

# Influence Strategies Affecting Organizational Buying Decisions: An Empirical Study in Vietnam Enterprises

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**Abstract:** Buying decisions in organizations often are made by decision-making units or buying centers whose members typically represent different departments and have different interests and motivations. Buying decision outcomes depend on many factors, including the interpersonal relationships between these members. Consequently, organizational decision-making processes involve considerable complexity. This study refers to influence strategies that a participant in a buying center may use to influence others, thereby, affecting the purchasing decision outcomes and their effectiveness. This study mainly uses a qualitative method to validate its hypothesis. In addition, although this study examines the organizational buying of the online marketing services, its findings will provide an insight into the influencing of purchasing decision outcomes for both professional services and general purchasing decisions. The implication and limitations are also discussed in this study.

**Keywords:** Influence strategies, effectiveness of influence strategy, buying center, organizational buying decision, e-marketing services.

## 1. Introduction

Unlike in the consumer market, in the industrial market, the industrial buying process is defined as a multi-step process and is determined by many people in the organization [1]. Many studies focus on the factors affecting the buying process inside and outside an organization. One of the most comprehensive models of organizational buying process is the model proposed by Webster and Wind (1972) [2]. In it, the author introduces the concept of buying center (BC) individuals involved in the buying process (in which individuals

participated in one or more of the following roles: initiator, user, influencer, decider, buyer, and gatekeeper). The authors also give different buying situations which have different influences on the buying process: new task, straight rebuy, modified rebuy [1]. This article presents studies on influence strategies that individuals in BCs use to influence other individuals, thereby, affecting the buying decision outcome. Managers as well as marketers need information related to the relationship among the key members of BCs. This becomes an important factor when determining the informal, non-task determinants in an organization's decision to buy. In this study, the influence strategies

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(based on the specified bases of power determining influence between participants [3]) affect three key members in the BC (managers, experts, users) in a new task buying situation. Knowing the factors affecting the decision makers is as important as the factors affecting the decision [4]. Furthermore, the successful influence strategies obtained from this study will provide guidance to marketers as to how to influence the key decision makers within an organization. As well as research by Lynn [5], the research results will be of benefit for marketing researchers in marketing professional services, especially in online marketing services.

### 1.1. Influence strategies

The study by Alex Mucchielli [6] explored the meaning of the "influence" that leads an individual or a group to change their views through influence strategies. Different influence strategies are used differently in different contexts. To influence others, an influencer could use methods such as using a model, debating, and persuading. In the theory of leadership, influence is a process that affects thoughts, behavior and feelings of the influence receiver, according to which the strategy influences include: being friendly, exchange - bargaining, persuasion, coercion, alliances and punishing.

As with the study by Venkatesh, Kohli, and Zaltman, the effectiveness of influence strategies is defined as the degree of influence on the target expressed by the influence strategy [7]. To influence, in this study, is to attempt to change opinions and decisions related to the purchase decision of the participant in the BC [7]. In this approach, influence is the interaction between individuals.

Studies in organizational [8-13], have found that *rational persuasion* is one influence strategy frequently and effectively used. According to Bristor [14], rational persuasion is expressed in the act: trying to convince, using reliable external sources to generate support, creating a priority, and trying to oppose

disfavored alternatives. Given Kelman's theory of the processes of attitude change, rational persuasion is an effective influence used in buying decisions [15, 16].

According to Kelman [15, 16], in this theory, *inspirational appeal* is another method for influencing others, which concerns the person making a proposal or request that arouses enthusiasm, by appealing to one's values, ideals, and aspirations. Another effective influence strategy in creating an influence is that of *consultation*. Kelman's theory supposes that consultation is a strategy regarding consulting others, listening to their proposals and their concerns. This will facilitate the process of changing attitudes and opinions.

