

# COLLABORATION BETWEEN SMALL RETAIL STORES AND SUPPLIERS OF FOOD PRODUCTS

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## ABSTRACT

Small grocery stores are forced to look for ways to retain customers. One possibility is through collaboration with suppliers. Therefore, the aim of this research was to determine the forms of collaboration between small Czech grocery stores and suppliers and to specify the differences in this collaboration depending on store location and the possible affiliation of the store with a retail chain. To achieve this goal, quantitative research was carried out among 65 Czech retail stores using face-to-face interviews with predetermined questions. Collaboration was assessed on the basis of four criteria defined by the authors. It was found that the most frequently occurring element of collaboration was the provision of trade credit to retailers – less often, long-term contracts and synchronization of replenishment. The least used was information sharing. The research results show that the form of collaboration is significantly affected by customer value. Therefore, the level of collaboration can be improved by building horizontally interconnected retail chains. The paper enriches theoretical knowledge by specifying possible elements of collaboration between small retail stores and suppliers and mapping the frequency of their implementation.

**Keywords:** Customer value, replenishment, retail management, retail store, supply chain collaboration

## 1. Introduction

The retail sector has undergone major changes in the last 30 years. Large markets have changed the retail business landscape through larger store formats, more shelf space, an increased variety of goods and services, and extensive marketing strategies (Borraz et al., 2014). Strong retail groups have arisen that have built their success on the streamlining of activities in relation to both customers and suppliers, which they control due to their high bargaining power. The dominance or power of buy-

ers over suppliers has a positive influence on the development of the supplier; in such conditions, supply chain management works best (Cox, 2004) and provides wide-ranging opportunities for all the members of the structure to increase their profits (Klimov, Merkuryev, 2008). Speed of delivery, a guaranteed supply and the possibility to purchase products, and convenience for customers, among other things, may improve the relationships between customers and suppliers and enhance consumer satisfaction (Banyte et al., 2011).

To prosper, a retailer must properly apply the concepts of customer value and relationship management (Berman, Evans, 2013). Naturally, this first requires both an appropriate location for the store to ensure its easy availability to customers as well as an appropriate range of goods to sell to those customers. However, as far as the sale of food is concerned, the quality of the goods supplied is equally important to customers (Maleki et al., 2013). According to research (Hes, 2010), the demand for food on the Czech market is mainly influenced by the price, the quality of the goods, the habitual behaviour of shoppers, and in-store promotional events. Customers of retail stores put a particular emphasis on special offers, because there are many low-income consumers whose behaviour is strongly influenced by price (Dawson, 1995; Cameron-Waller, 1995). The need to offer keenly priced goods forces retailers to follow a tough policy towards suppliers, which often destroys hopes for a balanced long-term relationship with them; nevertheless, it immediately becomes the basis for cost saving. This allows such retailers to acquire a price-oriented competitive advantage.

All the above-mentioned factors have had an impact on changes in the structure of Czech retail stores. In 2000, there were almost 19,000 small shops (i.e. shops with a sales area of 400 m<sup>2</sup> or less) operating in the Czech Republic; in 2015, this number had decreased by almost a third. By contrast, the sector of hypermarkets with sales areas greater than 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> has seen a dramatic growth, with numbers increasing annually by an average of 10.7 percent between 2000 and 2015 (Nielsen, 2016).

Although the number of small stores is declining, they have their own circle of customers who prefer them when making certain purchases. The most frequently mentioned reasons include narrow specialization with respect to the range of goods in the store, the offer of high-quality products from local producers, non-anonymous seller-customer contact, willing and qualified staff, fast service, and easy orientation in the store. However, small shops are unable to provide some of these benefits to consumers on their own. In particular, they cannot ensure the offer of high quality food or its availability without close collaboration with suppliers. Therefore, the development of collaboration between small grocery stores and their suppliers is absolutely crucial to maintaining market position. However, the form of such collaboration in the Czech Republic has not yet been a subject of research. The aim of

this study was to identify the form of collaboration between small Czech grocery stores (i.e. stores with a sales area smaller than 400 m<sup>2</sup>) and their suppliers, and to specify differences in this collaboration with respect to the affiliation of the retail store with a chain and the location of the store.

