

Concerning trust and information

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Abstract

Since the early 1990s, there has been an increasing awareness in the importance of ongoing, committed and trusting relationships – often grounded in a network of personalized associations – as at the heart of effectively operating business. Among this considerable body of work there is little that considers communication and the associated exchanges of information as a driver of relationship trust. This paper pairs these ideas and extends the conceptualisations of trust and information exchange.

The conceptualisations and empirical explorations of "trust" in business relationship literature are problematic and the diverging conceptualisations and operationalisations that have emerged are most probably the main reason for the observed lack of empirical consistency as to the antecedents and outcomes of trust. Operationalisations of trust increasingly focus on the assessment and minimisation of risk. Lacking is consideration of the emotional nature of trust, the way in which the nature of trust is determined by the conditions under which it arises and integrated understanding of the way in which the self-generating process of relationships that include trust emerges and endures. This paper presents an integrated conceptualisation of trust which includes the often-neglected elements of credibility. This enables trust to be grounded in the relationship processes of communication – an approach that is unusual in business relationship research. The paper goes beyond the usual utilitarian perspectives of communication and information exchange and explores the diverse and richly interconnected dimensions that make up the phenomena. Information exchange is conceptualised as a process with obvious activity–resource dimensions and drawing on social exchange theory, clear actor related aspects, including the type of relationship, motivations and norms. These actor dimensions are located within an activity–resource framework that acknowledges both transfer and transformational processes.

The interconnections of trust and information exchange are considered in a survey of trading and non-trading business relationships (n=355) which focuses on a particular information exchange relationship in depth. A scale of trust reflecting the relational properties of trust and highlighting credibility was developed as were scales of information exchange's transfer activities, motivations for information exchange, transformation activities and information exchange norms. Analysis of variance was undertaken to ascertain the extent to which various aspects of information exchange predicted trust. Few, if any, of the "traditional" ways in which information exchange (e.g. in terms of characteristics of transfer or style of communication) are good predictors of trust. The aspect that has the greatest effect on the level of trust is information exchange norms (positive impact) and these norms emerge as part of the long term co-production of the relationship itself. This has important managerial implications. Possibilities for management of communication are limited as there are few if any simple managerial actions that can "manufacture" trust.

The paper concludes with a discussion of the nature and future of research into business relationships. Comprehensive, holistic pictures of the deep processes business relationships will continue to be invaluable but these can be usefully augmented by surveys that focus on parts of the complex interacting processes that comprise business relationships

Key words: trust, norms, information exchange, business and interpersonal relationships, emotions

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, there has been an increasing awareness in the importance of ongoing relationships in such diverse areas as industrial marketing (Axelsson and Easton 1992; Håkansson 1982; Håkansson and Snehota 1995), marketing channels (Dwyer et al. 1987; Hewett and Bearden 2001), services (Gronroos 1993; Gummesson 1993), and relationship marketing (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Sheth and Parvatiyar 1994). Committed and trusting relationships—often grounded in a network of personalized associations—are seen as a context in which continuing, effectively operating business is likely to occur (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Young and Wilkinson 1997).

The considerable body of published work that conceptualises, operationalises and tests the importance of trust in business marketing concludes that trust is important, indeed central, to business functions. However, as we have argued elsewhere (e.g. Young forthcoming) the conceptualisations and empirical explorations of "trust" in business relationship literature are very incomplete. Trust is most often seen as emerging from general environmental conditions such as friendship, contract and goodwill (Ring and Van de Ven 1994, 1992; Sako 1992) and acting in concert with other factors to explain relational performance (Morgan and Hunt 1994). A range of concepts have been used to explain need for and/or nature of trust such as expectation, reliance upon others, faith, surrendering of control, consistency, mutuality and utility for risk (Young 2006). Scales have been developed to measure it that reflect different dimensions of trust (see Young 1996 for a review of trust scales). This includes typologies that present trust as stronger-weaker and faster-slower and a myriad of causal relationships with other relational constructs have been proposed in particular with commitment, cooperation, conflict and performance.