One of the other influence strategies frequently used is *legitimizing*. This influence can be in two forms: formal and informal. Formal legitimizing has been defined from the position of the responsibility in an organization, while informal legitimizing involves the influences arising from the position but not regulated. The person has the right to perform his or her tasks, as well as the "authority" – to influence beyond their duties. Other studies have shown that managers use informal influence processes more than formal power and authority when leading subordinates [9].

*Personal appeals* are also one of the influence strategies that Farrell mentions in his research [17]. This strategy is described by the situation where a person tries to influence others by the appeals from a faithful expression or friendship (beg, ask favors, enthusiasm, commitment...). This strategy is often used by subordinates who want to affect their managers [13]. While another strategy, *exchange*, is described as an exchange offer of benefits to achieve a certain task. This strategy has been often used by managers who want to influence their subordinates [11].

*Coalition* influence strategies involve seeking the support and assistance of others. The study of Kipnis shows that this strategy is only used by the staff who create the coalition

and seek the help of others to create a greater impact and make effective their strategy [11]. According to Case et al, those who are able to access many bases for support, tend to be effective at influencing others, however, attracting the support from colleagues is not often used in influence attempts [9]. In some studies, coalition strategies have been less frequently used and are less effective [18, 19].

The author has chosen seven influence strategies demonstrated previously which are the most commonly used in an organization's purchasing activities. Participants in a BC have distinctive characteristics of positions, majors with different interests and motivations. This makes the main difference for each participant to have different bases of power, based on that; they have different influence strategies.

### 1.2. Bases of power

According to Silk and Kalwani, there are not many effective and reliable methods to measure the influence of the different participants in BCs [20]. Communication and influence processes between individuals in BCs often occur in an unpredicted and complex way. Therefore, they are often in situations of lack of information, and fall into a state of "guessing" the final result. Sometimes, marketers and salespersons also try to measure the influence that the key members in the BC have used to affect the final result [21]. To eliminate mistakes in predicting, marketers need to have information about the behavior of members as well as their roles and positions in the buying process. French and Raven have supposed the basis of the system of power, corresponding to different positions within the organization, allows different assessment of individuals in the BC when solving a buying situation [22]. Two authors define five common and important bases of power between a source (S) and a receiver (R) of influence in an interpersonal relationship: *Reward Power* (Receiver has perception that Source has the ability to mediate rewards), *Coercive Power*

(Receiver has perception that Source has the ability to mediate punishments), *Legitimate Power* (Receiver has perception that Source has a legitimate right to prescribe Receiver's behavior), *Referent Power*: (R has identification with Source), *Expert Power* (Receiver has perception that S has some special knowledge or expertise). According to Thomas's study, the last three bases of power are most operated and used when determining the pattern of purchase influence in a new task buying situation [12]. The hypothesis is that the differences in these three patterns can be explained by the organizational positions of participants in the BC. These bases relate to the expected behavior of individuals holding different positions within the organization. In case there is a big difference in behavior between individuals with different positions, information obtained from this study would be of great significance for managers when developing marketing strategies.

### 1.3. Influence strategies in buying online marketing services

Online marketing is defined as all activities aimed at satisfying the needs and wants of customers through the applications of the Internet and electronic devices. Therefore, online marketing brings specific and superior characteristics in comparison to traditional marketing such as: unlimited space of time, increased interaction between consumers and products, suitable cost for all types of business, noting the feedback from customers... Therefore, organizations tend to use more and more types of online marketing. However, this is a category of services which needs technical knowledge and technology in both the service providers and buying organizations, whereas, according to the survey, advertising businesses in Vietnam have scarce resources for this sector, while buying organizations have not been as familiar with these new services as they are with traditional marketing.