## 2. Review of previous research

The retailer-manufacturer interaction problem is one of the classic research areas in supply chain literature (Alaei et al., 2013). Research in this area deals with the forms of logistic operations carried out by retailers, since logistic operations play a strategic role in the success of the store (Ltifi, Gharbi, 2013). Topics examined include changes taking place in the retail sector (see Fernie et al., 2000; Fernie et al., 2010; Kuhn, Sternbeck, 2013), the reconstruction of distribution and logistics chains, and the impact of these changes on the business efficiency of individual members of the chain. In connection with research into the redesign of food supply chains, researchers primarily focus on the reasons for, and preferred types of collaboration between retailers and manufacturers, as well as the possibilities and ways of implementing new technologies to manage logistics and supply chains (Fredriksson, Liljestrand, 2014), since the extent of collaboration can create opportunities to remove supply chain inefficiencies (Too, 2011), such as excessive inventory, the duplication of activities, or a lack of coordination in inter-firm processes (Hingley et al., 2011). To achieve collaboration, it is necessary for traditional relationships, in which the links in the chain act as independent operators, to transform into relationships of collaboration. Partners then jointly create value and their performances are therefore increasingly interconnected (Cheung et al., 2011). Collaborative exchanges are associated with very close information, social and process linkages and mutual commitments made in the expectation of long-term benefits (Day, 2000). Collaboration usually involves the sharing of information, the creation of similar objectives, the synchronization of decisions, the sharing of resources, and the harmonization of independent partners. It can be an effective tool for maintaining markets, even for retail stores.

In addition to the classic approach (Grant et al., 2006) of classifying partnership according to the degree of integration of the supply chain (information sharing, activities coordination, and collaboration),

other, yet similar, approaches can also be found in the literature. Holweg et al. (2005) defined three basic supply chain configurations for collaboration depending on the level of information sharing and cooperation in the area of replenishment:

- In the first type of partnership, they simply exchange information concerning demand as well as action plans in order to align their forecasts with respect to capacity and long term planning.
- In the second type of partnership, the task of generating the replenishment order is given to the supplier, who then takes responsibility for maintaining the retailer's inventory, and subsequently, the retailer's levels of service (Vendor Managed Replenishment).
- In the third type of partnership, called synchronized supply chain, the supplier takes charge of the customer's inventory replenishment on the operational level, and includes this process in planning his own supply operations.

Therefore, building functional collaboration between two or more links of the supply chain, e.g. a retail store and its suppliers, requires a change in the management of relationships between the cooperating links as well as a change in processes, often in both businesses or, indeed, in all cooperating partners. The retail store must succeed in making its suppliers its partners, who will help it to improve its performance in relation to customers. Often, however, there are many obstacles to creating a highly functional cooperating chain, since retailers and their suppliers have different priorities with regard to areas of control over the distribution channel, profit allocation, the number of competing retailers handling suppliers' products, product displays, promotion support, payment terms, and operating flexibility (Berman, Evans, 2013). Therefore, literature also presents the results of research aimed at removing barriers to functional collaboration (see Lostakova et al., 2009).

The retail store and its suppliers can collaborate in multiple functional areas. Gros and Grosova (2006) emphasize that the area of purchase is of strategic importance because it is in close contact with the supplier. The specific form of activities which the retail store synchronizes with its suppliers may be highly variable, but it is usually tied to efforts to optimize

material flows. Material flows enabling customer needs to be satisfied are accompanied by information flows necessary for effectuating not only material flows, but also cash flows (Pernica, 2005). In general, the materials, component parts, and finished goods flow downstream. Money flows upstream, whereas information flows in both directions (Gupta, Dutta, 2011). The managements of all flows must be in harmony. Material flows must be managed so as to create optimal financial flows and vice versa; the optimization of cash flows throughout the chain must not reduce material flows. For effective chain management, the upstream flow of money is as important as the management of the downstream flow of goods (Gupta, Dutta, 2011). While firms often collaboratively manage flows of goods and information with their partners, they commonly do not do so when it comes to cash flows (Wuttke et al., 2013).

