helping firms attain preferred customer status (Yang et al., 2023). By cultivating trust and strategic alignment, SRM helps firms navigate uncertainties, co-develop new solutions, and ultimately gain a competitive edge in today's dynamic business landscape (Bothra, 2024). In practice, SRM operates not merely as a transactional coordination tool, but as a relationship-oriented system that emphasizes long-term engagement and mutual value creation (Lambert & Schwieterman, 2012).

However, these strategic benefits are not automatically realized. They depend on how firms structure and govern their relationships with suppliers. To translate SRM's strategic intent into consistent operational outcomes, firms rely on governance mechanisms that regulate and shape supplier interactions. These mechanisms define how expectations are aligned, responsibilities are enforced, and collaboration is sustained across organizational boundaries. Governance mechanisms in SRM are commonly categorized into contractual and relational types, both of which play complementary roles in managing supplier relationships (Wieland & Ivens, 2025). Contractual governance relies on formal agreements such as long-term contracts and performance-based clauses, while relational governance is grounded in trust, open communication, and collaboration. Rather than being mutually exclusive, these mechanisms often operate in a complementary manner, jointly enhancing supplier engagement and relationship performance. While such hybrid approaches are well established in large corporations, SMEs engaged in cross-border e-commerce face magnified challenges due to limited resources and weak contractual enforceability, making the design of effective governance mechanisms especially critical.

Resource Dependence Theory (RDT)

Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) posits that organizations depend on external resources to survive and grow (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). These external resources include supply chain networks, capital, information, and other resources. As a result, companies in a supply chain must establish interdependencies and collaborate with others to secure the necessary resources for long-term success. Due to external resources, companies cannot be fully self-sufficient regarding critical resources for their survival, which necessitates interdependencies with external entities.

In international business, RDT highlights three critical dimensions of dependence: locational, interorganizational, and intraorganizational, particularly in international business, where firms must design strategies to manage cross-border resource dependencies (Jiang et al., 2022). Beyond international operations, the theory has also been applied to nonprofit healthcare organizations, where external board composition significantly influences revenue generation and resource acquisition (Ng & Khodakarami, 2021). These applications demonstrate the versatility of RDT in explaining how organizations across different contexts

cope with resource vulnerabilities. In supply chain research, RDT further sheds light on the complexity of interdependencies, illustrating how effective management of resource ties enhances competitiveness (Jimo et al., 2022).

A central contribution of RDT lies in explaining power asymmetries that emerge from resource dependencies. For instance, universities' performance agreements with government ministries highlight how asymmetrical dependencies constrain organizational autonomy (Kohtamäki, 2024). A similar dynamic can be observed in cross-border e-commerce, where SMEs often face significant dependence on large suppliers or platforms, resulting in reduced bargaining power and limited autonomy.

While early RDT studies tended to frame dependence as a liability, recent perspectives argue that dependent firms may also strategically embrace dependence relationships to gain access to complementary resources, enhance growth potential, and strengthen capabilities (Coşkun & Öztürk, 2023). Such a proactive view suggests that dependence can be a source of advantage rather than merely a constraint. This perspective is particularly relevant for SMEs in cross-border e-commerce, which often leverage dependence on digital platforms to expand market access, build reputational legitimacy, and achieve scalability despite limited resources.

Transaction Cost Theory (TCT)

Transaction Cost Theory (TCT), proposed by Coase in 1937, remains influential in modern economic research. It posits that transactions are the fundamental unit of analysis in economic organization and emphasizes minimizing these costs to achieve efficient governance structures, explaining why certain transactions are structured in specific ways and why some do not occur despite their potential utility (Williamson, 1981). According to the theory, organizations strive to reduce the costs involved in negotiating, monitoring, and enforcing contracts, which in turn impacts their decision-making regarding resource allocation, governance, and relationships with external entities.

This emphasis on minimizing transaction costs is particularly relevant in the context of supply chain management, where managing supplier relationships is a key area for reducing inefficiencies. TCT has been widely applied in organizational and supply chain management research, particularly in supplier selection contexts (Cuypers et al., 2021). It helps explain the organizational choices made in sourcing, managing, and integrating suppliers, and it provides insights into the complexities involved in maintaining supplier relationships. Minimizing transaction costs through effective governance forms can enhance operational efficiency and overall supply chain performance (García-Cáceres et al., 2024). In practice, this suggests that SMEs can improve their competitive advantage by adopting governance mechanisms that reduce friction in supplier relationships, ultimately fostering long-term, stable partnerships that support growth and resilience in global supply chains.