According to research on the intention to use online marketing services, Vietnamese

businesses have been often interested in these factors: benefits, convenience, cost, risk and social influence. With the better characteristics of online marketing than traditional marketing as presented, choosing online marketing services can be increased in Vietnam, however, only if online marketing services are operated in a correct way. This depends on the technology factor. Thus, in this case, the opinions of expert or those who have knowledge could be important. Based on the seven influence strategies, the strategy to be used when purchasing technical and technology products and services are often the strategies that typically allow buying organizations to be sure about reliability and social impact. In this case, the rational persuasion strategies, consulting and inspirational appeals have more special significance.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research hypotheses

In a buying center, the participants often play one or more of the roles that Webster and Wind suggested [1]. In some cases, the buying center is an informal ad hoc group, but in other cases, it is a formally sanctioned group with specific mandates, criteria, and procedures. However, in this study, when considering the influence strategies, the author considers only the major roles; removing the roles which have less impact on buying decisions. With this research, the author removed buyers and gatekeepers. The two roles have an impact on the process and buying behavior of organizations, however, they often have little impact on the decisions of the other members, as well as do not usually use influence strategies affecting others in the buying center, and usually, they only perform the procedure (gatekeepers) and tasks according to the final decision of the buying center (the buyer).

Accordingly, the authors divided roles into three main types: *manager, expert and user*.

These individuals have different bases of power, depending on their job position. For example, managers carry legal authority; they are empowered to be able to affect the behavior of other individuals in the purchasing decision process. Or scientists have expert power which is a base having great significance when buying professional technology services such as online marketing services. Thus, with such bases of power, participants will prioritize the use of appropriate influence strategies to affect effectively the buying decision. Based on the above analyses, the author has divided influence strategies into three groups corresponding to three bases of power:

- Group 1 (N1) (legitimate power): legitimating (n1a), exchange (n1b).
- Group 2 (N2) (expert power): rational persuasion (n2a), consultation (n2b), inspirational appeals (n2c).
- Group 3 (N3) (reference power): coalition (n3a), personal appeals (n3b).

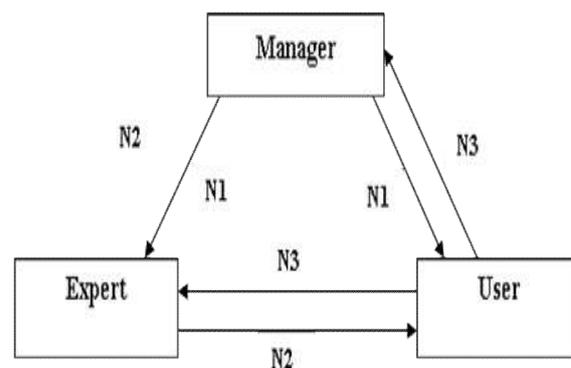


Figure 1. Model of the interpersonal influence strategies in a buying center.

Accordingly, the author designs three research hypotheses as below:

- H1: *Managers use more frequently the strategies of group 1 and the strategies of group 1 have a stronger positive relationship with manifest influence than group 2, and group 3.*
- H2: *Experts use more frequently the strategies of group 2 and the strategies of*

group 2 have a stronger positive relationship with manifest influence than group 1, and group 3.

- H3: Users use more frequently the strategies of group 3 and the strategies of group 2 have a stronger positive relationship with manifest influence than group 1, and group 2.

## 2.2. Research design

This study mainly uses qualitative methods to prove and to clarify issues in the theory. The author uses qualitative research because this topic is a relatively new orientation of research; the authors would like to perform exploratory research to more clearly understand the concepts and variables. On the other hand, as discussed in the section above, because this is a topic that brings many social and behavioral and psychological characteristics, there should be flexibility in the research process to detect new problems and discover them deeply. This is the reason why the author has chosen qualitative research for this research project.

The researcher chose interviews as the main research method. The interviews were designed and implemented in a professional way to ensure the reliability of information, the authenticity of behavior, activities and practical experience as well as the perception of the organizational strategies of the members involved in the buying process.

### 2.2.1. Sample of research

In this study, the authors focused on the online marketing services purchasing activities of businesses. The author has reviewed the research work related to the professional services purchase of organizations [23, 24]. In such cases, having personnel who have the expertise, knowledge and technology of online marketing becomes important. In this study, the authors interviewed 60 people from 20 different businesses using online marketing services.

