THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN THE TSL SECTOR IN POLISH CONDITIONS

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Abstract
The paper discusses the importance of strategic alliances as a source for obtaining competitive advantage. The authors will discuss existing and future constraints hindering cooperation between economic entities operating in the Polish conditions. They will be also presented proposals for practical actions aimed at overcoming barriers that hinder the success of the current process of cooperation between enterprises in a strategic dimension amid slowing economic growth. Developing a universal procedures aimed at lasting cooperation between operators in the TSL sector is not a simple task. The paper presents selected aspects of the complex process of construction and decision-making that accompanies the work on the development of management business relationship systems. The article defines the area of the further investigation of targeted business objectives of economic entities engaging in the service of physical flows.

Keywords: partnership, logistics, transport, alliances, TSL sector

1 INTRODUCTION
The modern global economy, based on knowledge, creates difficult business environment that is characterized by high volatility and instability. For all companies, both transnational giants and small business entities, strategic cooperation agreements have become a key factor in building a sustainable, permanent and difficult-to-copy competitive position. Acting alone in many situations is no longer possible and strategic alliances have become not only an attractive option among various forms of value creation, but a necessity [1].

It is commonly believed that alliances as a form of cooperation fosters the process of increasing the value of TSL operators, mainly because of the synergies that result in better interoperability between several entities than would be the case for separate entities. An assessment of the state of the art and the possibilities for constructing and implementing selected transport strategy for partnerships within the partnership.

2 TSL PLAYING FIELD FOR OPERATORS AND REASONS AND MOTIVES TO CONCLUDE STRATEGIC ALLIANCES
Progressive globalization and fierce rivalry in the TSL sector are forcing searchers and operators in the industry to find increasingly effective ways to meet emerging challenges. One such way is to go into a variety of layouts, relationships, connections. This situation applies not only to large organizations, but also to SMEs. The existing fragmentation in the road transport sector requires work / activities aimed at working out a platform for cooperation in the TSL sector. The lack of consolidation in the transport sector so far has been attributed to insufficient bidding power of transport SMEs in competition in the domestic and international TSL services sector.

The removal of many barriers, primarily of customs, official and political ones, has encouraged many companies, operating in the limited local area, to expand their business to other markets (both domestic and foreign markets). Unfortunately, the expansion of transport activities is associated with the large financial resources needed to organize the agency and office as well as the employment of new workers and the acquisition of transport capacity.

Contemporary companies operate in different conditions - dynamically changing environment and constantly evolving customer expectations. Therefore, to achieve the most general goal of existence of any organization, which is survival and development, companies increasingly have to resort to other systems and often new management principles. The rationale for engaging in strategic alliances is therefore a derivative of the specific conditionality of the organization and directly derives from the strategic objectives of the partner companies. There are many classifications of the factors that cause the need for strategic alliances, and the most frequently cited reasons for establishing such partnerships are: globalization, increased cost of management, technological and technological progress, costs and risks associated with mergers and political factors. Creating relationships in the form of strategic alliances is most often associated with the phenomenon of globalization, as this process, both in terms of globalization of markets, sectors, and management, faces new challenges for organizations, also in the form of barriers that overcome market and business growth. Consequently, companies are looking for allies in the form of strategic partners - the allies [2].