Beyond supply chains, TCT has also been applied across a wide range of domains, illustrating its versatility as a theoretical lens. In agriculture, for example, cultivation contracts and vertical integration models have been shown to help small farms regain competitiveness, offering insights into how governance arrangements can mitigate vulnerabilities for resource-constrained actors (Sgroi & Sciancalepore, 2022). This logic parallels the situation of SMEs in cross-border e-commerce, which often rely on contractual safeguards or platform

governance to address their weaker bargaining positions. Simultaneously, scholars note that in other fields, such as planning systems and agri-food chains, empirical applications of TCT remain limited or overly narrow, with challenges in measuring transaction costs or a tendency to focus primarily on coordination mechanisms (Shahab, 2021; Meirelles et al., 2022). Taken together, these developments highlight both the enduring relevance of TCT and the necessity of updating it to better capture contemporary governance challenges.

Integrating SRM with RDT and TCT

SRM can be theoretically grounded in both RDT and TCT, which offer complementary explanations for how firms manage external supplier relationships. From the perspective of RDT, SRM is a strategic response to resource dependence, particularly in environments where firms rely heavily on external suppliers for critical inputs such as materials, logistics, and technical expertise (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In the context of cross-border e-commerce, where SMEs often depend on global partners with limited bargaining power, building collaborative and stable supplier relationships becomes essential for reducing uncertainty and securing resource flows. TCT, in contrast, focuses on the governance mechanisms firms employ to minimize transaction costs, including the costs of negotiating, monitoring, and enforcing supplier agreements (Williamson, 1981). SRM contributes to this objective through formal mechanisms such as contracts, performance-based clauses, and relational strategies like trust-building and open communication. These practices help firms align expectations, discourage opportunistic behavior, and improve coordination efficiency, particularly in complex and time-sensitive supply chain settings.

Taken together, the two theories provide a more comprehensive explanation of SRM. RDT clarifies why firms need to manage supplier relationships strategically (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), while TCT explains how they can do so effectively through governance choices (Williamson, 1981). This dual view positions SRM as both a strategic response to external dependence and an efficiency-oriented governance system, highlighting that dependence management and cost minimization are not competing but complementary objectives. At the same time, the two theories also reveal different limitations. RDT identifies conditions of organizational dependence but offers limited guidance on when or how managerial tactics will succeed (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2004), whereas TCT provides insight into governance efficiency but does not fully account for strategic or social factors influencing transaction risks (García-Cáceres et al., 2024). By integrating the two, SRM research can address these blind spots and better explain how firms balance relational stability with governance efficiency. This is particularly relevant for SMEs in cross-border e-commerce, which must simultaneously cope with structural dependence on platforms or dominant suppliers and the high transaction costs of operating across borders.

Ultimately, combining RDT and TCT offers a balanced framework for understanding SRM governance. For instance, building relationships with multiple suppliers not only helps reduce over-reliance on a single source (as RDT suggests), but also helps avoid potential supplier opportunism and high costs from switching partners (as TCT emphasizes). In this way, SMEs can create governance strategies that ensure a more equitable power structure while reducing risks and costs across the supply chain.

Methodology

Research Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the challenges of supplier relationship management in CBEC SMEs. Qualitative research is a methodology for scientific inquiry that emphasizes the depth and richness of context and voice in understanding social phenomena (Lim, 2025). Rather than testing hypotheses or measuring variables, the study aims to construct a conceptual framework grounded in existing theories and informed by practitioner experience. By focusing on the subjective experiences of SME managers, this study extends beyond quantitative metrics to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges they face in managing supplier relationships. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of how firms navigate supplier relationships under conditions of uncertainty, dependence, and limited control.

The research is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm. It emphasizes understanding the meanings individuals assign to their actions within specific social and cultural contexts (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). This paradigm is founded on the assumption that people's perceptions, ideas, and meanings can be understood through examining their lived experiences and cultural settings. It aligns well with the aim of this study to explore how CBEC SME managers interpret and respond to supplier relationship challenges in a globalized environment. In such environments, SMEs often face unique challenges that are not typically encountered by larger organizations, including limited resources, weaker bargaining power, and the need to adapt quickly to shifting market conditions.

In this study, that interplay is realized through the integration of established theories (RDT and TCT), scholarly literature on SRM, and a single case illustration that provides practical relevance and validation for the conceptual framework. The case is not treated as an empirical unit for testing but as a reflective device to connect abstract theory with real-world SME practice. By using a case study, this research bridges the gap between theoretical constructs and their practical application in the day-to-day operations of SMEs. This method allows for a deeper, context-driven understanding of how theoretical principles can be operationalized in real business environments, especially in the context of CBEC.