At the same time as exploring logistics activities and the possibility of streamlining them on the intercompany level, the possibility is explored of improving activities taking place inside stores. In-store logistics is treated as one of the factors with the potential to directly and significantly influence retail store performance. Raman et al. (2001) and Fisher et al. (2000) have demonstrated that poor operations lead to low on-shelf availability, which is a severe problem for the majority of retailers, as they tend to operate with very low margins, particularly in the field of grocery retailing (Corsten, Gruen, 2003). Reiner et al. (2013) examined in detail in-store logistics processes in the field of dairy products. In addition, impacts of the efficiency of logistics in retail stores on consumer happiness and satisfaction were also explored (Ltifi, Gharbi, 2013).

An analysis of literary sources from 1980 to 2012 in the area of food logistics made by Fredriksson and Liljestrand (2014) shows that the papers dealing with relationships between retailers (regardless of their size) and their suppliers (e.g. manufacturers, wholesalers or other middlemen) are also focused on the specifics of the distribution of certain products (perishable products, chilled and ambient products, seasonal products), the causes of promotional on-shelf-availability shortfalls, and possibilities for improving transportation. However, research is primarily focused on large retail stores. As for small businesses, researchers are focused more on consumer shopping behaviour. The social practices of small grocery stores in Germany owned by immigrants were analysed by Everts (2010).

In analysing methods of collaboration between small grocery stores and their suppliers, we can expect that the form of collaboration will be influenced by the size of the retail store and its value to its suppliers. This means that there will be differences in the forms of collaboration between suppliers and large and small stores. Large stores are usually of high value to their suppliers, which is the foundation of large stores wielding greater bargaining power. Therefore, suppliers seek to deepen their relationships with large retailers and in most cases adapt themselves to the retailers' demands, albeit with varying degrees of willingness. This allows retailers to streamline their purchasing processes. Therefore, researchers focus on studying the logistical aspects of chains involving large stores and on the possibility of improving the performance of these chains – for example, by implementing logistic technologies such as Quick Response and CPFR. Research of this type is of interest to both directly involved links, i.e. both retail businesses and their suppliers.

Conversely, small retail stores managing low to negligible sales of individual product items are often regarded as insignificant customers by large suppliers. Their potential loss as clients does not jeopardize the economic results of large suppliers. This may be why small retailers are not an area of particular interest in primary research. Given the role of small stores on the market, it seems desirable to examine whether small retail stores collaborate with their suppliers and what form such collaboration takes.

### 3. Methodology

The main objective of primary research in this area (i.e. the identification of forms of collaboration between small Czech grocery stores and their suppliers and the specification of differences depending on the type of store and its location) can be broken down into the following four sub-goals:

- define the areas in which small stores can collaborate with their suppliers beyond the traditional trade relationships (i.e. specify the elements of collaboration),
- identify the degree of implementation of collaboration elements between small grocery stores and their suppliers on the Czech market,

- segment small grocery stores on the Czech market, based on the level of collaboration with their suppliers, and
- specify differences in the degree of implementation of collaboration elements depending on the affiliation of the store with the retail chain and the location of the store.

A literature review shows that the relationship between small retail stores and their suppliers has been analysed only marginally. Since it was not possible to rely on previous research carried out in this area, it was necessary to specify how collaboration between small retail stores and their suppliers of food products should be explored. The starting point thereof was in the basic function of retail stores, i.e. the sale of goods to final consumers. For a store to be able to successfully execute sales (of food) to its customers, it is crucial to ensure continuous replenishment of the right items in the right quantities at the right time and to pay for them using appropriate payment terms. The areas of replenishment and payment are thus the main areas of collaboration, and research needs to focus on them.