The most frequently identified reason for strategic alliances in Poland is the increasing importance of company development costs, resulting from high expenditure on research or the cost of providing organizations with the ability to respond flexibly to market changes. Two major developments have been the source of rapid growth in development costs: shortening service lifecycles and shortening the lifecycle of transport technology. Shortening the service life cycle results from the so-called the phenomenon of "Californian Needs" and the ever-shorter marketability of products on the market, leading to uncertainty of demand - the unpredictability of consumption patterns and behavior of customers. Reducing the technology lifecycle involves faster-than-current adoption of new, key technologies, which results in the loss of experience of the best companies in the sector and accelerating the race for research and development. So scientific and technological progress requires more and more financial investment and above all knowledge and competence, which because of their interdisciplinary nature go beyond the capabilities of individual TSL companies. Another important cause for cooperation in the form of alliances is the political conditioning of some countries ‘protectionist measures aimed at the progressive liberalization of trade and the limitation of carriers’ access to local markets (eg. restrictions on cabotage operations, minimum wage, etc. ). The low effectiveness, high risk of failure and high costs of other global strategies, especially mergers, also speaks for the creation of strategic...
alliances. The strategic alliance is an indirect form of competition between a merger or acquisition of another company and an independent business. At the same time, this kind of alliance is a type of an interrelated relationship between companies that favors the economies of scale, area, and cumulative gains. In addition, it promotes the preservation of the autonomy and identity of coalition partners. Of course, the economic benefits of the merger are generally lower than those of mergers and acquisitions, but the risk of failure is much smaller, because it spreads to co-operating partners. In addition (depending on the provisions of the agreement) there is a possibility to withdraw from the alliance, which in turn is not possible or at least hindered in case of merger or acquisition. Because of these characteristics, the alliance should be regarded as one of the most rational strategies for the development of an external company.

Motives for creating strategic alliances in the world are different from those of companies operating in Poland. Global alliances often decide on a technological factor. In Poland, the primary goal is to bring new technology and capital to the country in order to increase its competitive position vis-à-vis its native and western competitors. On the part of foreign investors, the alliance theme is a limited risk entry into the polish TSL market, with the potential for increasing market share and getting to know the local conditions before deciding to buy a strategic package. To the disadvantage of Polish companies often contracts with foreign partners take the form of asymmetric alliances (with companies that have uneven economic, technical and organizational potential) and often end up taking over majority ownership by a foreign partner.

Business development, the blurring of external and internal borders as a result of closer relationships between partner companies and their customers, the use of large-scale IT solutions translate into the development of new forms of partnership and alliances. This is conducive to the creation of network organizations in which companies fulfill certain functions and perform common tasks in the area of TSL support. As part of networking, many business processes take place, including transport processes. In this way, network organizations can distinguish, among other things, the particular type of network that is the logistics network [3]. Of the four main types of networks [4] the one that is most relevant to the relationship between TSL operators and transport SMEs is undoubtedly a contractual network based on contracts. The characteristic feature of this type of network is the spreading of risks and complementing the competences of the parties to the agreement.

3 CLASSIFICATION OF ALLIANCE NETWORKS

The definition of the network is ambiguous and broad conceptual, as is evidenced by, among other things, a considerable number of publications devoted to this issue. Network research is carried out by scientists from different disciplines, which translates into a wide variety of network-related workflows, or networks treated as a link between an organization and other entities in the business environment. In the management sciences a significant problem with the definition of a network is the precise definition of the research object. Companies operating in network structures, including TSL operators in its activities put emphasis on creating value for the customer.

Classification of alliance networks on the basis of one criterion implies that such a division refers only to the selected aspect of co-operation, eg taking account of transport relationships between entities. An interesting classification of the alliance network was presented by Ch. Snow and R.E. Miles [5], classifying them into three basic types: internal, stable and dynamic. For example, in the relationship between a TSL operator and a “small” transport operators, the most appropriate seems to be the dynamic network, where the lead company is focused on key business, and the rest of the functions (eg. transport) from the value chain are outsourced. These networks provide flexibility and specialization, working best in a highly competitive environment. Two basic types of such alliances are shown in Table 1. Their purpose is to obtain economies of scale or synergy benefits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Additive alliances</th>
<th>Complementary alliances</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>An alliance of companies that jointly produce and sell services</td>
<td>An alliance of companies, where one organizes, and other execution services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of layout</td>
<td>Forwarder - forwarder carrier - carrier</td>
<td>Forwarder – carrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>LEP International Spedition AG - Intercargo</td>
<td>LEP - Spedcargo Kuhne &amp; Nagel - Sernam</td>
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The TSL operator can treat subcontractors, often transport companies classified as SMEs, like the rest of the environment. The basic elements of partnership with subcontractors are:

- a database containing the most important information about the carrier and the values of the technical and operational indicators;
- assessment of the carrier's share of current and future revenues of the TSL operator, based on which it selects strategic partners from the largest subcontractors;
- an analysis of the current status of partnerships with all companies and the identification of goals that can be achieved by strengthening ties, especially partners who have strategic status;
- comparison of subcontractors - transport companies and benchmarking in the context of their importance to the TSL operator;
- self-assessment of the operator with respect to the possibility of establishing partnerships with carriers;
- identify the benefits of deepening partnerships with subcontractors, with particular focus on the best or strategic subcontractors;
- choice of planning method for the process of creating new value, as well as the way of
executing, managing, estimating and division of roles;
- choice of partnership management method;
- managing the process of making changes in TSL operators relationships with carriers.

From the point of view of partner selection, two types of strategic alliances can be distinguished, i.e. alliances of type X, consisting of selecting partners on the basis of complementarity of transport resources, and alliances of type Y, characterized by the fact that partners choose to strengthen the same resources. Alliances complementary X are commonly established by professionals with expertise and interests are varied, e.g. one company creates a product whose sales can be developed thanks to the capabilities of the other. Complementary alliances are generally limited to the common distribution of services "developed" by one of the partners, although they sometimes include the production of a joint product. Y integration types are formed by companies that intend to gain economies of scale in offering a specific, segmented / service phase.

4 THE BENEFITS OF CONCLUDING ALLIANCES
Strategic alliance allows not only entering a new market, but also the exchange of know-how between partners: TSL- SMEs, conducive to expand and get ahead of the competition. Strategic alliance is a complex venture. The following are the most important benefits of such forms of cooperation:

- Acquire a new market by working with an outside company that meets the needs of the alliance company. The strategic alliance must stay for both sides, because otherwise the alliance will collapse (sometimes very violent and heavy losses to both sides, especially to the smaller allied). The strategic alliance also strengthens the position of co-operating companies with stronger competitors (the two weaker firms are stronger after the alliance has become stronger).

- Measures aimed at rescuing a company in financial difficulty due to debts or outdated technology. Weaker carrier seeks to establish cooperation with a stronger partner to raise capital and new technology to stay on the market or the provision of transport services under the brand stronger partner. Such an alliance can take the form of a joint venture or be transformed into a merger.

- Reducing the cost of advertising through cooperation with existing competitor. As the competitive struggle generates high costs associated with the struggle for market share and the desire to eliminate an opponent, two competing companies can come to the conclusion that it is more profitable to cooperate for the benefit of both parties. The alliance often protects against the extinction of one or both companies because of the price war leading to the fact that the business is no longer paying off. The allies can also be companies that have not competed with each other and do not make contacts, but because of the market situation they want to cooperate.

- Limiting the financial risk associated with entering a new market. For smaller transport companies, the strategic alliance may be the only opportunity to enter a new market and expand their business.

- Acquire know-how by strengthening cooperation between the boards of both companies, who decide to share their experience in order to achieve mutual benefit. Exchange of know-how increases the effectiveness of the market, avoids mistakes made by one of the allies, and reduces the risk of business expansion. Increasing cooperation does not exclude the two companies' autonomy in making strategic and marketing decisions (e.g. tailor-made advertising for a particular market). Both companies may also continue to keep sensitive information confidential.

- Protection from takeover by a larger and stronger company in a given market. Strategic alliance between collaborating companies can gain them a better position in the market. Companies in similar industries can later transform the alliance into a merger, creating a new, more powerful organization with a stronger brand and a stronger market position.