Case Illustration

This illustrative case is not intended for generalization but serves to demonstrate the practical relevance of the conceptual framework. To supplement the conceptual development of the SRM framework, a single illustrative case was incorporated to reflect how SMEs in the CBEC context interpret and respond to supplier relationship challenges. The selected case involved a Chinese SME engaged in international e-commerce transactions. A semi-structured interview was conducted with Company X's CEO to understand the SRM-related difficulties faced by the firm. By aligning theory (RDT and TCT) with a real-world example, this illustration ensures the framework remains relevant to the lived experiences of firms operating in global supply chains. The illustrative case was used with the participant's informed consent, and no identifying details are disclosed to ensure confidentiality.

The selected case company, here referred to as Company X, is a micro-sized enterprise located in Eastern China, employing fewer than 10 staff and engaged in international e-commerce. Its primary sales channels are cross-border platforms such as Amazon and

Shopee, with Southeast Asia and Europe as its main target markets. Despite its small scale, the firm’s dependence on a limited set of China-based suppliers, combined with the complexities of cross-border fulfillment, makes supplier governance a decisive factor in ensuring consistent delivery performance.

The semi-structured interview with the CEO lasted approximately one hour and was guided by open-ended questions designed to elicit the firm’s experiences in managing suppliers within the cross-border e-commerce context. Rather than imposing predefined categories, the discussion allowed themes to emerge naturally from the participant’s reflections on daily operations. The interview notes were reviewed and interpreted to ensure alignment with the proposed theoretical dimensions

The case was chosen for its representativeness, Company X reflects the typical structural vulnerabilities of CBEC SMEs that depend heavily on suppliers and lack the bargaining power of larger firms. Its experience highlights how resource dependence and transaction costs converge to shape supplier relationships. By embedding the theoretical framework into this real-world context, the illustration adds not only descriptive richness but also analytical clarity, demonstrating the practical applicability of the proposed SRM mechanisms.

Results

Identified SRM Challenges from CEO Interview

Table 1 presents the core challenge and contributing factors related to SRM as reported by the CEO of Company X. The central issue highlighted in the interview is supplier performance instability. Four interrelated factors were identified as contributing to this instability. These include the lack of formal contracts with suppliers, irregular and reactive communication patterns, dependence on a single supplier and absence of structured performance evaluation or feedback processes.

Table 1
Illustrative Supplier Relationship Challenges Reported by the CEO

Core Challenge	Theme	Meaning	Evidence
Supplier Performance Instability	Lack of Formal Contracts	Opportunistic risk due to weak enforcement	“There are no enforceable contracts with suppliers, only informal agreements.”
	Poor Communication	Coordination suffers without consistent interaction	“Communication with suppliers is irregular and often reactive.”
	Supplier Overdependence	Strategic vulnerability with limited alternatives	“The company relies heavily on one supplier for key components.”
	Absence of Performance Monitoring	Lack of metrics hinders supplier accountability	“There is no structured performance evaluation or supplier feedback process.”

Following the identification of supplier performance instability as the core SRM challenge, the CEO elaborated that this issue manifested in inconsistent delivery times and recurring

fulfillment disruptions. These reliability issues, in turn, negatively impacted sales planning. Rather than isolated incidents, the CEO viewed these patterns as symptoms of deeper structural and relational problems in supplier management.

A key contributor to this challenge was the absence of formal contracts with suppliers. Although Company X places most of its orders through third-party e-commerce platforms such as 1688, these transactions do not amount to enforceable, long-term agreements. Suppliers frequently treat these platform-based orders as ad hoc and non-binding, often failing to meet the expected 48-hour shipping window. Without formal contractual arrangements that specify delivery expectations, penalties for delays, or performance incentives, the company lacks the leverage to hold suppliers accountable. Furthermore, platform-level enforcement mechanisms are often weak or slow to respond, offering little recourse when fulfillment failures occur. As a result, the company is exposed to frequent disruptions caused by supplier opportunism and delivery inconsistency, underscoring the need for stronger, bilateral governance structures beyond transactional ordering systems.

Another major issue was poor communication with suppliers. The CEO explained that, as a small company, Company X faces high employee turnover and lacks personnel specifically assigned to manage supplier coordination. This absence of dedicated communication roles has led to ineffective information transfer and delayed responses to supply chain issues. Without a stable interface between the company and its suppliers, problems are often addressed only after they have escalated, reinforcing a reactive rather than proactive approach to relationship management.