The researcher carried out a purposeful sampling method. This research studies the subjects during their time inside organization

and is related to personal factors about the individual, interpersonal relationships, and their informal/formal impact in organizations, therefore, the selected informants should suit the research requirements and be able to give information for the research. The researchers performed multi-stage purposeful sampling (choosing who provides information from the three groups into which the study was divided), to illustrate the characteristics of a particular group and to support the comparison among these groups.

Table 1. Selected respondent characteristics - Total sample and by position

Characteristic	Total Sample	Manager	Expert	User
Number of years in present position	4.71	5.31	4.73	4.08
Number of years in organization	7.49	7.04	6.74	8.68
Age	36.62	42.18	35.51	32.18
Education (From 1 = high school to 6 = doctorate)	3.97	3.79	4.21	3.94
Number of Professional memberships	2.19	2.02	2.24	2.36
	<b>N=60</b>	<b>N=20</b>	<b>N=20</b>	<b>N=20</b>

### 2.2.2. Collection and data processing

The researcher performed separate interviews, divided into three rounds to ensure the objectivity of the research results.

#### *Step 1: Collection of exploratory information*

In the early days, to collect some related information to the research question, the author conducted exploratory interviews on the subject of exploration research to know which questions are appropriate. With this objective, the author performed some unstructured interviews with 9 participants from 6 of the 20 chosen enterprises.

#### *Step 2: Preparation of questions portfolio*

At this step, the researcher performed a systematic interview. With this method, the

researcher divided the participants into three interview groups corresponding to their position at work, participating in the BO: managers, experts and users. Individuals belonging to the same group were interviewed using the same questions. The questions were freely listed, the researchers asked the participants to list the information that they could think of relating to influence strategies that they use based on their base of power.

#### *Step 3: Performance of interviews*

The interview process was divided into 3 rounds. The first round and the second round were made with 45 people (15 managers, 15 scientists, 15 users) of 15 enterprises, to get general information, then the author synthesized and sent back the summary to the interviewees to verify whether it was appropriate to their ideas or not. Fifteen other people belonging to 5 other businesses participated in the third round to discuss the information obtained from the results of the previous two rounds of interviews. The final results were the general opinion of 60 people interviewed in all three rounds.

Each interview lasted about 30-45 minutes. Each interviewer took notes carefully, and simultaneously recorded the content of interviews to ensure accuracy. To ensure consistency in the interpretation of the information from interviews, interview groups were conducted to discuss the data immediately after the interview ended.

#### *Step 4: Data Processing*

Data obtained from the interviews were classified and stored carefully after comparing with notes of the interviews to ensure accuracy and consistency, appropriate to each different situation and space of the interviews. The validation of the data collected through the steps took place in the research process. The researchers could generalize on some aspects of analyzing in many cases. However, in general, the reliability and the ability to generalize did not play a significant role in the qualitative study because the sample size was not too large and selected by a multi-stage purposeful

sampling method. Validation is considered the strength of qualitative research, and it is used to determine whether the findings are correct or not, from the perspective of researchers, participants, or interested readers. For this study, the authors used the method of *triangle test*<sup>1</sup> and *re-test within informants*<sup>2</sup> strategy. Researchers ask implicative questions of informants to test the value of the data.

#### *Step 5: Confirmation of hypothesis testing*

After being screened and analyzed, the data was presented in the results table. The researcher sent the participants who were interviewed the table of hypothesis testing results to obtain their opinions. Results of this testing allowed the study to confirm the value of the research results.

### *2.3. Interview questions*

The interview questions were designed in accordance with the study hypothesis, for 60 respondents.

## **3. Results and discussion**

### *3.1. Study results*

The author uses the method to present results suggested by Hill et al. [25]. Accordingly, the results are interpreted according to their frequency in the sample. In this study, the authors performed interviews with three different groups from 20 enterprises. Considering each group, categories that occurred to fewer than 3 participants are labeled Rare; 4-9, Variant; 10-15, Typically; 16-20, General.