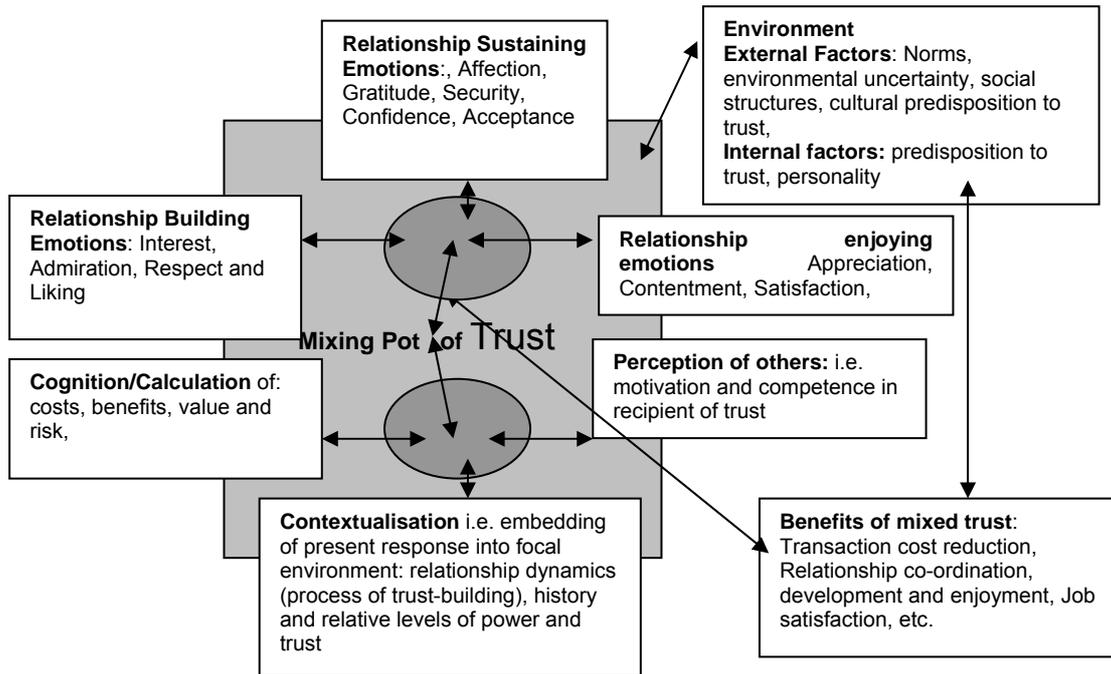
While this sort of work is necessary, it is not sufficient. We would argue that in addition there is a need for consideration of the nature of trust itself and reflection of this in the scales that are used to measure it (see Young and Albaum 2003). There is also need for more detailed consideration of the conditions that act to give rise to trust and the way in which they act to do so. Both, but in particular the latter are the focus of this paper which considers the way in which the processes of communication and in particular exchange of information act to give rise to trust. The paper is organised as follows. An integrated conceptualisation of trust is presented. Next we consider the nature of communicated information, exchange of information and the connections between trust and the informational properties and processes of relationships. The findings of a survey that illustrate the way trust emerges from information exchange are then presented. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings and suggestions for further research.

The nature and role of trust in information exchange

We have argued elsewhere (Young 2006) that research in trust has reached something of a dead end. There are a number of reasons for this. The breadth of typologies (and associated concepts) indicates the pervasive nature of trust, demonstrates it plays many roles and emerges from many sources but does little to explain what trust is. Perhaps in response to this diversity and lack of integrating framework, the nature of trust has increasingly though implicitly focussed on its utilitarian nature and risk-reducing properties. Taking a leaf from Transaction Cost Analysis trust is conceptualised functionally - as that which emerges from assessment of risks/costs versus benefits of interacting. This establishes the universality of trust in transactions as such assessments will inevitably (though perhaps unconsciously) occur in transactions but trivialises it by making it very generic – it becomes nothing more than the criteria for exchange – and as a result meaningless (Williamson 1993).

Emerging from this assessment of risk approach are a number of operationalisations that focus on the ways that risk and cost versus benefits can be assessed. Trust has been viewed as a form of confidence in another's reliability and integrity (Morgan and Hunt 1994), as a willingness to rely on another (Moorman et al. 1993), or an expectation of reliance (Rotter 1967), as well as a belief that the other will act with integrity (in your interests) (Anderson and Narus 1990). This is in contrast to our view of trust which *includes* assessments of risk but argues that these are also combined with and/or emerge from emotional experiences that include acceptance and positive feelings about the other (Young 1992; Young and Albaum 2003; Young and Daniel 2003). Figure 1 highlights the interplay of risk assessment and emotion.