This basic consideration is then used to define four elements that can be used for assessing the collaboration between small grocery stores and their suppliers:

- the existence of long-term contracts stabilizing the supplier-purchaser relationship and regulating the basic form of the relationship (*long-term contracts*),
- the sharing of information, especially retrospectively throughout the chain as a basis for common demand forecasting and the common planning of material flows (*information sharing*),
- the establishment of synchronization mechanisms to replenish items sold by the retail store (*synchronization of replenishment*), and
- the application of trade credit as a tool of collaboration in the area of financial flows, i.e. in financing the goods stored in the shop which have not yet been sold to the end consumer (*trade credit*).

The extent of the application of these defined elements of collaboration was the subject of quantitative research among 65 Czech retail stores with a sales area smaller than 400 m<sup>2</sup>, whose range of

goods consisted primarily of groceries. Data collection took place in the period of March-April 2015 using face-to-face interviews with predetermined questions. Forty percent of the sample of retail stores comprised independent businesses, while sixty percent comprised stores that were part of retail chains. According to the location of the stores, there were also two groups of respondents identified in the sample, namely stores in small villages with up to 5,000 inhabitants (45 percent) and retail stores in larger towns with a population of more than 5,000 (55 percent).

The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions seeking both qualitative and quantitative answers with respect to the management of material and financial flows between the store and its suppliers. The obtained data were processed in order to identify the various elements of collaboration in each retail store. Information sharing beyond the normal trade relations was confirmed only in those situations where the retail store actively used information from its suppliers to predict demand and, subsequently, replenish stock in the store. Synchronization of replenishment was seen in inventory systems based on P, Q-models or their analogous equivalent and in automatic replenishment systems, which removed the need for the retailer to repeatedly generate orders.

Data were processed by descriptive and inferential statistics using the statistical software package IBM SPSS Statistics (v. 24). First, we identified the extent

of elements of collaboration between retailers and their suppliers by analyzing multiple responses. In the following step, the retailers were segmented according to the level of collaboration with their suppliers. As the elements were found to be statistically independent, the sample of retailers was segmented according to the number of elements of collaboration applied. Profiles of segments were compiled using the modal category in the observed characteristics of the retailers (i.e. the affiliation of the store with the retail chain and the location of the store) and using the elements of collaboration, or combinations thereof, most commonly applied in the given segment. In the final part of the analysis, differences were examined in the extent of application of the elements of collaboration among different types of retailers. For the purpose of the statistical validation of these differences, we used Pearson  $\chi^2$ -test at the 0.05 level of significance.

#### 4. Results and discussion

The first part of the results describes the form of collaboration between small retailers and their suppliers by identifying the elements of collaboration that are applied most frequently and, on the contrary, rarely. Table 1 includes a frequency-based presentation of the monitored elements of collaboration (Percent of responses) and the frequency of stores in which the element of collaboration was identified (Percent of cases).

**Table 1** Frequencies of elements of collaboration

Element of collaboration	Responses		Percent of cases
	N	Percent of responses	
Trade credit	56	32%	86%
Long-term contracts	50	28%	77%
Synchronization of replenishment	44	25%	68%
Information sharing	27	15%	42%
Total	177	100%	-

Source: Authors

The most frequently occurring element of collaboration was the provision of trade credits. This element was identified in the majority of cases (86 percent of cases). The high degree of application of this type of collaboration can be attributed to the fact that trade credit is the predominant method of

payment for deliveries to retail stores in the Czech Republic (Pecinova et al., 2015). The research also shows that most often it is a trade credit provided for a maximum period of 30 days. The relatively short duration of the trade credit (compared to, for example, the length of trade credit usually provided

by raw material suppliers to their customers) may indicate a worse bargaining position on the part of the retailer in relation to their suppliers of food (Lostakova et al., 2009).

