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A PROCESS PERSPECTIVE ON TRUST IN BUYER/SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS

"CALCULUS": AN INTRINSIC COMPONENT OF TRUST EVOLUTION

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Introduction

A recent study showed that good customer–supplier relationships enable firms to increase productivity by 3–5 percent (Purchasing Decisions, 2011). Indeed, it has been noted frequently that, in B2B, year t's sales are based on 90 percent of the clients in year t-1; within this perspective, trust in the partner plays a pivotal role for maintaining the relationship, and consequently for profitability. Trust is a major construct in sound partnership building (Das and Teng, 2001).

For the last 30 years, trust has been the subject of a vast body of literature that is very rich, constantly developing, and sometimes mixed. The concept has its roots in various disciplines, including social psychology (Deutsh 1958, Lewicki & Bunker 1995), sociology (Lewis & Weigert 1985, Granovetter 1985, Zucker 1986), and economics (Dasgupta 1988, Kreps 1990, Williamson 1993). Furthermore, with few exceptions, "Trust has usually been studied as a static, rather than dynamic variable" (Lewis & Weigert, 2012, page 27).

In the field of B2B Marketing, trust has become one of the several relational constructs tested in SEM, conceptually restricted to few-items scales, or combined into higher-order constructs such as relationship quality.

However, as in other disciplines, a process perspective of trust in marketing B2B remains under-studied. Notwithstanding the growing corpus of research into relational and trust dynamics (Svensson, 2005; Andersen and Kumar, 2006; Ekici, 2013; Huang and Wilkinson, 2013), we still lack a full understanding, in a marketing B2B setting, of the transition from low degree towards higher-degree forms of trust over time. Moreover, a question that arises when addressing trust dynamics is why B2B marketing researchers have excluded calculus and economics variables from their conceptualizations of trust?

Trust has been defined in a number of manners, mostly drawing from Rotter's (1967) meaning of the term as a generalised expectancy held by an individual that the word of another can be relied upon. Trust is thus seen either as an expectation (Dwyer et al., 1987; Sako, 1997; Zaheer et al., 1998), as a belief in relation to the partner (Schurr and Ozanne, 1985; Anderson and Narus, 1990; Kumar et al., 1995) or a trusting behavioral actions (Currall and Judge, 1995). Other approaches have also been proposed by such authors as Moorman et al., (1992, 1993) and Smith and Barclay (1997) viewing trust both as a belief and/or expectation and/or feeling and as a behavioral intention: “trust as a cognitive expectation or affective sentiment and trust as risk-taking behavior or a willingness to engage in such behavior” (Smith and Barclay, 1997).

It should be recognized that calculative trust has been otherwise neglected, at least associated with cognitive dimension (Young, 2006; Ekici, 2013; Huang and Wilkinson, 2013).

As part of the continuing work on trust dynamics in the B2B marketing field, the present article explores two different but related aspects of trust. The first aspect relates to knowing what stands beyond calculus in trust by treating interest and reputation as precursors, as well as the entanglement of economic with social exchange. The second aspect is how the evolutionary character of trust requires taking into account of calculus within a multi-phase model, in which economic and social mechanisms complement each other.

As most studies use psycho-sociological variables in modeling trust while economic explanations remain largely marginal; a primary contribution of the current research is an examination how the economic and social faces of trust are part of a gradual process.

The present research fills the above-mentioned gap in the literature by conceptually addressing the implications of moving beyond calculus in B2B marketing relationships.

In the first part of the paper, we discuss calculativeness and trust in light of Williamson's (1993) positions, in order to reconcile the conditions for its demonstration and premises and the entanglement of economic with social exchange. The second part deals with the evolutionary and multi-form character of trust with a presentation of the theoretical background followed by the conceptual framework and research propositions. We conclude with implications and future research directions.

WHAT STANDS BEYOND CALCULUS?

The status of trust among economists has taken different direction than others disciplines since trusting relationships are not accepted in neo-institutionalist thinking and are even considered to be contradictory and irrelevant. This is particularly the case with the theory of transaction costs, the leading proponent of which feels that the use of the term "trust" is superfluous and should be prohibited because it is confusing (Williamson, 1993). For Williamson, situations in which economists have resorted to using the concept of trust are only special cases of risk-bound transactions; the traditional tools that economic theory has constructed for analysis are easily applied.