Considering the role of managers, this study has shown the 9 methods of influence

<sup>1</sup> *Triangle test* consists of collecting different sources of information through review of evidence from sources and uses it to construct coherent argument notes for topics.

<sup>2</sup> *Re-test within informants* is used to determine the accuracy of qualitative findings through putting the final report or the specific description or topics to participants to determine whether the trial participants feel they are correct.

strategies, in which methods of legitimating strategy were used regularly (n = 13 - 20, typically-general), and in which the methods of Emphasis on their position of manager, and the right of decision belong to label of general (n = 20). The other methods of others strategies have lower frequencies (consulting, n = 9 (variant); coalition, n = 6 (variant), or not at all (n = 0). This has proven that the strategies of group 1 are used by managers more than the group 2 and 3. On the other hand, Table 3b also shows the strategy group 1 had the greatest impact on the other members (experts and users), (n = 15 - 20), in which, Emphasis on their position of manager, the right of decision belong to label of general (n = 20). Moreover, some experts also affected by negotiation strategy (n = 9,

typically), and users are also affected by this strategy (n = 12, typically).

For experts, Table 3a shows, the strategy of group 2 is used most with a high frequency: rational persuasion (n = 20, general), consultation (n = 17 - 20, general), inspirational appeals (n = 17, general). Other strategies are also used, but with less frequency: coalition (n = 5, variant), legitimating strategy (n = 7, variant). Combined with the results of Table 3b, managers are affected by the rational persuasion strategy (n = 17 - 20, general), consultation (n = 17, general), along with it, users are also attracted by the rational persuasion strategy (n = 17, general), consultation (n = 15, typically), legitimating (n = 7, variant).

Table 2. Interview questions

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Questions</b>
Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would you use any strategy to impact on other members when deciding to buy Online Marketing Services?</li> <li>- In a situation of buying online marketing services, would you do anything to influence the decisions of other members in the BC?</li> <li>- Have you ever used the power of your position to influence other members?</li> <li>- Have you ever used the strategies of negotiation and exchange of interests with other members?</li> <li>- What's different in the influence strategies used to affect experts and users?</li> <li>- In case of opposite opinions, which influence strategy do you use to react?</li> <li>- Which influence strategies affect you the most from experts? From users?</li> </ul>
Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would you use any strategy to impact on other members when deciding to buy Online Marketing Services?</li> <li>- In a situation of buying online marketing services, would you do anything to influence the decisions of other members in the BC?</li> <li>- Have you used the power of your knowledge to influence other members?</li> <li>- Have you used all your experience and that of other enterprises in order to convince other members?</li> <li>- What's different in the influence strategies used to affect managers and users?</li> <li>- In case of opposite opinions, which influence strategy do you use to react?</li> <li>- Which influence strategies affect you the most from managers? From users?</li> </ul>
User	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would you use any strategy to impact on other members when deciding to buy Online Marketing Services?</li> <li>- In a situation of buying online marketing services, would you do anything to influence the decisions of other members in the BC?</li> <li>- Have you used alliance groups strategy to influence the other members?</li> <li>- Have you used personal appeals to influence other members?</li> <li>- What's different in the influence strategies used to affect experts and managers?</li> <li>- In case of opposite opinions, which influence strategy do you use to react</li> <li>- Which influence strategies affect you the most from experts? From managers?</li> </ul>