Other elements of collaboration which are very often applied between small retailers and their suppliers include long-term contracts (77 percent of cases) and the synchronization of replenishment systems in retail stores (68 percent of cases). The high incidence of long-term contracts may indicate the desire of both the supplier and the customer to bind the partner to repetitive purchases. Given the fact that these are small stores of rather low value to suppliers (given the smaller turnovers and sales), it can be assumed that by entering into long-term contracts the retailer seeks to stabilize grocery deliveries (it secures seamless replenishment from a time-proven supplier). The high incidence of synchronized replenishment systems may then point to the interests of both partners in this area - both have an interest in seeking to satisfy end customers and an interest in reducing costs associated with replenishment. An interesting finding was that retailers who benefit from synchronized replenishment with their suppliers prefer replenishment P-systems (95 percent of cases). Our knowledge of replenishment systems in the supply chain allows us to assume that the reason for this is the easier planning of transport and in-store logistics processes. Besides P-systems,

Q-systems are also applied on a smaller scale (19 percent of cases), but only in three cases (7 percent of cases) did we identify automatic replenishment systems. This fact is probably the result of some unwillingness on the part of both partners to invest in this kind of replenishment system.

Using information from suppliers in demand forecasting is an element of collaboration that occurs less frequently between small retailers and their suppliers (42 percent of cases). This can be attributed to the reluctance to share information along the supply chain, which still represents one of the biggest barriers to the implementation of collaborative strategies (Lostakova et al., 2009). Another reason is probably the fact that the form of the demand forecasting process in Czech retail stores is still at a primitive level. There is the prevalent use of qualitative methods, relying on the intuition of retailers and their experience with certain products (Patak et al., 2015).

In the following part of the analysis, retail stores were segmented according to the level of collaboration with suppliers. The number of elements of collaboration applied was chosen as a segmentation variable since the greater the number of elements of collaboration between the retail store and its suppliers, the more intense the collaboration can be considered. The profile of segments is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** *The profile of segments*

Segment		A	B	C	D
The number of identified elements of collaboration		1	2	3	4
Representation of the segment in the sample		12%	24%	42%	22%
Affiliation of the retail store to a chain (modus)		Independent (75%)	Independent (69%)	Independent (52%)	Independent (57%)
Location of the retail store – inhabitants (modus)		5,000+ (63%)	< 5,000 (63%)	5,000+ (52%)	5,000+ (79%)
Representation of the element of collaboration (% of cases)	Trade credit	38%	63%	85%	100%
	Long-term contracts	0%	19%	37%	100%
	Synchronization of replenishment	13%	44%	81%	100%
	Information sharing	50%	75%	96%	100%

Source: Authors

The segment with the lowest level of collaboration (Segment A) also had the lowest representation in the sample of respondents (12 percent). In relation to their suppliers, the retail stores from this segment apply only one element of collaboration, but it is variable (they do not cooperate with their suppliers in the same way). The most commonly used is trade credit (50 percent), as is the case in the whole sample of respondents. In addition to that, long-term contracts and synchronization of replenishment are applied. None of the retailers in the segment, however, uses information from their suppliers in demand forecasting.

The stores in Segment B, which covers about one quarter of the sample, most often apply a combination of the elements “long-term contracts” and “trade credits” (38 percent), and a combination of the elements “long-term contracts” and “synchronization of replenishment” (25 percent). We can therefore identify two partial interests among retailers - one group focuses on the management of logistical aspects (while developing collaboration in the field of synchronization of replenishment), the other one focuses on the financial aspects (while developing collaboration in the field of trade credits).