In his article entitled "Calculativeness, Trust, and Economic Organization", Williamson is careful to delineate the Economy and the relationships that this discipline must maintain with other social sciences. The economic approach is closely associated with the notion of *calculativeness*: "Calculativeness is the general condition that I associate with the economic approach and with the progressive extension of economics into the related social sciences" (Williamson, 1993, page 456).

In emphasizing the role of the social dimension in the genesis and development of trust, social network theory (notably including the two approaches of conventional economics and new economic sociology) enables us to fill gaps in traditional economic theories, and therefore provides a significant contribution to the study of trust, including reputation and interest in particular. This is the concept that we will develop below.

Reputation. According to Transaction cost theory rational calculation substitutes trust under all circumstances. However, empirical observation of businesses allows us to assert that contractual clauses, and their associated penalties, are not the only reason parties renounce opportunistic behavior. In fact, by acting honestly, the parties seek primarily to preserve their reputation in the market and increase their participation in new business opportunities.

The notion of reputation helps explain how partners who have never previously had a relationship of exchange can trust and start collaborating thanks to a criteria built on past events (Dasgupta 1988, Kreps 1990). On closer examination, the reputational mechanism transcends the economic sphere and involves implicitly non-economic resources, which are characteristic of some social networks (Ford *et al.*, 2003, IMP group). Social ties become a cumulative part of the exchange (Orléan, 2000). The trusting relationship is not established only between A and B but also between A and its peers. Trust is not bilateral, but instead, based on reputation, builds a “chain of trust”. By facilitating the movement of information on the behavior of actors and making effective use of consultation mechanisms and sanctions against opportunistic, networks can not only reduce the suspicion that rational action would require but also decreases the likelihood of cheating by creating larger penalties for cheating (Gravonetter, 2002). According to Gulati (1995), co-location in a dense network of alliances increases mutual confidences as companies realize the possible negative reputational consequences of their own, and other opportunistic behavior. Wuyts and Geyskens (2005) found that network embeddedness, due to the reputation effect, enhances the effectiveness of detailed contracts in reducing supplier opportunism in their sample of manufacturers in two Dutch industries.

Therefore, the emergence of trust rests on the ability of partners to disseminate information that they are willing to provide, with all parties wishing to maintain a good reputation. Even if, in absolute, everyone doesn’t necessarily wish to maintain a good reputation, there are strong benefits to doing so, making the trust assumption more likely to be opportune. Furthermore, as emphazised by Bromiley and Harris (2006), Williamson’s own discussion of reputation deviates from his previously defended TCE assumption that all actors should treat others with equal suspicion as a safeguard against possible opportunists (Williamson, 1996).

In his response to Ghoshal and Moran (1996), for example, Williamson (1996) relates the metaphor of a hiker who, when traveling in a dangerous wilderness, will choose traveling companions with a reputation for cooperative behavior over those with bad or unknown reputations.

Interest. With reference to game theory, parties to the exchange must behave accordingly if they wish to be sure of opportunities for future trade. Indeed, in the case of serial games -

matching continuous exchange - if *A* behaves badly, *B* can react and respond to the bad behaviour of *A*. In this case, trust and cooperation are in the interests of both parties, in the building of reputation for future opportunities. Contrary to transaction cost theory, trust exists even if it is mostly the result of calculativeness. This approach is of interest in that it does not separate calculation and trust, but considers that they can coexist in an economic relationship. According to game theory, the value that *A* places on cooperative behavior is the result of three factors: maintaining a reputation for honesty, the continuing relationship with the partner, and monetary gain.

By respecting its commitment to the other party, *A* can benefit from three types of economic gain. In the first instance, it can monetize the investment in the relationship (which can be very important, especially in areas such as training and production that require specific investment vehicles) and will therefore find it easier to maintain, continue, and multiply their dealings with the other party. Finally, honoring the trust grants *A* the ability to build a new reputation and/or preserve and defend its existing reputation with all stakeholders (Kreps, 1990). Observation of business relationships in South-East Asia, even between sub-contractors and suppliers, shows that the economic agent does not always seek its own interest (Granovetter, 1985). On the contrary, trust plays a central role in structuring relationships and generates considerable benefits for economic actors. In fact, this notion has offered an intangible asset to the community as a whole, provided that its members comply with the rules and standards of conduct established within the community.