The firm was also heavily dependent on one partner providing most key components. This concentration exposed the company to significant vulnerability, especially when disruptions occurred. From a resource dependence perspective, such overreliance limited the firm's bargaining power and left it with few viable alternatives in the event of delays or quality issues.

Finally, the absence of performance monitoring or a supplier evaluation system contributed to the instability. Without metrics or structured feedback, the firm had no mechanism to track supplier behavior, compare alternatives, or implement improvement plans. This lack of visibility not only made it difficult to manage supplier relationships strategically, but also weakened the firm's capacity to adapt to changing performance trends over time.

Conceptual Framework for Strengthening SRM in CBEC SMEs

In order to translate the diagnostic insights from the case interview into a theoretically grounded and actionable framework, this study develops a conceptual framework to guide the design of SRM interventions in CBEC SMEs. This framework integrates RDT and TCT to explain how supplier relationship challenges can be addressed through structured governance mechanisms and operational metrics. The framework maps each core challenge identified in Section 4.1 to relevant theoretical perspectives and proposes targeted SRM mechanisms aimed at reducing dependency, minimizing coordination costs, and improving delivery performance. By linking theoretical insights with practical governance tools, this framework provides SMEs with a scalable approach to improving supplier management in a globalized e-commerce environment. Figure 1 below illustrates the conceptual framework.

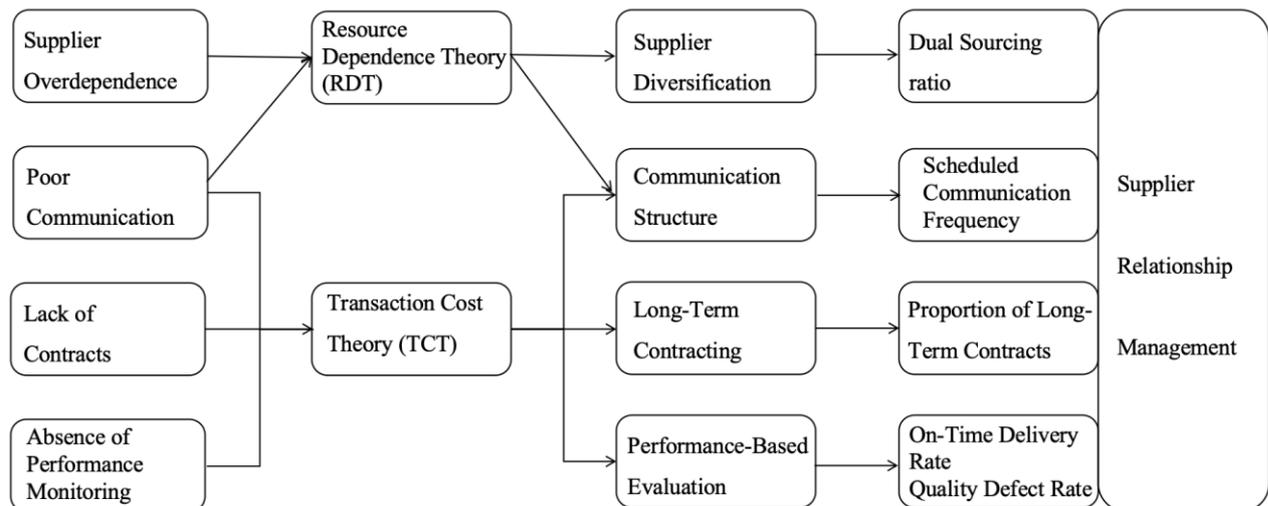


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Strengthening SRM

The left side of the framework identifies four core challenges affecting supplier performance: supplier overdependence, poor communication, lack of contracts, and absence of performance monitoring. These challenges reveal both structural vulnerabilities and behavioral inefficiencies in supplier governance systems. To explain their underlying logic, the framework draws on RDT and TCT as complementary lenses.

From the perspective of RDT, supplier overdependence and poor communication reflect forms of external resource dependence and coordination asymmetry. Overreliance on a single supplier exposes firms to strategic vulnerability by limiting alternative sources of critical inputs, thus making the firm heavily dependent on external actors for survival and operational continuity. Poor communication further exacerbates this dependence by weakening the firm's ability to manage and negotiate the flow of external resources, thereby creating a power imbalance that favors the supplier. These issues reflect a broader organizational reality in which firms are constrained by their dependence on external entities, highlighting the importance of mitigating such dependencies through diversification.

