

Understanding the Evolution of Flexible Supply Chain in the Business-to-Business Sector: A Resource-Based Theory Perspective

Manisha Tiwari

Liverpool Business School
Liverpool John Moore's University
Liverpool, Merseyside L3 5UG
UK
E-mail: M.Tiwari1@2021.ljmu.ac.uk

David J. Bryde

Liverpool Business School
Liverpool John Moore's University
Liverpool, Merseyside L3 5UG
UK
E-mail: D.J.Bryde@ljmu.ac.uk

Foteini Stavropoulou

Liverpool Business School
Liverpool John Moore's University
Liverpool, Merseyside L3 5UG
UK
E-mail: F.Stavropoulou@ljmu.ac.uk

Gunjan Malhotra

Institute of Management Technology Ghaziabad
Raj Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh
201001, India
E-mail: mailforgunjan@gmail.com

Abstract

Resource-based theory (RBT) is one of the theoretical lenses that have been used extensively to understand a firm's competitive advantage by utilising strategic resources and capabilities. When applied to Business-to-Business (B2B) supply chains, RBT emphasises the importance of having a flexible and adaptable supply chain that can leverage a company's internal strengths to meet customer needs effectively. By focusing on the resources specific to a particular company, a flexible B2B supply chain can be designed to meet customer demand efficiently and cost-effectively in a rapidly changing marketplace. Despite RBT's popularity as a theoretical lens, it has also faced criticism. To comprehensively understand these critiques and discover alternative views, we conducted a thorough analysis of relevant literature in the field of supply chain management. Although some of the criticisms were valid, we determined that the core message of RBT remains intact. However, we also acknowledge that a biased neoclassical economic rationality has constrained the RBT community. To overcome these limitations, the authors recommend further research into flexible B2B supply chains to uncover new opportunities for improvement.

Keywords- *Resource Based Theory (RBT), Operations Management, Supply Chain Management, B2B Supply Chain, Contingency Theory, Institutional Theory, Stakeholder Theory.*

Paper type-Literature review

1. Introduction

The pandemic and geopolitical conflicts have exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chains across various industries (Panwar et al., 2022; Ishak et al., 2023). Consequently, it has become increasingly crucial for organisations to develop dynamic capabilities that can provide a competitive advantage during disruptions (Kahkonen et al., 2023). To stay competitive in today's uncertain landscape, companies must rethink their supply chain strategies and build resilience to withstand unforeseen challenges (Roscoe et al., 2022; Prabhu & Srivastava, 2023; Sanchez & Garcia, 2023). Mitigating risks and adapting to changing circumstances are essential for success (Ketchen & Craighead, 2021; Boh et al., 2023).

The role of flexible supply chains in gaining a competitive advantage during uncertain times has become more apparent in recent years (Hult et al., 2007; Sushil, 2015; Flynn et al., 2016; Craighead et al., 2020; Asim & Nasim, 2022; Hasan et al., 2023). Scholars have

increasingly turned to organisational theories in supply chain management to address this issue (Ketchen and Hult, 2007, 2011; Choi & Wacker, 2011; Craighead et al., 2020). Using such theories has helped researchers solve complex problems and advance knowledge in this field (Choi & Wacker, 2011; Ketchen & Hult, 2011; Hitt, 2016; Craighead et al., 2020). The literature on flexible supply chains has mainly focused on flexibility as a dynamic capability, as Huo et al. (2018) stated. A supply chain's ability to adjust to changes and disruptions is viewed as its primary source of flexibility. However, researchers have also used the Resource-Based Theory (RBT), or its extensions, to explain how a flexible supply chain can be built, as discussed in a study by Blome et al. (2014). This perspective emphasises the role of strategic resources and capabilities in creating a supply chain that can respond to changes in customer demand, supply chain disruptions, and other external factors (Stevenson & Spring, 2007; Blome et al., 2014). By combining these two perspectives, researchers can better understand how supply chains can achieve flexibility in the current dynamic business environment. Therefore, in this study, we aim to explore supply chain flexibility in the Business-to-Business (B2B) supply chain using RBT and, in doing so, seek to understand the significant limitations that hinder the progress of the theoretical understanding of the B2B flexible supply chain.

RBT is a valuable perspective for studying B2B supply chain management according to research by Hitt et al. (2016). The theory suggests that a company can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage by leveraging its strategic resources or capabilities (Barney, 1991; Sirmon et al., 2011; Hitt et al., 2016; Cooper et al., 2023). Different firms within an industry may possess varying resources, some of which may be more easily transferable, resulting in long-term heterogeneity (Barney, 1991). This can lead to valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and not easily substitutable resources that can contribute to sustained competitive advantage. To better understand how RBT can be applied to supply chain management operations, Hitt et al. (2016) investigated vital activities that make up the supply chain, as shown in Figure 1. Their work builds on previous studies (Olavarrieta & Ellinger, 1997; Mentzer et al., 2001; Hitt et al., 2016) and enhances knowledge in this field.

While existing studies on supply chain flexibility have primarily relied on cross-sectional data collected from a single firm's viewpoint, Stevenson and Spring (2007) suggest that this approach does not provide a comprehensive understanding of how flexibility is created across the entire B2B supply chain network, which typically involves multiple firms. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the network and identify the mechanisms by which flexibility is established and maintained throughout the supply chain to gain a more detailed perspective. This requires a more thorough investigation of the relationships between firms,

including the coordination and communication strategies that enable the network to respond effectively to changing market conditions and customer demands. Such an analysis would provide valuable insights for firms seeking to enhance their supply chain flexibility and resilience. Hence, we present an overview of various activities involved in the B2B supply chain network based on a synthesis of our literature review and an understanding of the complexities involved in the B2B supply chain network (Stevenson & Spring, 2009; Chaudhuri et al., 2018) (see Figure 1).