Two types of sanction are possible in response to non-respect of trust.: either the usual financial penalties found in most contracts (fines, penalties or criminal convictions), or more sanctions, including the interruption of any form of collaboration with *A* on the part of all members of the network, causing economic and social loss.

Therefore, it seems justified and even appropriate to integrate some rational elements (reputation, interest) in a context in which agents are looking, at least partially, to maximize their economic gains. The contribution of game theory seems pertinent in this regard, since it allows us to provide the elements of a response explain the emergence of trust in economic exchanges.

Porosity of the economic to other approaches. The existence of social conventions (Eymard-Duvernay, 2006) can regulate the behavior of actors and thus establish the notion of trust in relational exchange. Therefore, economic behavior passes through the analysis of conventions. If we follow the definition of Salais (1994) – "A convention is a set of elements that at any time, for those bound by the convention, go together and by which, therefore, they share a mutual agreement" – then the relationship between the actors rests on a history that establishes common rules and personal ties based on the notion of trust.

Economic transactions are not simply the product of the maximization of interest; they also assume the existence of rules and social norms governing economic exchanges (Granovetter, 1985). It is social relations, as well as institutions or morality (Williamson, 1993), that generate and nurture trust in economic life. Relationships with family and friends, and the group membership of an ethnic group or a network, are the crucible of economic transactions based on mutual trust between individuals.

Williamson defined institutional trust as "the social and organizational context within which contracts are embedded. In the degree to which the relevant institutional features are exogenous, institutional trust has the appearance of being non-calculative. In fact, however, transactions are always organized, governed with the reference to the institutional context environment of which they are part. Calculativeness thus always reappears."

Concurrently , apart from economic and social exchanges, the concept of trust is rehabilitated to describe the protection mechanisms of the contract. This position raises two questions. First, why would the context be exogenous to the people involved? Second, why would institutions try (in principle) to escape by resorting to opportunism and calculativeness intended to govern economic and social forms of exchange?

From the foregoing, we agree with Granovetter (1995) that the "embeddedness" of the economic and the social forces analysts to consider both the links and relationships that people have with each other, and that the structures of such relationships foster trust and deter opportunism. Economic institutions do not emerge automatically in a form determined by external circumstances; they are "socially constructed." For example, services have been established in recent years dedicated to mediation between companies, involving protagonists and professional associations, aiming to establish rational standards and promote balanced and sustainable relationships between large firms and subcontractors (Purchasing Decisions, 2011).

Having demonstrated the theoretical bases of compatibility between reputation, economic interest, and trust, and the necessary inclusion of a social context in B2B exchange, we will move on to the theoretical framework in order to understand a multi-form concept of trust focusing more on the processes by which trust "mutates" gradually with respect to relationship evolution.

Temporal perspective. For many years, trust was studied as a static phenomenon. Research in social psychology tended to emphasize a dichotomy: trust versus total distrust. This static approach has its roots in the preponderance of experimental tests in early research that used matrix games (Deutsch, 1960; Zand, 1972).

Currently, most scholars consider trust as a dynamic process. For example, Mayer *et al.* (1995) argued that a better understanding of trust comes from considering its evolution with the relationship. The introduction and integration of the dynamic aspect in the study of trust came from three areas of research. The first addressed the issue of time by using variables such as "long relationship" or "experience with the partner" in modeling the history of trust (Anderson & Weitz, 1989; Doney & Cannon, 1997).

The second area of research is concerned with identifying the stages of development of trust. There is general agreement that this notion develops gradually over time (Gabarro, 1978; Rempel *et al.*, 1985), starting from a low level and increasing as the relationship is reinforced and consolidated.

The final area of research pays particular attention to the interactive process of trust, a process that integrates all the components of trust (antecedents and consequences). Zand (1972) suggested that trust takes shape through the interaction of the parties. He proposed a cyclical pattern of trust, in which the beginning of the cycle is triggered by the willingness of both parties to trust. From that point onward, interactions influence perceptions, judgments, and trusting behavior.

In fact, sociological studies (Rempel et al., 1985; Shapiro et al., 1992; Lewicki & Bunker, 1995) have allowed this development to be more clearly defined. Despite their theoretical orientation, such studies have the merit of underlining the transformation of trust according to the different stages of a relationship.