5 COOPERATION OF TSL OPERATORS WITH TRANSPORTING SMES
Supporting the alliance in clearly defined and transparent conditions greatly facilitates later solving problems and disputes. Partners who are no longer satisfied with the effects of the cooperation can check whether the fixed factors have not changed and whether the components remain on the appropriate, level-controlled model. Assessment of business benefits resulting from cooperation between companies from the TSL sector of transport subcontractors, which are to contribute to the objectives of the client, it requires taking into account characteristics of the relationship between these entities. Taking into account such features plays a special role in the context of the high impact of contracted transport services on the market performance of TSL operators. Thus, in evaluating performance by the customer of transport services should mainly be taken into account:

- general assumptions about the terms and conditions of co-operation in outsourcing and the assumed contractual contract period;
- scope of precisely formulated regulations concerning the rights and obligations of the parties to the contract;
- adjusting the activities of the cooperating entities to the terms of the contract;
- anticipated and applied restrictions for non-compliance with the terms of the contract.

These issues relate specifically to the characteristics that characterize the results of cooperation with the TSL operator. They play a less important role in the formulation of the objectives of such cooperation. It is difficult to distinguish, for example, the correct configuration and understanding of contract terms with the service provider as the purpose of outsourcing. Ensuring the implementation of the agreed rules of cooperation, taking into account the applicable law, should, however, be regarded as one of the conditions which will be fulfilled to achieve the objectives of cooperation between the parties. It should be added that the question of the participation of the transport company classified as SMEs in additional TSL operator benefits, resulting from the improvements made by the service provider, is reflected in the studies, in which it was the issue of relations with service providers, among others, by M. Corbett [6], or D. Brown and S. Wilson [7]. Solutions that take into account the provider's share of the benefits are treated as compensation for the
Apart from the definition of the basic scope of activities to be performed and the related rights and responsibilities of the contracting parties, the basic elements of the contract between the principal and the service provider shall also include sanctions for non-performance or improper performance of the terms of cooperation. Commonly used penalties in contracts between contractors include contractual penalties, penalty interest and a reduction in the amounts due to the carrier, which may be related to contractual penalties imposed on the contractor.

It should be noted that penalties should only be enforced in extreme situations when the carrier has not taken steps to resolve a problem that has arisen as a result of its faults. The disclosure of information about liabilities resulting from the contractual consequences of non-performance or improper performance of the terms of the agreement should better serve to raise awareness of the problem of the service unit manager, which should be resolved rather than punish the service provider for causing the problem [9]. It should be noted, however, that the proposed approach derives from contract law, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries (England, Wales, USA, Australia), whereas in other countries, the enforcement of such obligations is more common. Exiting immediately after such an event, including the lost benefits associated with the handicap or the failure to perform certain activities. However the parties may limit or even exclude in the contract (contract) the liability of the parties in this respect.

The hedging of a transport service provider prior to the appearance of these types of costs is difficult, and the contract with the service provider only limits the possibility of such costs. The assessment of existing contracts facilitates, however, the avoidance of errors concerning the regulation of terms of cooperation with new contractors. Experience from existing cooperation also facilitates the development of an appropriate set of selection criteria for service providers. It should be supplemented that some interference tolerance for cooperation over a longer time horizon may be due to the small impact of such disruptions on the results achieved by the actions taken or under cooperative significant investment to start cooperation in the framework of the signed contract.