The largest segment of retail stores (Segment C) is profiled by the existence of three elements of collaboration. In most cases (63 percent), this involves a combination of the elements “long-term contracts”, “synchronization of replenishment” and “trade credits”. It can be stated that the retailers in this segment operate with their suppliers in a common way – binding the partner to long-term collaboration by means of a business contract, synchronizing replenishment, and obtaining trade credits. Probably, they have a good relationship with their suppliers; however, with regard to the full synchronization of the supply chain they lack the willingness to share and use information on demand forecasting and replenishment.

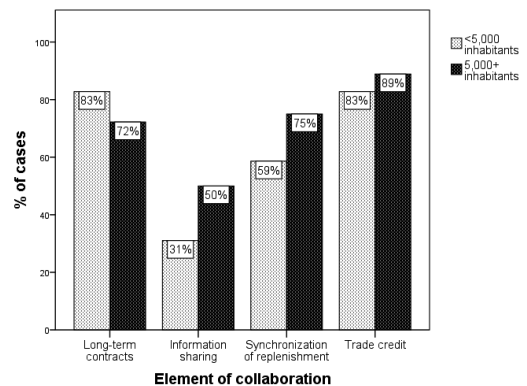
Segment D, covering less than a quarter of the respondents, is profiled by the greatest intensity of collaboration. In fact, it is a segment in which all the investigated elements of collaboration are applied. The retail stores in this segment maintain long-term collaboration with their suppliers based on a certain degree of information sharing and the synchro-

nization of material and financial flows, with high prospects for the implementation of sophisticated methods of supply chain management.

The profiles of the segments also show a trend towards greater collaboration in those retailers that are part of a retail chain and whose stores are located in larger cities. These differences are illustrated by the final part of the research results aimed at specifying differences in the application of elements of collaboration depending on the type of retail store.

Comparison of the frequency representations of elements of collaboration as a function of the location of the retail store in Figure 1 shows a greater level of collaboration between suppliers and retailers that are located in larger towns and cities. The differences observed can be considered significant only for information sharing ( $\chi^2 = 4.758$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $Sig. = 0.029$ ) and synchronization of replenishment ( $\chi^2 = 3.941$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $Sig. = 0.047$ ). Most likely, retailers in larger cities will be more valuable to their suppliers thanks to their ability to generate more revenues for the items delivered.

**Figure 1** Frequencies of elements of collaboration based on the location of the retail store

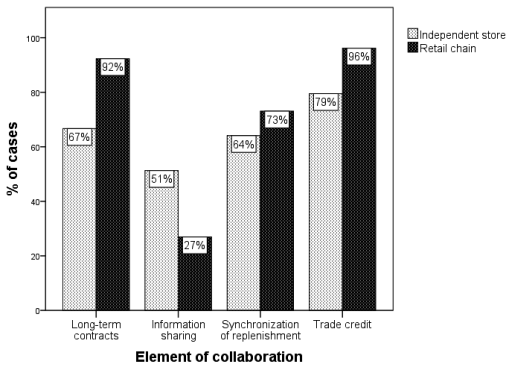


Source: Authors

Finally, the comparison of frequencies in Figure 2 confirms greater collaboration between suppliers and retail chains except in the area of information sharing. The differences are significant in long-term contracts ( $\chi^2 = 11.556$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $Sig. = 0.001$ ), information sharing ( $\chi^2 = 7.623$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $Sig. = 0.006$ ) and trade credits ( $\chi^2 = 7.265$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $Sig. = 0.007$ ).



**Figure 2** Frequencies of elements of collaboration based on the affiliation of the store with a retail chain



Source: Authors

The differences shown in Figure 2 can be explained by a greater willingness of suppliers to collaborate with small stores that increase their bargaining power by their involvement in a chain. That is, they become more attractive to suppliers because the sales of the store usually grow and, moreover, the supplier gets an opportunity to service the entire retail chain. An interesting conclusion of the analysis is that, in these cases, there is little willingness on the part of retailers to use information from suppliers. Stores that are part of a retail chain have very little tendency to use this information. The reason for this may be the more complex structure of the supply chain (often with the inclusion of distribution centres), a different management policy on the part of the chain in choosing sources of data for demand forecasting, or just the simple fact that the chain plans its needs and the supplier is expected to fully adapt without having to become involved. It follows from this that the horizontal integration of small stores into retail chains (leading to increased bargaining power at the expense of suppliers) can pose a significant barrier on the Czech market to the application of modern collaborative approaches to supply chain management using joint demand forecasting.