Figure 1: The Nature and Process of Trust (adapted from Young and Daniel 2003)



As depicted in Figure 1, both emotions and cognitive elements combine to form trust. The latter include the calculation of costs, benefits and risks associated with particular situations (Bagozzi et al. 1999), the way that others who are recipients of trust are perceived, including the competence and motivational components of their credibility (Young and Wilkinson 1989) and assessment of the state of the focal relationship (Wilkinson and Young 1994). These assessments combine to form an overall assessment of a relationship. As Figure 1 indicates, emotions will influence assessments of risk and/or vice versa. If balanced, the emotions of trust and the assessments of risk will support each, continuing to combine to form an affectual trust, i.e. trust that contains both emotion and cognition. If not, either discomfort with emotions being experienced relative to the situation lead to a reassessment and realignment of the relational situation (Heider 1958). As Figure 1 indicates, affectual trust results in certain benefits (or costs) for a relationship and those participating in it. These, in turn, change the nature and context of the relationship by changing the value placed on it, the expectations of those involved and the conditions surrounding the relationship. Changed relational conditions in turn create changed opportunities for trust (Young and Wilkinson 1997). It should also be noted that all of the relationships depicted in Figure 1 are multi-directional, with, for example, the mixture of trust elements impacting on the individual emotions felt as well as vice versa and with the performance of the relationship impacting on trust experienced as well as vice versa. (The latter highlights the interconnected nature of mutual trust, that is, the relationship functioning, including the blend of mutual trust, which impacts on the trust that each relationship participant experiences.) This figure indicates that evolution of trust is an emergent process. There is no causal order but rather a combination of factors coalescing in a bottom-up way with the observed, complex processes the result (Holland 1995).

We argue that an integrated conceptualisation of trust within complex, adaptive relationships is necessary for progress in research into business relationships and networks. Most other conceptualisations are partial and focus on only some aspects of trust in conceptualising its *nature* and as a result misinterpret the results of studies that consider the *role* of trust – most often because as discussed, they see only its economic coordination role. (The implications of this are considered in greater depth in Young (2000; 2006)). In addition the operationalisations that are based on these partial conceptualisations are generally flawed. As we have argued elsewhere (Young 2006; Young and Albaum 2003), scales have more often than not contained a hodge-podge of items the nature of which has not been profoundly considered. We believe that it is these diverging conceptualisations

and operationalisations that are most probably the main reason for the observed lack of empirical consistency as to the antecedents and outcomes of trust.

Perhaps more profoundly the processes that drive trust and the embeddedness of it into relationships processes have not been considered in the mainstream of research into trust. Much of the modern empirical testing of the nature and role of trust emerges from a positivist paradigm that focuses on variance-based research in which relationships emerge from variables rather than events (Buttriss and Wilkinson 2005; Van de Ven and Poole 2005). The empirical tests focus on causality which requires the establishment of implied temporality but where the analysis techniques use cross-section, linear data and where, due to the technical limitations of maths, causality can only flow one way. However, post-modern empiricists argue that such causal explanations are absurd because when everything is interactive, the temporal priorities necessary for causal explanation are impossible to establish (Cova 1994). However this presents problems for survey researchers who wish to make generalisations of the kind not possible in the deep case methods (that of necessity emerge from these non-positivistic approaches).

This work attempts a compromise between the ways of the postmodernist and positivist. The paper considers trust as emerging from the processes of interaction of relationship via consideration of ways that communication generally and information exchange specifically, shape trust. Although as subsequent discussion highlights, the data used to illustrate this process is cross-sectional, it has at its heart concern with relational processes, as evidenced by the focus on communication and information exchange through time continuously making and remaking trust (as illustrated in Figure 1).