In this vein, Lewicki and Bunker (1995) proposed a typology of the development of trust in business relations. They considered the development of trust to be a process that integrates multiple determinants at the beginning, middle, and final stages of the relationship. As with the development of a relationship, they proposed three stages of situational trust: (1) trust based on calculativeness, backed up by sanctions; (2) trust founded on knowledge of and the capacity to predict the behavior of others; and (3) trust based on identification, dependent on empathy with the desires and needs of others. These three stages are connected in that the completion of one stage is necessary for the next to emerge.

Insofar as B-to-B buyer/seller relations take place over time and put not only organizational factors to the test but also and especially human factors (contact personnel), we think that these authors' findings can be profitably transposed in B-to-B marketing.

Trust Levels.With regard to levels of trust, the marketing literature reveals the existence of interpersonal trust and inter-organizational trust. Interpersonal trust concerns the relationship between two individuals representing their respective companies (such as buyer/seller, buyer/retailer, or retailer/seller relationships), while interorganizational trust refers to the relationship between two organizations. Research has shown that the effect of interpersonal relationships on customer behavior and financial performance is stronger than that of interfirm relationships (Palmatier et al., 2006)**.**

Pre-eminent forms of trust over time in B2B exchanges

Drawing from previous development and in order to encompass all forms, we define trust broadly as "one's calculative or non-calculative belief, sentiment or actions comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of another’s intention or behavior.

Analogous with the development of trust in professional relationships (Lewicki & Bunker, 1995), we expect that three forms of trust are emphasized as a business relationship evolves: trust based on calculation, accompanied by sanctions; trust based on cognition, maintained by the ability to predict the behavior of the other person; and affect-based trust, fueled by empathy with the other person’s wishes and needs, sentiment of security and emotional bonds. We will elaborate on the different forms in the following.

Calculative trust: not an oxymoron. Trust based on calculation is the first step in the emergence of trust which is still at an interorganizational level. Given the strong information asymmetries that characterize the earliest transactions, the behavior of the parties is markedly more prudent. The “calculation” dimension depends on a comparison between the expected gains in case of successful collaboration, and the costs of maintaining this relationship, is certainly pervasive, and the primacy of calculation does not entirely exclude trust. In the initiation phase of a relationship, there is, among others, a form of trust that establishes a specific sanction called “forfeiture”. The latter, if we borrow a legal standpoint, designates a requirement of diligence or integrity imposed to retain the benefit of a law where a single act of non-compliance is nevertheless legally sanctioned. It is true that a busines that looked to legal sanctions on every possible non-compliance would be suing people all the time. However, we believe that in the beginning of a relationship calculative trust contributes to select the best partner.

Rather than “wishful thinking” (Huang and Wilkinson, 2013) or “placed trust” (Halliday, 2003), trust and the disrespect thereof are also based potential penalties that deter and dissuade parties from behaving opportunistically to avoid any sudden unilateral termination of the relationship which is a sanction *per se*. Deterrence and trust are not mutually exclusive, as underlined by Axelrod's comment (1984): "Deterrence is an essential element of trust". The fact that calculative trust comes with safeguards does not invalidate its existence. It is much more credible to talk about calculative trust when the loss is potentially greater than the gain; otherwise, it becomes simply a matter of economic rationale. When choosing whether to place trust or not, a rational buyer will weigh up the potential gain (if the partner is trustworthy) against the potential loss (if the partner is untrustworthy), and consider the utilities under the respective risk

Cognitive Trust. Cognitive trust corresponds to a combination of transactional and relational elements and is expressed by personal expectations and/or beliefs. Unlike calculative trust, Cognitive trust arises from an accumulated knowledge that allows one to make predictions, with a certain level of confidence, about the likelihood that a focal partner will live up to his/her obligations (Johnson & Grayson, 2005). This trust is at interpersonal level and largely based on internal and external information that aims to enhance the predictability of the other party.

Affective trust. The concept of affective trust is very close to "trust based on identification" and occurs in the advanced stage of the relationship. According to Andersen and Kumar (2006), affective trust, with its basis of positive emotions, creates a reciprocal attachment between the buyer and seller favoring the formation of strong, more durable personal links. We défine affective trust as a psychological state akin to a sense of security and a lasting attachment with the intention to accept based on mutual socio-emotional benefits between the parties in the context of vulnerability of a social exchange long-term It is characterized by the primacy of interpersonal or even emotional links, and by long-term orientation. Trust can move beyond calculative and cognitive behaviour without being completely unconditional.