### 5. Conclusion

Small grocery stores have their unique place in the market, but changing market conditions along with competitive pressure from large hypermarkets forces them to look for ways to streamline their busi-

ness. One of those ways is to deepen collaboration with their suppliers, which could result in a significant competitive advantage.

In the Czech market, four segments of retailers who work with their suppliers with different intensities were identified. Frequently applied elements of collaboration include trade credit to retailers, long-term contracts, and the introduction of synchronization mechanisms in the delivery of goods to the store. Relatively few retailers use information from their suppliers to predict demand or subsequently control their inventories. The reason for restraint in this area is probably the same as that found for other supply chains - a lack of trust between the partners and a fear of the misuse of information.

The research results also confirmed a greater degree of collaboration in retailers in larger cities, but also in retailers that are members of retail chains. At first glance, it may therefore seem extremely beneficial to build horizontally integrated chains of retail stores. However, in these cases, we also observed a significant decrease in the frequency of information sharing, which usually widens the gap between retailers and suppliers and poses a significant obstacle to the implementation of modern collaborative approaches. Therefore, it seems desirable to examine the advantages and disadvantages of the horizontal integration of retail stores in subsequent research in order to identify additional opportunities to improve collaboration between suppliers and retailers.

The limitations of these research results lie in the fact that the form of collaboration between small retailers and their suppliers of food products has only been studied in the Czech Republic, which may exhibit territorial peculiarities. The generalization of conclusions concerning markets for other commodities could also be problematic. However, the proposal of a methodology for studying the forms and levels of collaboration between small grocery stores and their suppliers is an important contribution to theoretical knowledge, especially as little attention has been devoted to this topic in the literature. It is obvious that there are still a number of other issues yet to be resolved in the area of supply chains involving food products, and therefore it appears to be desirable to continue with this type of research.

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## **SURADNJA MALIH MALOPRODAJNIH TRGOVINA I DOBAVLJAČA PREHRAMBENIH PROIZVODA**

### **SAŽETAK**

Male trgovine moraju tražiti načine kako zadržati kupce. Jedna je mogućnost suradnja s dobavljačima. Cilj je ovog istraživanja analizirati oblike suradnje između malih trgovina u Češkoj i njihovih dobavljača te utvrditi razlike u toj suradnji ovisno o lokaciji trgovine i eventualnoj povezanosti određene trgovine s maloprodajnim lancem. U tu je svrhu provedeno kvantitativno istraživanje na 65 maloprodajnih trgovina u Češkoj, i to putem usmenog intervjua s unaprijed utvrđenim pitanjima. Suradnja se ocjenjivala prema četirima kriterijima koje su definirali autori. Utvrđeno je da je najčešći element suradnje odobravanje trgovačkoga kredita trgovcima na malo, a manje su učestali dugoročni ugovori i sinkronizacija obnove zaliha. Najmanje se upotrebljava dijeljenje informacija. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da na oblik suradnje značajno utječe vrijednost za kupca. Stoga se razina suradnje može unaprijediti izgradnjom horizontalno povezanih maloprodajnih lanaca. Rad doprinosi teoretskim znanjima tako što utvrđuje moguće elemente suradnje između malih maloprodajnih trgovina i dobavljača te usustavljuje učestalost njihove primjene.

**Ključne riječi:** vrijednost za kupca, obnova zaliha, upravljanje u maloprodaji, maloprodajna trgovina, suradnja u opskrbnom lancu