6 EXAMPLES OF COOPERATION IN THE TSL SECTOR

The consolidation process is particularly evident in the area of courier services. Last years have passed in the market of carrier services under the sign of consolidation of capital. In line with the trends throughout the TSL market, courier companies seek to offer customers a comprehensive service that the customer purchases directly from one operator, within the One Stop Shopping. The way to offer such high standards is the form of close cooperation between logistic operators and courier companies. Creating a global supply network gives large operators the ability to reach local customers without having to spend extra money on network development, while small courier companies are expanding their offer for international delivery at the highest quality level, as well as raising capital and experience of a large operator [10]. Large companies form groups of companies operating under the same brand, using company letterheads, means of transport and transshipment points, distribution networks using synchronized information systems. This is one of the symptoms of consolidation in the industry resulting from the acquisition of certain strategic goals. On the road of this type of cooperation, the company is aiming at the development of its own business - this includes, among other things, the increase in brand value, which plays an important role mainly for larger companies. It is also important to reduce the operating costs that are
possible due to economies of scale - fixed costs that are particularly high in the industry (these are costs related to maintenance of infrastructure, investment in equipment and IT systems) are distributed to a larger volume of services. There is also an opportunity to enrich the offer - as a result of cooperation links it is possible to benefit from the extension of the offer by Cross-Holling is not only a core activity, but also a related service. One Stop Shopping, increasingly sought by customers; It is also important to accumulate brands. Important potential advantages include: increasing the reach and expansion of the distribution network - thanks to cooperation with local companies, well-known brands reach smaller towns. Cooperation with foreign bidders enables the availability of services in the international service and increases the market share of the market [11].

The consolidation of the Polish express delivery market is increasingly reflected in the trends and phenomena of this industry in Europe, where the 6 largest pan-European express carriers dominate: Deutsche Post / DHL, TPG / TNT, La Poste/GeoPost, Royal Mail Group, UPS and FedEx. On the other hand, the Polish market shows the slightest extent of mergers concluded by these operators with Polish courier companies. An example of such consolidation is the consolidation of a group of Deutsche Post World Ned companies under the joint global brand DHL Express. This group included the oldest Polish courier company, Servisco, which offered domestic courier services. The resulting concern has become one of the world’s leading logistics providers offering complete logistics services to 228 countries around the world. Another example of the inclusion of the Polish operator in global logistics structures was the acceptance by Swedish mail and French Masterlink Express. Through this connection Masterlink specializing in domestic express mail became a member of the international Direct Parcel Distribution (DPD) network. Masterlink is now fully owned by GeoPost, a holding company owned by the French La Poste Group. With this merger Masterlink uses the DPD road network in almost 30 European countries. Another example of consolidation on the Polish market is the purchase of part of the shares of Szybka Paczka (Raben Group) by the international operator General Logistics Systems (GLS). General Logistics Systems B.V. has built up a strong European logistics network within three years. One of its subsidiaries is General Logistics Systems Poland, which was established in 1998 as a forwarding and packaging company belonging to the Raben Group. GLS B.V. deals with the carriage of parcels and offers related services. Through its own companies as well as partners, it proposes its services in several dozen European countries [12].

One of the largest courier companies in the world is United Parcel Service (UPS), a US concern with a long-standing position in the European market. The company provides a broad spectrum of transportation and logistics services in more than 20 countries. The company’s advantage is its modern fleet of transport jet aircrafts and the effective use of modern technologies to streamline logistics processes. In Poland, UPS offers shipping services in domestic and international relationships. UPS has completed the process of acquiring one of the leading Polish express carrier services - Messenger Service Stolica. UPS acquired 58% of the three founders and 42% owned by Enterprise Investors. This transaction allowed the Stolica customers access to the global UPS transport network. The American operator has, in turn, gained broad access to the national services offered by the Polish company.

In the relational approach, the economic structure of the cooperative network is more marked by the role of leaders, partners. Networks are formed by horizontal and vertical alliances. A single company participates in various forms of relationship and has a variety of functions within the network. One can distinguish several degrees of corporate co-operation by assigning specific forms of co-operation in the supply chain - from one-off, sporadic buy-sell transactions to the involvement of companies involving equity exposures. Some of these forms can be called strategic alliances. Despite the several definitions of the strategic alliance mentioned in this paper, it has to be stressed that its concept is not yet definitively (definitively) defined. Some think that strategic alliances are relationships that connect a company with its business partners to "large companies" or "enterprise constellations." Because strategic alliances contain goals shared and declared by all partners, they may appear in ways that relate to relational strategies.