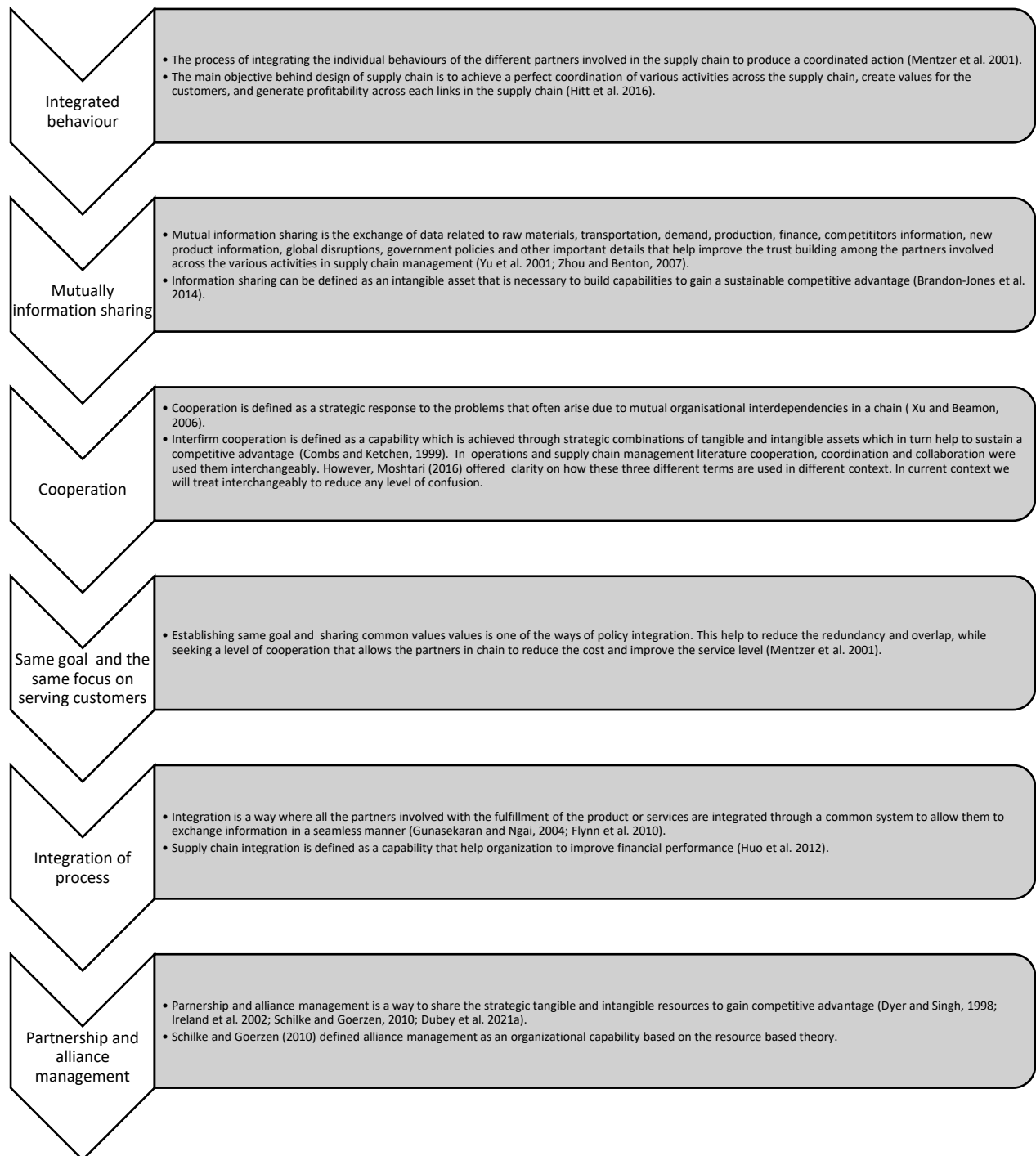


Figure 1: Supply Chain Management activities from RBT perspective (Authors own work)

Moreover, we summarise a supply chain study using RBT (see Appendix 1). It explains how combining resources and capabilities improves performance. RBT encourages organisations to build things that help them achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Olavarietta & Ellinger, 1997; Hitt et al., 2016). The individual capability of an organisation is further enhanced through its heterogeneity, proper allocation, independence, and optimal utilisation of rare resources (Walker et al., 2015). RBT has been used within and across organisations, and it has been further developed in the Supply Chain Management (SCM) field in various industries to explain how to create, attain, and diminish competitive advantage (Hitt et al., 2016). Organisations often collaborate with supply chain partners, including suppliers, to gain a competitive edge, ensure product/service quality, and meet customer demand (Xu et al., 2014). Building solid relationships and integrating these partners is vital.

In this paper, we provide a retrospective view of RBT in operations and supply chain management beyond Hitt et al. (2016), which further incorporates the suggestions offered by Bromiley and Rau (2016) in the B2B context. The B2B supply chain involves the transfer of goods or services from one business to another, starting with acquiring raw materials and ending with delivering finished products to customers (Hong et al., 2022; Shrivastava, 2023). Successfully managing a B2B supply chain is complex and requires coordination, backup planning, and eCommerce order management to deal with uncertainties (Cortez & Johnston, 2020; Bag et al., 2021a,b). The achievement of goals by supply chain partners, including suppliers, producers, distributors, and retailers, heavily relies on the efficient operation of their respective supply chains (Kang et al., 2021; Rajaguru et al., 2022; Lau & Zhao, 2022). In the context of B2B supply chains, there are various examples that we can discuss. For instance, the Tata Ball Bearing division of the Tata Group sells their bearings to Tata Motors and other automotive manufacturing organisations (Panda & Sahdev, 2019). Similarly, pharmaceutical companies manufacture COVID-19 vaccines and sell them directly to government health organisations, such as NHS (Freeman et al., 2023).

Flexibility is a crucial element in supply chain management that sets it apart from other industries (Delic & Eysers, 2020). The design of flexible supply chains differs for B2B (business-to-business) and B2C (business-to-consumer) supply chains in terms of control and distribution (Stott et al., 2016; Garner & Mady, 2023). In a B2B supply chain, there are fewer players, and negotiations take place directly between buyers and sellers. This provides an

opportunity for more direct control over the bargaining process (Lambert, 2009; Hansen, 2009; Dung et al., 2022). In contrast, B2C supply chains involve multiple partners and directly reach the end-users (Anderson et al., 2022). B2B sales volume is generally high, while B2C sales volume varies depending on the customer's needs (Chen, 2013). In the B2B supply chain, direct relationships based on mutual understanding and trust are considered essential for successful transactions (Lambert & Enz, 2017; Abreu et al., 2021). On the other hand, in B2C, the focus is on customer satisfaction and building brand loyalty to retain customers (Nisar & Prabhakar, 2017; Zhang and Du, 2020; Baliga et al., 2021). In today's competitive eCommerce and B2B marketplace, success requires a user-friendly eCommerce platform and a connected supply chain (Wang et al., 2020; Belhadi et al., 2023). Therefore, integrating B2B eCommerce and supply chain management is crucial for capturing leads, building relationships, and increasing sales (Chatterjee et al., 2023).

In supply chain management, "span of control" refers to the number of employees or departments a manager can effectively oversee. In B2B supply chains, the span of control tends to be more expansive, as the supply chain involves multiple organisations and departments (Rosenzweig & Roth, 2007). On the other hand, in B2C supply chains, the span of control is narrower, as the supply chain involves fewer organisations and departments (Hoejmoser et al., 2012). This is primarily because B2B supply chains are typically more complex and involve multiple stakeholders, whereas B2C supply chains are relatively more straightforward and involve fewer stakeholders.