Table 3. Summary of results  
Table 3a

Role	Influence strategies used	n	Result
Manager	Emphasis on their position of manager, the right of decision (n1a)	20	General
	Creating pressure, coercion (n1a)	15	Typically
	Expressing discreetly own desire (n1a)	16	General
	Demonstrating his power, not as an official, through several stories, examples (n1a)	13	Typically
	Expressing attitude (agree /disagree) through gestures, behavior (n1a)	17	General
	Giving opinions and analysis on management aspects (n2a)	13	Typically
	Negotiating/	11	Typically
	Exchanging the benefits (n1b)		
	Consulting the alternatives	9	Variant
	Providing some opinions of other managers (not in BC) (n3a)	6	Variant
Scientist	Persuading through reports (n2a)	20	General
	Creating trust in expert opinions (n2c)	17	General
	Providing examples about organizations which have success in implementation and using online marketing services(n2c)	17	General
	Expressing knowledge, professional analysis and service provider's products (n2a)	20	General
	Consultation purchase processes and methods of using services (n2b)	20	General
	Opposing disfavored alternatives. (n2a)	17	General
	Use the right to respect scientific opinions (n1a)	7	Variant
	Creating alliances (n3a)	5	Variant
User	Giving their knowledge and experience about marketing activities (n2a)	12	Typically
	Establishing relationships to increase influence (n3a)	17	General
	Calling for support from outside (n3a)	17	General
	Demonstrating enthusiastic attitude, and demand (n3b)	20	General
	Creating linkages and cooperation with individuals, other units (n3a)	16	General
	Expressing enthusiasm performing job if using preferred service (n3b)	20	General
	Emphasizing the importance of his job position (n1a)	7	Variant

Table 3b

Role	The most affective influence strategy	N	Result
Manager	<i>From User</i>		
	Expressing enthusiasm performing job if using preferred service (n3b)	20	General
	Giving their knowledge and experience about marketing activities (n2a)	15	Typically
	Demonstrating enthusiastic attitude, and demand (n3b)	17	General
	Creating linkages and cooperation with individuals, other units (n3a)	12	Typically
Scientist	<i>From Scientist</i>		
	Persuading through reports (n2a)	20	General
	Consultation purchase processes and methods of using services (n2b)	17	General
	Opposing disfavored alternatives. (n2a)	17	General
	<i>From Manager</i>		
Emphasis on their position of manager, the right of decision (n1a)	20	General	
Use attitudes, gestures, actions implicitly expressing their desire (n1a)	15	Typically	
Negotiating/	10	Typically	
	<i>From User</i>		
	Exchange benefits (n1b)		

	Calling for support from outside (n3a)	13	Typically
	giving their knowledge and experience about marketing activities (n2a)	15	Typically
	Expressing enthusiasm performing job if using preferred service (n3b)	17	General
	Creating linkages and cooperation with individuals, other units (n3a)	17	General
User	<i>From Manager</i>		
	Emphasis on their position of manager, the right of decision (n1a)	20	General
	Use attitudes, gestures, actions implicitly express their desire (n1a)	17	General
	Demonstrating his power, official, through several stories, examples (n1a)	15	Typically
	Negotiating/ Exchange the benefits (n1b)	12	Typically
	<i>From Scientist</i>		
	Persuading through reports (n2a)	20	General
	Consultation purchase processes and methods of using services (n2b)	15	Typically
	Opposing disfavored alternatives. (n2a)	18	General
	Use the right to respect scientific opinions (n1a)	7	Variant

According to the results in Table 3a, users often use the strategies of group 3. Specifically, personal appeals are used the most (n = 16 - 20, general), then, coalition (n = 17, general) In addition, users also use a rational persuasion strategy (n = 12, typically) and legitimating strategy (n = 7, variant). Table 3b shows that managers are often impacted by a personal appeals strategy from users (n = 17 - 20, general), coalition (n = 13, typically), rational persuasion (n = 12, typically), while the experts are being impacted by the coalition (n = 13 - 17), personal appeals (n = 17, general), rational persuasion (n = 15, typically).

### 3.2. Hypothesis testing and discussions

The results collected from Table 3a and 3b, permit the authors to test their hypothesis. Hypothesis testing results are shown in Table 4.

H1: There are 20/20 managers who agree with the statement of the hypothesis that: Managers use more frequently the strategies of group 1 and the strategies of group 1 have a stronger positive relationship with manifest influence than group 2, and group 3. To illustrate this conclusion, we consider some ideas drawn from the interview:

“As the managers, we manage our principles and my position allows me to make final decisions,”

“When there are opposed opinions, I always want to be given the final word and express attitude and power by gesture, action...”