An interesting example of a successful partnership is Coty Polska and Euro-Pegaz Transport. The latter is a Polish logistic operator providing co-pack and transport services for Coty Polska. The high quality of the service, the flexibility of the operation and the constant increase of the operator’s potential caused the cooperation between the partners. The new joint project consisted of carrying out a "X-sets" holiday promotion and was fundamentally different from the existing principles of concept and size of cooperation. This situation was related to the need to reorganize some of the existing organizational structures and scope of activities. As a result of the cooperation, new processes have been created, allowing for the creation of new promotions without increasing the complexity of the business, increasing the competitive advantage, promoting the Polish supplier in the international structures of Coty Polska, and preparing the basis for further modification of logistics processes. The operator took over the know-how in the sphere of production and co-packing, won the unique 3PL skills on the Polish market and created a new service comparable to 4PL. The project has been successful and has been rated as the best in terms of quality and timeliness that Coty has done in the last decade. The mutual learning process in this project has strengthened the relationship between partners by encouraging further cooperation.

Another interesting example of cooperation within the TSL sector is the new forwarding and logistics area between PEKAES and ETLogistik. (The latter focuses on the provision of logistic services and distribution of general cargo and full truck loads, including environmental protection and the creation of human-friendly jobs). PEKAES has assumed that it will increase its sales revenue in its flagship product - general cargo, through cooperation. Development in the core and high-margin segment is one of the PEKAES strategic goals. Thanks to the modern form of cooperation in the form of a cluster, both companies will be able to exploit synergies in selected areas of cooperation, especially in the field of domestic consignments. Domestic and international operations and customer service are continued by both companies independently. Thanks to the creation of a new cluster strengthened its position on the domestic market of general cargo services. Both partners also see new technological and organizational solutions that will enable the development of operational processes in line with the sustainability requirements of TSL systems. Thus, in the first half of 2013, the volume of freight in the group of general cargo and courier services in the PEKAES Group increased by 4.5%.

7 SUMMARY

Taking into account the development of the Polish economy after accession to EU structures, it is a reflection that it is too early to talk about big strategic alliances similar to those that take place between large operators in the world in the context of globalization. Under the Polish
conditions for the TSL sector, three forms of strategic alliances can be distinguished: joint ventures, corporate consortia and franchises. While the formation of joint ventures has become a popular form of engaging foreign capital in Poland, capital alliances are not a common form of strategic agreements with Western partners. Foreign investors instead of buying minority shares in Polish companies prefer to take control packages.

There is a lack of systematic research on strategic alliances in Poland. It is also characteristic that the importance of strategic cooperation between Polish companies is relatively lower compared to the more developed countries. However, the prospects for the development of strategic alliances in certain sectors of the economy are increasing dynamically (eg. the arms industry, air transport, the pharmaceutical industry). This is due to factors such as macroeconomic trends in the global economy and, above all, to the increasing importance of globalization as well as the sharpness of scientific and technical progress.

The nature of relationships between enterprises and other units including cooperation their location and the nature of the cooperation between them determined also innovations in industrial systems [13]. Maintaining partnerships between businesses (suppliers and buyers) is part of the competitive supply chain. The immanent feature of enhancing its effectiveness through such cooperation is the trust that allows the free flow of information needed to reduce risk in the supply chain. Trust as the result of experience increases with the duration of the relationship. We are talking here about long-term effects measured by financial ratios but due to the factors of cooperation - its quality, reliability, inventiveness, sustainability, and above all – communication.

The specificity of the partnership relationship in the TSL sector in Poland is characterized by the individual character of cooperation, in which a number of qualitative elements emanating from the so-called "soft management skills". Partnering in the supply chain allows you to use available logistics concepts, eg. CPFR, ECR, Just-in-time, VMI, or early involvement of the supplier in product development. Their use accelerates the response of businesses to changes in demand while also optimizing global logistics costs throughout the supply chain. However, the partnership should be analyzed both in the context of its perception by counterparts and in measuring the effects of that cooperation. The advantages achieved by the chains in which the partnership is maintained co-decide to tighten the relationship between Polish companies in the TSL sector.

8 REFERENCES