The B2B industry has traditionally relied on push-and-pull marketing methods. However, with the evolution of technology and the internet, communication methods in business are rapidly changing. The COVID-19 pandemic has also significantly impacted B2B exchanges, resulting in more interactive forms of communication replacing traditional ones. The younger generation of B2B clients is more accustomed to digital technologies than their predecessors, so they prefer to engage in business communications digitally. Additionally, the pandemic has further shifted business preferences towards digital communication. The younger generation often relies on digital content and prefers to learn and connect through gamification and virtual platforms. Collaboration in a B2B supply chain is a critical aspect, and the influence of digital transformation is significant (Dubey et al., 2021b). For sustainable competitive advantage, B2B organisations must focus on human experience in their supply chain redesign and rely upon the benefits of long-term relationships garnered through trust and communication. Ordanini (2005, p. 97) argues, "*The attention of practitioners and academics has been largely dedicated to the potential role of B2B exchanges in creating new business*

models or in shaping industries, but very little has been said on how these marketplaces may influence competition at the firm level”.

Hence, we identify three phases of the study. By examining the three phases of the study, readers will better understand the B2B supply chain management and the use of RBT to explain the rapid evolution of the complex B2B supply chain due to digital transformation (Wielgos et al., 2021). RBT has been used in various disciplines during different periods (Wong & Karia, 2010; Hitt et al., 2016). In the context of a B2B supply chain, RBT suggests that a company's competitive advantage can be enhanced by building a flexible and adaptable supply chain based on the organisation's unique resources and capabilities (Zhang & Dhaliwal, 2009; Kalaitzi & Tsolakis, 2022). The importance of a flexible B2B supply chain cannot be overstated (Fauska et al., 2014; Singh et al., 2021). Such a supply chain can quickly respond to market conditions and customer needs changes and optimise utilising a firm's resources to reduce costs and improve service levels (Sarker et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2022; Antunes et al., 2023). By leveraging its resources and capabilities, a company can create a tailored supply chain that differentiates it from its competitors, enabling it to maintain a competitive edge (Liao et al., 2017). Collaboration between multiple organisations is one critical aspect of a flexible B2B supply chain (Miocevic & Srhoj, 2023). It involves sharing resources and capabilities, working closely on product design, or implementing tasks (Dubey et al., 2021). Collaboration can range from remote-based to tightly coupled engagements and is often referred to as integration in B2B exchanges (Chaker et al., 2022). This type of collaboration benefits firms by allowing them to focus on their core competencies, enhancing their competitive advantage through mutual learning. The relational assets and causal ambiguity of the supply chain partnering firms make it difficult for competitors to imitate, giving the collaborating firms an edge over their competitors. However, finding a suitable partner or organisation that contributes to successful collaboration can be a daunting task. The process involves unravelling hidden aspects that hold the B2B collaboration together. Therefore, we suggest guiding questions to help solve these obscure aspects and enable successful collaboration between B2B organisations. In conclusion, the importance of a flexible and adaptable B2B supply chain cannot be overstated. By leveraging their *resources* and *capabilities* and collaborating with other organisations, companies can create a tailored supply chain that differentiates them from their competitors and enhances their competitive advantage.

Organisational capabilities are a complex construct that describes how resources are combined and leveraged to achieve a desired outcome (Wu et al., 2006). These capabilities are considered a higher-order construct because they involve multiple resources and are more than

just the sum of their parts. According to Wu et al. (2006) and Brandon-Jones et al. (2014), organisational capabilities are developed by bundling resources, which involves combining and coordinating different resources to create a more effective and efficient outcome. This process requires a deep understanding of the specific resources involved and the ability to integrate them in a way that maximises impact. Overall, organisational capabilities are essential for organisations looking to succeed in the complex and competitive business environment. Hence, we refer to organisational resources as a *lower-order* construct and organisational capabilities as a *higher-order* construct. This is well demonstrated in explaining supply chain robustness and resilience (Brandon-Jones et al., 2014).

We conduct an in-depth critical review of the literature to address the gaps in research on B2B flexible supply chains. We focus on understanding how RBT has been used as a theoretical lens to comprehend the flexible supply chain. We aim to provide a list of guiding research questions to help scholars enhance the theoretical debate on using RBT to understand the flexible supply chain phenomenon. Our goal is to analyse how RBT applies to the B2B supply chain and what if any, theory limitations need addressing. We aim to create a guide for future studies focusing on developing a theoretical model to explain B2B flexible supply chains and frame research hypotheses. To achieve this aim, we undertake a comprehensive literature review on RBT and the B2B supply chain. We analyse existing research to identify the key factors impacting B2B supply chains and how they relate to RBT. We investigate any potential limitations of RBT that may hinder its effectiveness in the B2B supply chain context. We contribute to the existing body of knowledge on B2B supply chains by better understanding RBT and its potential limitations. In doing so, we hope our findings will help organisations optimise their B2B supply chains and improve performance.

The remaining part of the paper is structured as follows. Firstly, we provide a brief discussion on the evolution of RBT and its extension across various disciplines. Secondly, we present an overview of the application of RBT in a SCM context. Finally, we conclude our discussion and provide future research directions.

2. Evolution of RBT

In the field of strategic management research, the leading work of Wernerfelt's (1984) and Barney's (1991) RBT is one of the key developments in the competitive industry (Peng, 2001). From the available literature, RBT can be understood as a managerial framework that helps to

evaluate and understand how a firm's resources (whether tangible or intangible) can be exploited strategically to attain a sustainable competitive advantage over other firms. RBT has received considerable attention and has been widely cited since it was introduced in Barney's 1991 article "Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage." However, some scholars argue that before Barney's work, RBT had already been discussed in 1930. According to Hitt et al. (2016), the theory was developed in 1959 in economics. Still, it was not widely accepted because it explained that industries are diverse due to their unique resource combinations. Prominent economists, however, argue that this heterogeneity is only temporary and that firms tend to develop homogeneity over time.

RBT is believed to be a response by a company's management to the actions taken by its competitors in the industry (Behl et al., 2019). Barney (1991) argues that sustainable competitive advantage can be achieved through improved resources and capabilities, which are deemed necessary during emergencies according to the RBT proposed by Prahalad and Hamel (1990). Barney (1991) also suggests that a company's sustainable competitive advantage depends on resources and capabilities that are rare and valuable but not easily imitated or substituted by rival organisations (VRIN). In a way, Barney (1991) argues that to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, the resources must satisfy the following conditions: *V-valuable, R-rare, I-inimitable and N-non substitutable*. Further, Barney (1995) extended the VRIN framework to VRIO – with the O denoting *organisation*, i.e., owned by the organisation - to enhance its applicability by focusing on organising resources.

RBT suggests that a firm's resources and capabilities are the primary drivers of its competitive advantage. In the past, the definition of resources in RBT only applied to internal resources, such as its physical assets, human capital, and intellectual property (Del Canto & Gonzalez, 1990; McKelvie & Davidsson, 2009). However, with the evolution of the RBT theory, the definition of resources now encompasses internal and external resources (Grandstand, 1998; Lockett et al., 2009). External resources may include relationships with suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders that contribute to the firm's success (Harrison & St. John, 1996; Wang & Sengupta, 2016). Including external resources in the definition has broadened the scope of RBT, making it more relevant and valuable for firms operating in today's complex business environment (Nason & Wiklund, 2018).