“In case of high conflict, I often use multiple measures to exchange and negotiate, and often do not make concessions without providing adequate reasoning.”  
“I care about the opinions of experts and use professional analysis of these scientists when making decisions.”

H2: There are 20/20 experts who agree with the statement of the hypothesis that: Scientists use more frequently the strategies of group 2 and the strategies of group 2 have a stronger positive relationship with manifest influence than group 1, and group 3. To illustrate this conclusion, we consider some ideas drawn from the interview:

“As an expert on Internet applications and social network, I often make the analysis report, assessment and selection of quality products...”

“The information about customer behavior about Online Marketing is analyzed and evaluated in order to ensure the correct choice of appropriate services...”

“I have often referred to examples and success/failure stories and from businesses have used the service of different providers in order to convince the other members of the council...”

“I used to provide information and advice based on objective information, sometimes there are similar choices, I am often affected by decisions of managers”

H3: There are 20/20 users who agree with the statement of the hypothesis that: Users use more frequently the strategies of group 3 and the strategies of group 2 have a stronger positive relationship with manifest influence than group 1, and group 2. To illustrate this conclusion, we consider some ideas drawn from the interview:

“As a user who desires to use the best products and services to work, I often express this desire with the other members in BC to influence their decisions...”

“When conflict occurs, due to lower decisive positions, I usually have to use the lobbying strategy, calling for external support, maybe even a few informal dynamics and other means to generate support...”

“I need information and am often persuaded by the information from the experts. But many times, I would be subject to imposition, led by managers.”

Table 4. Hypotheses testing results

	Describe	N	Participant responds	Results
H1	- Managers use more frequently the strategies of group 1 and the strategies of group 1 have a stronger positive relationship with manifest influence than group 2, and group 3	20	Agree	Supported
H2	Experts use more frequently the strategies of group 2 and the strategies of group 2 have a stronger positive relationship with manifest influence than group 1, and group 3	20	Agree	Supported
H3	- Users use more frequently the strategies of group 3 and the strategies of group 2 have a stronger positive relationship with manifest influence than group 1, and group 2	20	Agree	Supported

Table 4 (hypothesis testing results) concluded 60/60 participants concurred with the results of the hypothesis testing. This is consistent with the conclusions of Thomas [3], that is, with different positions, the members use different bases of power, from this basis, and corresponding strategies are implemented [17]. The strategies based on the appropriate power base will have a stronger effect than other strategies.

**4. Conclusion**

From the research results, some academic implications are discussed. Firstly, this study set out the relationship between the power base and the influence strategies used when purchasing online marketing services in Vietnam. Secondly, the study also outlined the

effective influence strategies corresponding to each different role and position. These results provide information about purchasing decisions, buying behavior of organizations, the influence strategies of the key members in a BC and the influence strategies which can be applied in Vietnamese enterprises in the purchase of online marketing services. The research results also provide marketers and sales people with information about the inside working of buying centers when they are making buying decisions.

In addition to the contributions mentioned above, the study could not avoid certain restrictions. The study examines three key positions (managers, experts, users), the other positions are ignored. In addition, the other factors affecting organizational buying decisions are not considered within the scope of the study. The lack of external validity is the

inability to generalize the findings of this study to other groups, populations, or individuals because the results represent only the words and experiences of the study's participants. Although the purpose of qualitative research methods is not raised as an objective truth of a phenomenon or to generalize the results obtained [26]. The stability and reliability of the results of this study could be improved if the researchers examined an accurate data analysis of the intention of the participants interviewed (the study ignored this stage). Additionally, a limitation of this study related to the subjectivity of the interviewer. Moreover, the personality prejudices and personal views of the interviewer could prevent the participants answering questions about topics studied in the best way most objectively and completely, according to their thoughts. Therefore, the author hopes to have more research on this subject in the future to be able to confirm the validity and resolve all the limitations of this above study.

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