Insert Figure 1(page25)

Figure 1: Trust Transformations and dominant form per phase

These three phases and forms are interdependent and the emergence of a phase/form is made possible by the completion of the preceding phase (Fig 1).

Calculus and Trust: Complementary rather than substitutable

Based on the previous development, we believe that this dichotomous thinking between calculus and trust is not only unjustified, but also hinders the emergence of a coherent vision of trust evolution. Trust evolution is contingent on both calculus and psycho-sociological causes.

By integrating the time dimension, trust becomes a more complex issue, and a broader theoretical framework is required in order to capture its multi-faceted forms.

Therefore, we consider that, within a process perspective, these approaches could be combined by using the analytical framework of relational cycle of Dwyer et al. (1987). This model, which was confirmed by the recent empirical work of Jap et al. (2007), enables us to reconcile calculus and trust perfectly with its multiple forms (Fig 1). According to Dwyer et al.'s (1987) model, the B2B exchange relationship consists of five phases: awareness, exploration, expansion, maintenance, and termination.

Phases of awareness and termination are steps for which there is no real relationship between exchange partners and, therefore, do not involve trust. The other three phases, however, offer fertile grounds for the development of trust.

The exploration phase allows partners to discover and test each other, mutually assessing each other's capabilities and the benefits they would derive from the relationship. In the short term, committed parties simply give and take to find a middle-ground way of working together (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). The following phase (expansion) is characterized by the development of both a degree of interdependence, and an acceptable level of satisfaction between trading partners. The advanced phase is only possible if both partners are convinced of both the benefits of collaboration and the correct behavior of the other party.

The primacy of economic logic that characterizes the early stages of the exchange, during which information asymmetries and uncertainty are at their peak, partially echoes the approach of Williamson. Indeed, we consider economic calculativeness, for purposes of TCE, as an analytical process that assumes opportunism (self-interest) on the part of other actors. It is important to recall here that the two examples employed by Williamson (a farmer and a young girl) incontestably involve phases in which the relationship is still in its infancy (that is, a farmer, having bought a farm, is harvesting his first crop when his machine breaks ... the young man barely knows the girl ...).

There has been widespread criticism of TCE (e.g., Ghoshal and Moran, 1996). However, given that most studies have been conducted with cross-sectional data, transaction cost logic, so far as we are aware, has not been challenged in terms of the time dimension, encompassing calculativeness in a process stages. In this perspective, recognizing the temporal dimension of trust, and studying the conditions its emergence a well as the implications for governance choice, would significantly refine and extend TCE.

In the more developed stage of the relationship, the adjustments of behavior in relation to each other are based on the interaction. Cummings and Bromiley (1996) state: “Optimal expenditures on control, monitoring and other kinds of transactions costs are a function of opportunism. Opportunism, in turn, depends on and influences the level of trustworthy behavior in an organization” (p. 303).

In the expansion phase, when trust is built through repeated transactions, partners are more willing to engage in open communication and show greater behavioral transparency.

In the maintenance phase at which the individual occupies a central place enabling partners to the exchange to strengthen the bonds that maintain and develop affective trust because – as indicated by Ness and Haugland (2005) – the development of trust and feelings of shared destiny and openness of the interaction require both time and patience.

With process prespective of relationship (fig2), calculus becomes irrelevant in so far as cognitive then affective trust strengthen. This doesn’t mean that calculative Trust is definitely replaced. In phases 2 & 3 calculative Trust continues in the background. In the maintenance phase of the relationship, the most prominent form is affective trust but the other two forms: cognitive and calculative trust remain in the lower layers.

Conceptual framework and propositions

Drawing on previous development, we develope a framework (shown in Figure 2) to expand the current theory on trust in B2B marketing and to gain a better understanding of the development of relationships supplier and customer. This reasoning can lead to a clearer understanding of trust dimensions, antecedents, and consequences.