While RBT is a very popular and often-cited theory, it has been criticised for not considering external environmental factors. Scholars such as Priem and Butler (2001) and Akhtar et al. (2020) argue that RBT does not consider the impact of external factors such as competition, technological advancements, and market changes when analysing a firm's

competitive advantage. Additionally, RBT has been criticised for not providing clarity on utilising resources and capabilities in dynamic environments (Peteraf & Barney, 2003). It does not account for the impact of fast-paced economic growth or sluggishness in the economy due to unexpected events such as economic crises, geopolitical crises, or internal political instability. As a result, it becomes difficult to use to help assess a firm's long-term sustainability.

To address these limitations, Teece et al. (1997) offer an alternative theoretical lens, the Dynamic Capability View, which is considered an extension of RBT, focusing on how firms can build and sustain their competitive advantage in dynamic and unpredictable environments (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007). It emphasises the importance of a firm's ability to adapt and transform its resources and capabilities in response to changing market conditions, technological advancements, and other external factors. By doing so, firms can achieve and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Teece, 2007; Schilke, 2014; Fainshmidt et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Leiblein (2011) pointed out that the RBT theory's constructs and fundamental ideas must provide clear distinctions, leading to more clarity in the two concepts. Barney et al. (2001) extended the theory to clarify its use in various fields such as human resource management, economics and finance, entrepreneurship, marketing, and international business. Thus, RBT has become an influential theoretical perspective in management research due to its extensive applicability to various fields and future research directions (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Hitt et al., 2016).

3. RBT in Supply Chain Management

Since the rise of globalisation, supply chain management has garnered significant attention in the academic community (Cooper et al., 1997). To gain a deeper understanding of the B2B context involved in this field, the authors refer to the Lambert et al. (1998, p. 1) definition, “*supply chain management (SCM) is the integration of key business processes from end user through original suppliers that provides products, services, and information that add value for customers and other stakeholders*”. Further, we explored the operational definition of SCM as “*supply chain is a network of organisations that are involved, through upstream and downstream linkages, in the different processes and activities that produce value in the form of products and services in the hands of the ultimate customer*” (Christopher, 1998, p. 13). Hence, we can argue that for many organisations, supply chain management is considered an

integral element of strategic management (Hult et al., 2007), and thus, efficient and effective SCM seems to be one of the ways to increase the competitive advantage in the global market. An organisation's effective management of the supply chain process improves its ability to achieve the desired performance. The main aim of supply chain management is to establish proper coordination across its chain of activities, satisfy and provide value to customers and generate profitability in each chain process (Hitt et al., 2016).

Applying RBT in supply chain management can provide a strategy to analyse and examine the supply chain process separately and collectively to ensure the expected goal is achieved. To achieve the desired goal and compete in the global market, companies focus on establishing a healthy relationship with their partners at both ends, upstream and downstream, by adding benefits throughout the activity of SC (Vitorino & Moori, 2020; Xu et al., 2014). In this situation, RBT can be helpful for value addition at each level by defining the resources (tangible or intangible) and capabilities (human or non-human (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991).

We utilised the SCOPUS database to analyse RBT's use in supply chain management research. We opted for this database as it encompasses literature published in any outlets in the Web of Science, making it a comprehensive bibliometric resource (Schotten et al., 2017; Pham et al., 2021). We focused on English publications of review papers, book chapters, and articles published in the last two decades, as outlined in some previous studies (see Varriale et al., 2021; Manzoor et al., 2022; Pereira, 2022 a, b). Our search yielded 699 articles, which we scrutinised to understand better how RBT has evolved and been utilised in the past two decades. We selected a specific 20-year range relevant to the topic to conduct an in-depth study on the most recent discussions and challenges highlighted in the literature. Although RBT has piqued the interest of organisational scholars for almost three decades, the operations and supply chain management community has primarily utilised the theory-driven approach to explain complex phenomena over the past two decades.

Table 1: Advanced Search Syntax on Scopus

Database	Keywords Searched
Scopus Database: January, 2024 (https://www.scopus.com)	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (resource AND based AND view) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (supply AND chain AND management)) AND PUBYEAR > 2003 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "re") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ch")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English"))

4. RBT and B2B Supply Chain

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented disruption to businesses worldwide (Guillot et al., 2023). B2B organisations have faced significant challenges as the pandemic has caused major changes in the global economy (Raj et al., 2022). The situation has been further compounded by recent geopolitical crises, which have added to the concerns of B2B organisations (Ishak et al., 2023). The pandemic has caused severe supply chain disruptions, increasing costs for many B2B organisations. In addition, global uncertainties and rising energy costs have forced B2B organisations worldwide to reconsider their business models and find ways to reduce costs and remain competitive (Zahoor et al., 2022). B2B organisations can address these challenges through collaboration (Dubey et al., 2021). Participating organisations can reduce costs, improve process quality, and build better supplier relationships (Abreu et al., 2021; Patel et al., 2022). Collaboration can also lead to increased sales revenue, which can significantly impact the competitiveness of participating organisations (Cao & Zhang, 2011). RBT provides an exciting perspective on how B2B organisations can generate sustainable competitive advantage through collaboration (Lewis et al., 2010). Unlike popular views of competitive advantage, RBT assumes that firms within the industry may be heterogeneous regarding the resources they carry (Bromiley & Rau, 2016). It also suggests that the resources held by these organisations need to be more mobile.

B2B organisations that collaborate and use RBT to generate sustainable competitive advantage can navigate crises and remain competitive in the long run (Sirmon et al., 2011). Thus, firms derive their competitiveness based on the heterogeneity and immobility of strategic resources. In the case of B2B participating firms, it is essential to identify the extent to which they control tangible and intangible resources, as the ability to manage strategic resources enhances the firm's competitiveness, a critical aspect of a long-term partnership. The immobility nature of the help further prevents the partner from duplicating them. Kozlenkova (2014) argued that while RBT has many theoretical contributions, empirical evidence needs to be provided to confirm the key assumptions. Additionally, there are differing opinions on the nature of competitive advantage and the variables that lead to it. These debates have led to criticisms regarding RBT, including its circular reasoning and lack of consideration for resource development. These two assumptions are crucial aspects of long-term relationships with partners and lay the foundation of B2B exchanges. In particular, the main concern is the

need for more consensus when defining strategic resources, which often leads to confusion when differentiating between resources and capabilities. Secondly, excessive focus on the internal side of the firm often needs to appreciate the influence of the external environment on the way resources are exploited to generate competitive advantage.

These limitations often need to be clarified in generalisability. To address these criticisms, researchers need a deeper understanding of resource planning and the interaction between resources and other factors. Hence, Ling-yee (2007, p. 360) argues that RBT suffers from “*context insensitivity*” despite enormous potential. Context insensitivity describes a situation where the researchers face difficulty identifying the specific conditions under which the resources or valuables are more useful. To address the criticism of the B2B supply chain further, this study provides an integration of various organisational theories in the B2B supply chain in the next section.