From the perspective of TCT, poor communication, lack of formal contracts, and absence of performance monitoring represent key governance deficiencies that elevate coordination and enforcement costs in supplier relationships. While poor communication is often associated with information asymmetry and dependence in RDT, it also aligns closely with TCT, as it raises the cost of aligning expectations, resolving disputes, and verifying performance across organizational boundaries. Without formal communication structures, supply chain coordination becomes reactive and inefficient. Similarly, the lack of formal contracts undermines accountability by removing clear enforcement mechanisms. In the absence of binding agreements, suppliers face few consequences for delays or non-compliance, increasing the likelihood of opportunistic behavior. The absence of performance monitoring further compounds this issue by eliminating visibility into supplier reliability, making it difficult for firms to compare alternatives or implement corrective actions. According to TCT, high levels of uncertainty and limited enforcement capacity increase the risk of opportunism and transaction failure. To mitigate these risks, firms can adopt formal governance mechanisms,

such as long-term contracts and performance monitoring, which clearly define obligations, align incentives, and reduce the costs of negotiation, monitoring, and enforcement.

To operationalize the proposed governance mechanisms, the framework links each to a measurable performance indicator that reflects its intended impact on SRM. These indicators serve as practical tools for SMEs to assess and improve their SRM efforts over time. Supplier diversification, grounded in RDT, is designed to reduce overdependence on a single supplier. This can be assessed using the dual sourcing ratio, which measures the proportion of key inputs sourced from at least two suppliers. A higher ratio indicates greater redundancy and lower dependency risk. Communication structure, which addresses both RDT and TCT concerns, is evaluated through scheduled communication frequency, the number of planned supplier interactions (e.g., weekly check-ins, monthly reviews), within a defined period. This metric reflects the degree of formalization and proactivity in supplier coordination, helping to reduce ambiguity and reactionary behaviors.

Long-term contracting, based on TCT, aims to minimize opportunism by strengthening supplier commitment and enforcement clarity. The proportion of long-term contracts among total supplier agreements serves as an indicator of the firm's strategic orientation toward relational governance and reduced renegotiation costs. Performance-based evaluation is implemented to increase supplier accountability and control under TCT. Two complementary indicators, on-time delivery rate and quality defect rate, capture supplier fulfillment performance. High on-time delivery reflects schedule reliability, while low defect rates indicate consistent quality, both of which are essential for sustaining SRM effectiveness in global supply chains.

In conclusion, this conceptual framework offers a cohesive structure that links supplier relationship challenges to targeted governance mechanisms and measurable performance indicators. By grounding each intervention in established theoretical foundations, it enhances both analytical clarity and practical relevance. It provides CBEC SMEs with a scalable and adaptable tool for improving supplier coordination, reducing risk, and achieving sustained delivery performance in dynamic global markets.

Discussion

This study contributes to SRM by demonstrating how RDT and TCT can be jointly applied to analyze governance limitations in supply chains. Rather than introducing new theoretical constructs, it advances existing logics by translating them into actionable governance mechanisms and measurable indicators. This conceptual shift strengthens the analytical relevance of both theories in the context of globalized SME supply chains, where dependence and coordination problems are deeply intertwined. By linking theoretical insight with managerial tools, the framework also establishes a foundation for future empirical studies aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of SRM interventions under varying environmental and institutional conditions.

From a practical perspective, the framework offers SMEs a structured approach to identifying relationship challenges and implementing targeted governance solutions. In CBEC environments, where enforcement mechanisms are often weak and supplier control is limited, the use of strategies such as supplier diversification, long-term contracting, and performance-

based evaluation can help firms manage risks more effectively. The incorporation of specific operational indicators, including dual sourcing ratio, scheduled communication frequency, and on-time delivery rate, equips managers with actionable tools for monitoring supplier behavior and improving coordination. As such, the framework functions not only as a diagnostic tool but also as a flexible and adaptive decision-making guide that can be tailored to varying supply chain conditions.

Conclusion

This study develops a conceptual SRM framework that integrates RDT and TCT to explain how CBEC SMEs can manage supplier dependence and coordination challenges. By translating theoretical principles into actionable governance mechanisms and measurable indicators, the framework provides a structured approach for diagnosing relationship risks and guiding managerial decision-making in globalized supply chains. However, empirical validation is still required to assess the framework's effectiveness across different industries and institutional contexts. Future research could apply the framework to multiple SMEs, incorporate longitudinal designs to observe how SRM practices evolve over time, and examine how contextual factors such as platform dependence, digital maturity, or regulatory environments influence SRM outcomes. Such work would further enhance the theoretical robustness and practical relevance of the framework.

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