Firstly, we argue that calculative trust corresponds to a type of risk evaluation relative to expected gains, appearing in the first phase of the relationship (exploration phase) and implies close monitoring. Secondly, cognitive trust is manifested in terms of personal expectations and/or beliefs and emerges in the expansion phase, which occurs just after the exploration phase. Finally, emotional trust refers to an emotional investment that is characterized by the primacy of personal relationships intervening in the advanced stages of the relationship (maintenance phase). Trustworthy behavior can be both a consequence of affective trust and its reinforcing element. Likewise, it should also identify the antecedents of trust according to the phase of the relationship. The utilitarian variables that are derived from game theory and used to predict the behavior of the other party (such as reputation and anticipation of future earnings, as mentioned above) are more likely to determine the first form of trust. Buyers are strongly attracted to well known or existing suppliers since they are perceived as being less risky. Trust in the expansion phase is predominantly cognitive evaluation and reflects the formation of cognitive "assets". In this phase, the cognitive dimension fosters accurate exchange of information across the interface, diminishing the probability of opportunism and reducing the need for costly monitoring processes. Interactions in expansion phase contribute to sensemaking, as indicated by Huang et al. (2013), which "involves the managers and firms involved building and adapting their cognitions and mental maps over time in order to integrate, adjust and reintegrate their knowledge, memories and experiences in the face of a changing environment into some understanding of their partners and their relationships". Communication, information sharing, and conflict resolution relate more to cognitive trust.

In the maintenance phase, emotional aspects are predominant. The long-term orientation of the relationship is sustained by the emergence of goals and projects with shared stakes for the customer and supplier. Flexibility, adaptation and similarity are representative of the antecedents of trust.

Additionally, since trusting behavior is an indicator of the risk of trusting someone, and is therefore the result of the attitude of the "truster" and not an intrinsic component of trust, it may be, from a process perspective, a factor that reinforces the affective or cognitive trust that arises in the expansion and maintenance phases.

Insert Figure 2 (page26)

Fig. 2. Theoretical framework.

Proposition 1: In the exploration phase, the predominant form of trust is calculative trust. Utilitarian variables such as interest and reputation will drive the emergence of trust located at an inter-organizational level.

Proposition 2: In the expansion phase, the predominant form of trust is cognitive trust. Sensemaking mechanisms allowed by communication, information sharing, and conflict resolution will drive trust, which is increasingly occurring at an interpersonal level.

Proposition 3: In the maintenance phase, the predominant form of trust is affective trust, which is determined by identification variables (similarity/shared values and flexibility/adaptation). The recurrent positive emotions felt by the partners in the exchange over time produce a sense of security (interpersonal trust) and lead to strong personal ties and reciprocal positive socio-emotional benefits.

Proposition 4: Trusting behavior correlates positively with cognitive trust (or affective trust) that arises respectively in the expansion and maintenance phases.

Proposition 5: The relationship context (the content of the exchange, the level being studied, and the type of relationship) and the individual and organizational characteristics of the two participants (customer/supplier) moderate these different forms of trust.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this article, we have sought to integrate calculus in the framework of Trust evolution in Buyer – supplier relationships. Our reasoning boils down to the three following ideas: (1) that calculus and trust are not incompatible; (2) that reputation and interest are the antecedents of calculative trust; and (3) that the elucidation of the evolutionary nature of trust, termed serial characteristics of trust by Svensson (2005), shows that calculative and non-calculative trust respectively provide insights for the temporal perspective. Indeed, since the confirmation of expectations is conducive to greater colloboration (the opposite is true), the initial conditions are crucial for the rest of the process of trust and therefore must be mastered in details. As a business relationship evolves, cognitive and affective become more relevant for a better understanding of relationship between partners. Previous empirical studies have shown that trust reduces transaction costs (Sako, 1992). The discovery of the appropriate determinants of various forms in each phase suggests ways to improve the relationship between suppliers and customers. Therefore, to move successfully through different phases, relationship partners have to care about the form of trust. This enable relationship partners to set appropriate govern mechanisms to develop collaboration with respect to each phase of the relationship.

The main challenge to the proposed model will be the empirical test. Longitudinal research is clearly the most suitable method. Given the difficulty of collecting longitudinal data, we suggest that the alternative methodology recommended by Anderson (1995) and tested by Eggert et al. (2006) in the study of value creation in B2B customer-supplier relationships could be applied. Doing so would require a rigorous protocol for selecting sub-samples of dyads. To process the data, multi-group analysis (such as three groups of homogenous dyads corresponding to the three stages of the relationship) using structural equation models (with different variables at each stage) could be very useful. We hope future research will find in the analytical and theoretical perspective that we have proposed a fertile ground to generate further insights on the process of trust building.

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