4.1 Theory of B2B Supply Chain

Ordanini (2005, p. 103) argues that “*efficiency, partnership, and negotiation* effects may be the main value drivers of participation in a B2B exchange”. According to Ordanini (2005), *efficiency*, the first effect, relies on the automation capability of internal processes. The ability of the organisation to deal with internal capabilities significantly reduces the direct material cost, the direct labour cost, and the overhead expenses without compromising the quality of the processes (Lewis et al., 2010). Hence, the efficiency effects distinguish the organisations that are capable to manage internal processes such as ordering, delivery, inventory management, settlement, and billing, and thus, achieve significant improvements through their well-defined processes and implementation.

The *partnership*, the second effect, is a highly effective and widely recognised strategy that involves leveraging inter-organisational networks to achieve various goals. This approach involves engaging in collaborative efforts with other entities, which can encompass a variety of activities, including sharing information, evaluating initiatives, and procuring resources. This approach's numerous benefits include increased access to shared resources and expertise and acquiring new knowledge and skills to help organisations stay competitive. Given its potential to drive significant outcomes, prioritising collaboration is crucial for organisations looking to succeed and thrive in the current dynamic business environment. Cortez and Johnston (2020) describe how B2B organisations have dealt with the adverse effects of the pandemic resulting from COVID-19 through inter-organisational network capabilities. For

instance, healthcare organisations have faced tough challenges in coping with the growing number of COVID-19 cases and the severe shortages of critical healthcare items such as supplies of medical devices like ventilators, sanitisers/cleaners, and personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hand gloves, masks, and gowns (Madanaguli et al., 2022). The NHS in the UK, through B2B partnerships, have managed to tackle the shortages of PPEs in most hospitals during the most severe time (Elsahn & Siedlok, 2021), which demonstrates how partnership affects times of crisis and can have a significant impact on competitiveness. Similarly, other B2B organisations have made several changes by investing in new technology, new marketing strategies and other plans to tackle the pandemic crisis.

The third effect is the *negotiation*. Some authors define negotiating ability as the ability to bargain (Grennan, 2014). Porter (1980), in one of his seminal works, has played a significant role in framing the competitive advantage theory. The bargaining power of suppliers and buyers are the two most important forces that shape an industry's competitiveness. According to Grennan (2014), who expanded Porter's (1980) theory, the ability to negotiate is a skill specific to each firm that significantly impacts its competitive advantage. This is particularly true when prices are up for negotiation, and factors such as cost, ability to pay, and competition come into play to determine the final price. According to a study conducted by Grennan (2014), it was discovered that hospitals possess distinctive bargaining abilities, leading to discrepancies in medical equipment costs. This can be attributed to hospitals constantly learning and refining their bargaining abilities, which allows them to negotiate better deals and secure better prices for equipment and supplies. Therefore, it can be concluded that the advancement of hospital bargaining abilities is a continuous process that significantly impacts the cost of medical equipment. Ordanini (2005) argues that the ability to exploit the market and bargain are resources of a firm that are rare and quite difficult to imitate.

Still, in some cases, they are less valuable than they are due to liquidity crises resulting from unexpected events, which often make it difficult for B2B exchanges. Hence, for superficial reasons, viewing B2B supply chain activities and the role of partners in the network cannot be considered purely using the transaction cost economics (TCE) perspective. The transaction cost is purely a zero-sum game, which assumes that one of the participating firms gains at the cost of the other partner. Hence, this assumption does not incentivise the players to participate in such B2B exchanges. Hence, C-RBT offers a solid perspective to understand the B2B exchanges from the resources point of view and the factors that help maximise the benefits from these resources. Further elaboration on RBT's contingency view is discussed in section 4.2 below.

4.2 Contingency Theory and RBT (C-RBT)

In the previous section, we discussed how the contingency view of RBT shapes B2B exchanges through three effects: efficiency, partnership, and negotiation. This section will provide further elaboration on the contingency view of RBT. Organisational researchers have often debated the usefulness of the theory, as resource and capability utilisation depends on contingent factors (Aragon-Correa & Sharma, 2003). Contingency theory addresses the notion of contingent conditions. It explains that internal and external conditions determine how an organisation or supply chain is handled (Brandon-Jones et al., 2014; Eckstein et al., 2015; Dubey, 2023). Contingency theory also explains the organisation's approach towards external conditions and argues how it must adapt to them (Donaldson, 2001). In response to the criticisms of RBT, some scholars have suggested integrating RBT with contingency theory to address the somewhat static nature of RBT. The development of C-RBT serves as a useful theoretical lens to explain the extent to which resources or capabilities may provide value in different contexts (see Aragon-Correa and Sharma, 2003; Brandon-Jones et al., 2014) to enhance further the usefulness of the theory (Brush & Artz, 1999), and to determine additionally the conditions that may influence the effectiveness of the resources or capabilities (Fredericks, 2005; Chisholm & Nielsen, 2009; Safari & Saleh, 2020).

Contingencies are often considered crucial while evaluating the extent to which resources or capabilities can generate competitive advantage, especially in the context of the identification of resources and capabilities and their implementation (Sousa & Voss, 2008; Prashant & Harbin, 2009; Schilke, 2014). The contingent factors relevant to B2B supply chain management include national culture, firm size, strategic context, and other organisational variables (Akin Ates et al., 2022). Despite enormous efforts in recent times, the contingent perspective in the B2B supply chain still needs to be developed in the literature.

4.3 Institutional Theory and RBT

The RBT approach explains firm heterogeneity and sustainable competitive advantage, which centres on the attributes of resources and the strategic factor markets that provide them. By rationally identifying and utilising resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to replicate, and cannot be substituted, firms can achieve lasting differentiation and supernormal profits. However, Oliver (1997) argues that despite the enormous usefulness of RBT, it has never

focused beyond the properties of the resources and the resource market that explain the heterogeneity of the firms. Attention must be paid to the social fabrics that are equally important for the firm to appreciate while making choices. For instance, while selecting resources, the firm needs to consider the tradition of the firm, the local people's sentiments, the regulatory pressures, and social network ties and further understand how these contexts might influence sustainable differences (Oliver, 1997; Dubey et al., 2019). For instance, during the COVID-19 crisis, some of the leading pharmaceutical companies, such as Pfizer and Moderna, made significant profits from the pandemic, ignoring the needs of some underdeveloped and developed countries affected people (Emanuel et al., 2021; Jecker, 2023). These practices of the leading pharmaceutical companies have raised concerns among policymakers and academic scholars (Piñeiro-Chousa et al., 2022), further fuelling the debate that resources and capabilities need to be exploited in the context of the given situations. In fact, in the past, the philanthropic initiatives of organisations in times of crisis have helped organisations to gain sustainable competitive advantage (Vogel, 2005; Porter & Kramer, 2006). Given these criticisms, Oliver (1997) recommends expanding the theoretical boundaries of RBT through integration with institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1987) in the selection of resources.

Institutional theory is a theoretical lens that has gained significant attention from the supply chain management community (see Kauppi, 2013; Shou et al., 2016). It provides the theoretical basis to examine the influence of external pressures for social conformity in shaping the organisation's actions (Oliver, 1997; Massi et al., 2021). However, despite some efforts made by scholars to use the institutional theory to examine the B2B exchanges (Graca et al., 2021; Barry et al., 2021; Keranen et al., 2023), the combination of RBT and institutional theory may offer better ways to examine the collaborative efforts in time of crises to tackle healthcare challenges and other significant grand societal challenges.

4.4 Stakeholder Theory and RBT

The concepts of RBT and stakeholder theory presented fresh perspectives on strategy. RBT analysed how a company's distinct strategic resources could give it a competitive edge, while stakeholder theory prioritised the importance of establishing lasting relationships with stakeholders for achieving optimal firm performance. Defining the boundaries of stakeholders and resources has been challenging, and both theories have faced criticism about their status as "*theories*" (Freeman et al., 2021, p. 1759). Both theories were minimally affected by a distracting rearguard action, which had little impact on their influence, development, or

findings (Jones et al., 2018). In RBT and stakeholder theory, shareholder interests and competitive advantage are viewed differently (Freeman et al., 2021; Weitzner & Deutsch, 2023). Stakeholder theory emphasises cooperation and shared values, challenging the concept of fiduciary duty towards shareholders (Dmytriiev et al., 2021). RBT scholars view sustained competitive advantage as maximising social welfare and a firm's economic performance (Sodhi, 2015). RBT is widely accepted in organisational studies, while stakeholder theory is often linked with social responsibility and business ethics (Weitzner & Deutsch, 2023).

Despite this, both theories remain essential in management, with some scholars engaged in both discussions. Similar sentiments apply to the operations management and supply chain management fields. Organisations aim to maintain a competitive advantage while being accountable to stakeholders who shape their strategies (Sodhi, 2015). Stakeholders play an essential role in the success or failure of an organisation (Jensen, 2001), and the stakeholder perspective continuously evolves to encompass the complexities of how organisations and stakeholders shape strategy (McGahan, 2021). However, RBT remains our central focus. Scholars have noted the need for a sharper stakeholder perspective in RBT despite corporations increasingly prioritising stakeholder benefits (Harrison et al., 2020; Barney & Harrison, 2020). While scholars have attempted to incorporate stakeholder views in RBT to explain firms' motivation towards society (Palsson & Kovacs, 2014; Sodhi, 2015), i.e., enhancing the usefulness of RBT in demonstrating humanitarian aid during crises and post-disaster recovery (Sodhi & Knuckles, 2021), integrative study in the B2B context remains limited (Feng et al., 2020). The advantages of integrating contingency, institutional, and stakeholder theories with RBT in B2B exchanges are discussed in the next section.

5. Discussion

RBT is highly influential in management and aims to explain how a firm can achieve sustained competitive advantage by acquiring and controlling valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources and capabilities and having the proper organisational structure to apply them. While the theory is simple and easy to understand, it has also been criticised for its weaknesses. By integrating RBT with contingency, institutional, and stakeholder theories, the value of RBT in B2B exchanges can be significantly enhanced. This strategic approach can help organisations better understand their complex and dynamic business environment and their stakeholders' diverse needs and expectations. Furthermore, it can enable them to identify and exploit their unique and valuable resources and capabilities and to achieve sustainable

competitive advantage in the market. Integrating RBT with these theoretical perspectives can provide organisations with a comprehensive and holistic framework for effective decision-making and performance improvement. RBT was developed to complement the industrial organisation (IO) view, which puts the determinants of firm performance outside the firm in its industry's structure (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). RBT is a theoretical framework that seeks to identify the internal sources of a firm's sustained competitive advantage and explain why firms within the same industry may perform differently.

RBT assumes that firms are primarily profit-driven and managed by individuals with limited rationality. Additionally, it considers the predictability of the market in which the firm operates. In organisational theory, there are varying perspectives on conceptualising firms. Some organisational theorists believe organisations are like systems that prioritise keeping themselves separate from others (Smircich, 1983). This view contrasts holistic or emergent theories that interpret firms as complex organisms with interdependent parts. Organisational scholars argue that firms work best when they separate their internal and external systems (Smircich, 1983). Using feedback loops can help maintain that separation. On the other hand, those who adopt the latter view contend that firms are greater than the sum of their parts and that a more fluid understanding of organisational structure is necessary to understand how they function. RBT provides a specific perspective on how firms can maintain a competitive advantage over their rivals in each industry. After conducting an in-depth analysis of various articles about the implementation of RBT in the B2B sector, we have identified multiple areas of concern that require attention. These challenges must be addressed effectively to ensure seamless integration of RBT technology into these industries.

5.1 Lack of clarity between RBT, Dynamic Capability View and Knowledge-Based View

In the realm of research, three prominent schools of thought are closely related yet distinct in their approaches. These schools are RBT, dynamic capability (DC), and knowledge-based view (KBV). Each of these schools offers a unique perspective on how to approach research, and they are widely recognised as essential frameworks for understanding and advancing research in various domains. Despite their differences, these schools aim to advance knowledge and understanding through rigorous inquiry and analysis (Hitt et al., 2016). As such, they are highly valued by researchers and scholars alike for their contributions to the field of research. (Acedo et al., 2006; Shafeey & Trott, 2014). While some scholars consider them one school of thought with the same underlying theoretical structure, others classify them as two or three distinct

schools. Previous research has overlooked the potential relationship between DCs, KBV and RBT (Hitt et al., 2016). More research must be conducted within B2B exchanges and supply chain management to explore their interrelationships. Despite the potential value of examining these links, more attention has been paid to this aspect, leading to a need for more apparent contributions to theoretical frameworks such as RBT. Further study is warranted to understand better these crucial interrelationships and their potential impact on business operations.

5.2 Lack of Conceptual Clarity between Resources and Capabilities

One of the main limitations of RBT is its failure to recognise differences among types of resources and their contributions to firm performance (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Hitt et al., 2016). The definition of resources in RBT needs to distinguish between inputs and capabilities, leading to confusion about the core concept (see Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Amit & Schoemaker, 1993). While RBT acknowledges physical, human, and organisational capital, it treats them equally (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). According to Barney & Clark (2007), the typologies provided are just labels, and the RBT fundamental logic remains valid. Moreover, most of the authors have used the terms "resources" and "capabilities" interchangeably, despite scholars like Sirmon et al. (2007) differentiating between them. The B2B supply chain research could benefit from distinguishing between the two constructs, as creating capabilities involves bundling resources, like scientific equipment and human capital, together (Sirmon et al., 2007; Brandon-Jones et al., 2014). Some B2B research has differentiated between resources and capabilities, but it is different (Blessley & Mudambi, 2022; Hortovanyi et al., 2023). Sirmon et al.'s (2007) research could help clarify this distinction. Hence, RBT could substantially improve if it explicitly recognised differences among types of resources and ownership.

5.3 The applicability of the VRIN/VRIO framework

The VRIN/VRIO framework proposes that resources and capabilities must be valuable, rare, inimitable, non-substitutable, and organised to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. (Barney, 1991; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). While the VRIN/O criteria help evaluate a company's resources and capabilities, they do not comprehensively assess sustainable competitive advantage. Other factors, such as market dynamics, customer preferences, and technological advancements, must also be considered. Therefore, a more holistic approach is required to ensure that a company can maintain its competitive edge over the long term (Peteraf

& Barney, 2003; Hoopes et al., 2003). In the past, scholars suggested that more than simply possessing resources may be required based on empirical studies. While some evidence supports this idea, it is only moderate. Further investigation is necessary to determine how other factors, such as personal motivation and goal-setting, also play a role in achieving success (Hoopes et al., 2003; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Behl et al., 2023). To gain a sustainable competitive advantage, it is essential to allocate resources effectively. However, there is a certain level of disagreement regarding determining the specific roles of markets, individuals, and resources in this process. Further exploration and analysis may be necessary to better understand these differing perspectives (Lavie, 2006). Within the realm of RBT, two distinct perspectives challenge its fundamental assumptions. The first of these perspectives posits that sustainable competitive advantage is derived from something other than individual resources at the component level, as RBT suggests. Meanwhile, the second perspective takes issue with RBT's broad characterisation of entrepreneurs and managers, arguing that the key attributes necessary for success are limited to "*entrepreneurial alertness*" and "*superior knowledge*". These opposing views offer insight into the complexities of RBT and the ongoing discourse surrounding the theory's validity. We argue that specific resources may be valuable for organisations, but to create sustained competitive advantage, a firm needs both resources and managerial capabilities to recognise and exploit productive opportunities.

To summarise, RBT fails to provide a complete explanation for sustainable competitive advantage by solely utilising the VRIN/O logic for "deployment capabilities". The theory needs an understanding of capability deployment. Additionally, some studies argue that the VRIN/O criteria are optional for explaining SCA. According to Foss & Knudsen (2003), uncertainty and immobility are the two vital factors that lead to the emergence of sustainable competitive advantage. Hence, it becomes imperative to understand that knowledge cannot be treated as a mere resource like other tangible assets, particularly in the context of the B2B supply chain, as stated by Hitt et al. (2016). The essence of knowledge management lies in the ability to leverage knowledge and turn it into a strategic advantage, ensuring long-term success and growth.

6. Conclusions

Based on our thorough analysis, we have pinpointed three noteworthy areas of concern about RBT. To develop a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the theory, we carefully considered the critiques presented in the literature. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that adhering to a narrow perspective of neoclassical economic rationality can impede progress and

hinder growth. For long-lasting success, fostering a well-managed socioeconomic system prioritising continuous innovation is crucial. Achieving sustainable competitive advantage is contingent upon this essential component. (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). Barney's (1991) critical evaluation of Porter's five-force analysis reveals that it may need to be more comprehensive to account for the intricacies inherent in B2B transactions. As an alternative, postmodern innovators are postulated, and further investigation can assist in advancing RBT into a more pertinent theory. By scrutinising the limitations of current analytical frameworks and exploring new approaches, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanics of B2B exchanges.

6.1 Implications for Theory and Practice

Our efforts to develop a deeper understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of RBT are geared towards enhancing the knowledge base of both researchers and practitioners operating in B2B exchanges. By leveraging the synergies that arise from pooling resources and value, it is possible to cultivate a more robust and sustainable competitive advantage theory that can be applied to the B2B context. When considering sustainable competitive advantage, it is essential to consider a company's ability to surpass its competitors. This concept remains valid for the RBT framework. For a company to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, it must possess unique resources and capabilities that allow it to outperform its rivals. These resources and capabilities include proprietary technology, brand recognition, and skilled employees. By leveraging these advantages, a company can maintain its position in the market and continue to grow and thrive. When analysing a firm's performance, RBT must consider the context and processes involved in deploying resources that contribute to their value. To ensure the effectiveness of RBT, it is recommended that theorists stay abreast of the latest research streams and integrate those findings into their analyses. This will further cement RBT's position as one of the fundamental theories for analysing sustainable competitive advantage.

6.2 Future Research Directions in B2B Exchanges

Collaboration within the flexible B2B supply chain is a complex and multifaceted process that involves several research questions. Inter-organisational partnerships typically involve multiple organisations working closely to achieve common goals (Marzi et al., 2023). This collaboration can take many forms, from sharing resources and capabilities to collaborating on

product design and implementation of tasks (Maurya & Srivastava, 2022). When organisations collaborate, they aim to leverage each other's strengths, expertise, and resources to achieve mutual benefits (Zhou et al., 2022). This collaboration can occur at different supply chain levels, from raw material suppliers to manufacturers, distributors, and end customers. Successful collaboration requires high trust, communication, and coordination among the participating organisations. It also requires clear guidelines regarding sharing information, resources, and responsibilities. By working together, organisations can enhance their competitiveness, reduce costs, and improve their ability to respond to market changes (Cao & Zhang, 2011; Prajogo & Olhager, 2012).

Collaborative relationships vary from remote-based to tightly coupled engagements (Gulati, 1998). In the case of B2B exchanges, collaboration is often referred to as integration and combining assets for mutual benefits (Voss et al., 2019). Cao & Zhang (2011, p. 165), “*the embeddedness of the supply chain partnering firms’ relational assets and the causal ambiguity makes it difficult for their competitors to imitate*”. Hence, for B2B organisations, supply chain collaboration allows the firm to focus on its core competencies, enhancing its competitive advantage through mutual learning (Walters, 2008; Budhwar et al., 2021; Lasrado et al., 2023). However, in B2B exchanges, looking for a suitable partner or organisation that may contribute to a successful collaboration is challenging and sometimes elusive (Babu et al., 2020; Garri et al., 2020). Hence, we posit some guiding questions that might help unravel some hidden aspects that hold the B2B collaboration. Below we present these questions, with an accompanying narrative for each one.

RQ1: Could sharing resources with competitors outside the market inadvertently enable them to develop capabilities that would eventually allow them to enter the market and compete with the leading company?

As discussed earlier, RBT has been criticised for its narrow focus on internal resources. Critics argue that by only focusing on internal resources, the theory overlooks the importance of external resources that can help organisations gain a competitive advantage. As a result, RBT has evolved to include external resources to address this criticism. This integration of internal and external resources has significant benefits for organisations. By combining internal and external resources, firms can develop higher-level dynamic capabilities to better respond to challenges and seize opportunities. For instance, firms with a more comprehensive and

diverse resource portfolio are better equipped to navigate the crisis and come out more vital during a crisis. Moreover, firms can create a more balanced and robust resource portfolio by leveraging internal and external resources. Internal resources, such as organisational culture, employee skills, and knowledge, can complement external resources such as partnerships, collaborations, and alliances. This combination of resources can lead to a more sustainable competitive advantage for firms. In conclusion, incorporating external resources into the RBT framework is essential as it helps organisations build a more comprehensive and balanced resource portfolio. This, in turn, enables firms to develop higher-level dynamic capabilities, which can help them gain a competitive advantage in both the short and long term.

RQ2: What are the implications of sustainable competitive advantage if two competitors have an ordinary supplier?

A well-developed supplier base is crucial for building competitive advantages for B2B firms (Lewis et al., 2010). Reliable and efficient suppliers ensure timely delivery of quality products, which boosts a firm's reputation and increases customer satisfaction and loyalty. However, if the supplier base is underdeveloped, firms may struggle to meet customer demand, negatively affecting their competitiveness and risking losing customers to competitors (Tukamuhabwa et al., 2017). To address this issue, competitors can collaborate to build a strong supplier base that caters to the needs of the whole industry. By working together, they can share resources, knowledge, and expertise to create a pool of dependable and efficient suppliers. This leads to better product quality, enhanced efficiency, and cost savings for firms. Building a solid supplier base helps the industry and promotes the nation's competitive advantage. Despite this, research on suppliers' impact on competitiveness is still unclear, particularly in terms of supply base complexity.

RQ3: Do firms acquire rare external resources (e.g. strategic partners) that aid in creating unique and non-substitutable capabilities?

In the B2B environment, companies often seek to acquire non-tangible resources and capabilities to help them achieve a higher position in the market (Pitt et al., 2019). These intangible resources include brand equity, intellectual property, and organisational culture. Unlike tangible resources such as inventory or equipment, intangible resources are difficult to replicate or imitate, giving companies a sustained competitive advantage over time. For example, a strong brand reputation can help a company sell at higher prices. At the same time,

a unique organisational culture can attract and retain top talent. Similarly, exclusive patents or trademarks can help prevent competitors from entering the market or copying its products. Overall, acquiring and managing non-tangible resources is critical to long-term success in the B2B context. By leveraging these resources effectively, companies can differentiate themselves from their competitors and create lasting value for their stakeholders.

To conclude, in our research on flexible B2B supply chains, we have integrated several theories to analyse the subject comprehensively. These theories include contingency theory, which emphasises the importance of adapting to the changing environment; institutional theory, which focuses on the impact of social, cultural, and political factors on business practices; and stakeholder theory, which highlights the significance of considering the interests of all stakeholders involved in the supply chain. By incorporating these theories, along with our anchor theory of RBT, we provide a more nuanced understanding of flexible B2B supply chain dynamics and their implications for businesses and other stakeholders.

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Appendix 1: RBT and SCM activities

Activities	Source	Objectives	Findings
Integrated behaviour	Yu et al. (2018)	Examines how big data analytics capability leads to relational capabilities that affect financial performance.	The study uses the theoretical lens of RBT to explore how relational capabilities affect financial performance.
	Wong and Karia (2010)	Explains how logistics service providers (LSPs) gain a competitive advantage by bundling resources and capabilities, with relational capabilities being one of the most important sources of competitive advantage.	The study uses the Resource-Based Theory (RBT) as a framework to elucidate the competitive advantage of the LSP.
Mutual information sharing	Barratt and Oke (2007)	Explains how sharing information among supply chain partners creates visibility, leading to improved performance and sustainable competitive advantage.	The authors have used the Resource-Based Theory (RBT) to explain how the interplay of resources and capabilities helps retail firms achieve sustainable competitive advantage.
	Brandon-Jones et al. (2014)	Extends the study of Barratt and Oke (2007) to explain how improving information connectivity, sharing, and	The authors explain how combining RBT and Contingency

		supply chain visibility can enhance supply chain resilience and robustness.	Theory can overcome limitations, and how the bundling of resources and capabilities under the moderating effect of supply base complexity influences the resilience and robustness of the supply chain.
	Gunasekaran et al. (2017)	The mediating effect of top management commitment on the bundling of resources (information connectivity and sharing) and supply chain visibility is examined to determine its impact on assimilating big data analytics capability.	In this study, the authors aim to explain how big data analytics capability affects supply chain performance using both RBT and upper echelon theory.
	Dubey et al. (2018)	Analyses how top management commitment moderates the impact of resource combination and supply chain visibility on agility, adaptability, and alignment (triple-A).	The authors have used the Resource-Based Theory (RBT) to explain how automotive manufacturing organizations can develop triple-A capabilities.

Cooperation	Combs and Ketchen (1999)	Explains how cooperation between firms can enhance performance.	In this study, the authors have based their arguments on the principles of RBT and organizational economics.
	Ordanini (2005)	Explains how cooperation impacts B2B exchanges.	The authors have grounded their view in the RBT.
	Baah et al. (2022)	Examines the role of information sharing and visibility in collaboration among supply chain partners.	The authors used RBT to explain how the interplay of resources and capabilities explains collaborative performance.
Same goals and focus on customer	Morash et al. (2002)	Argues that building capabilities to serve customers is crucial. Public policy-enabled customer services or demand-oriented performance capabilities may provide a greater competitive advantage than cost and supply-oriented capabilities. In other words, a demand-responsive supply chain is more important than an efficient supply chain in a highly turbulent environment.	The authors have grounded their view in the RBT.

	Ray et al. (2005)	Examines the differential effects of IT resources and capabilities on customer service performance.	The authors have used RBT as a theoretical lens to explain the performance using IT resources and capabilities.
	Srivastava et al. (2001)	Provides critical insights into how resources and capabilities help provide better customer service to create value for the organisation.	The authors have grounded their view on the RBT to expand the boundary of the RBT beyond the firm.
Integration of process	Xu et al. (2014)	Explains how intra-organisational resources help improve supply chain integration, which in turn helps improve business performance.	The authors used RBT to explain how intra-organisational resources help improve supply chain integration.
	Rungtusanatham et al. (2003)	Explains how the firm gains an advantage through linkages with various partners in the supply chain on its internal operations.	The authors used RBT to explain how firms gain an advantage through linkages with various partners in the supply chain on its internal operations.
	Huo et al. (2016)	Studies the antecedents of supply chain integration and the effects on supply chain performance.	The authors have grounded their model in the RBT.

Partnership and alliance management	Kauppila (2015)	Tests how alliance management capability through co-exploration and co-exploitation can improve the firm's performance.	In this study, the author grounded their model in RBT.
	Lavie (2006)	Argue that the relationship is more critical and potent than strategic resources to gain a sustainable competitive advantage.	In this study, the author grounded the argument in RBT.
	Clarke and MacDonald (2019)	Argue that multi-stakeholder partnerships are crucial for effectively and efficiently addressing social problems.	In this study, the authors have grounded their view in the RBT.
	Sambasivan et al. (2013)	Examines the factors that influence strategic alliances and impact supply chain performance.	In this study, the authors used multiple theories, including RBT, to explain strategic alliances.