The nature and role of communication and information exchange in trust

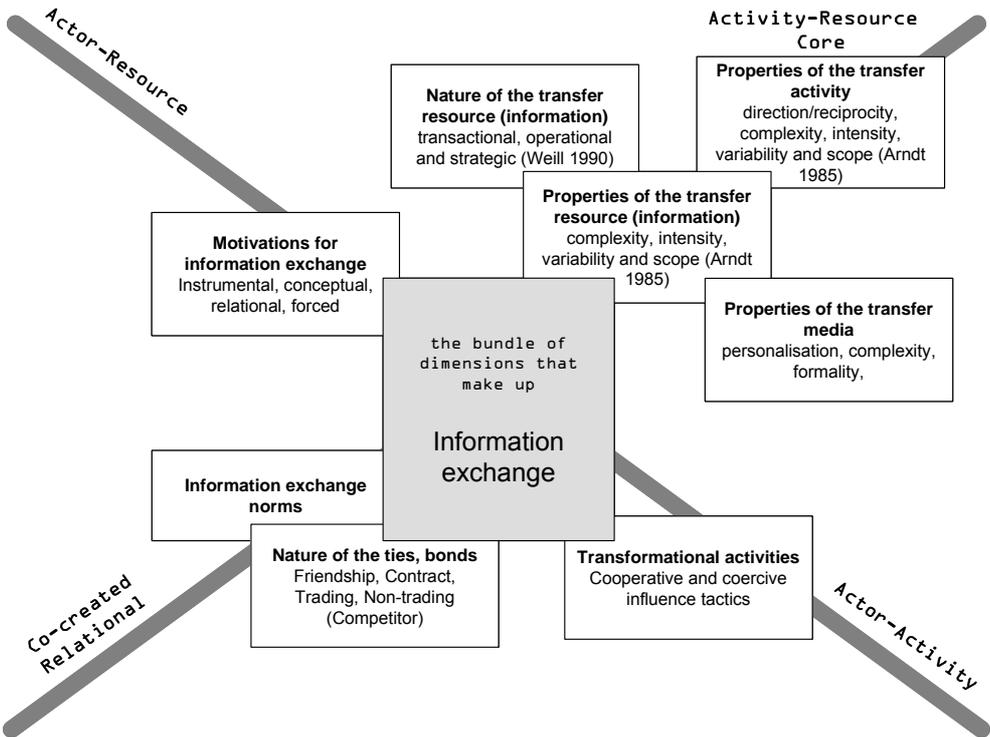
The relationship between trust and communication has, in recent work, been largely neglected. This was not always so, early work had at its core consideration of credibility as a central component of trust. This modern oversight has considerable implications as credibility has rich interconnections that are not found in much of the more contemporary work. An individual is believed to be credible if they do as they say they will or convey information accurately (Rotter 1971; Schlenker et al. 1973). Therefore, it is argued, it is possible to anticipate another's future behaviour and thus to trust them. Credibility is concerned with nature of the trusted other, the ability to communicate their intentions and the capability of a "truster" to receive, process, and act upon those intentions (Giffin 1967). It has been argued that credibility may have dropped out of trust research because it failed to distinguish between anticipation of the positive and negative. An individual could be said to "trust" a credible threatener if he is able to predict that a threatened punishment will follow his non-compliance (Schlenker et al. 1973; Tedeschi et al. 1973). However, this runs counter to the common, positive usage of the term "trust" and to avoid confusion credibility came to be not considered (Young 1992). However we argue the value of credibility outweighs such minor confusion. Such distinctions are regularly made in business marketing today (e.g. see Sharma et al (2006) for discussions of positive and negative commitment). Also, credibility contains elements of both competence and motivation which it is argued are separate dimensions of trust (or separate categories of antecedents) (Young and Wilkinson 1997) and credibility does not therefore result in "clean" multi-dimensional scales of trust. However in circumstances where a single trust scale is the goal, this will be less of an issue.

Consideration of credibility enables development of conceptual linkages that are not otherwise possible. Via credibility the informational properties and processes of relationships – including trust – can be linked. As credibility is concerned with the assessment of intention and motive of the source, links with the affective nature of trust can be formed. The inclusion of credibility into the development of trust further reinforces the development of relationships as social process. This includes the continual remaking of trust in conjunction with the continual making and using of knowledge and where, as trustworthiness (in part in terms of the ability and motivation to communicate credible and valuable information) is demonstrated, the parties increasingly commit themselves to one another as bonds strengthen and to extend and clarify the nature of trust (Hallén et al. 1990). Mutual exchange of information is at the heart of this evolutionary process (Ford 1980). In the early stage of the development, firms may engage in superficial information exchange. As the relationship matures, an information exchange meta-structure emerges which is based on shared norms and expectations. Information exchange is likely to be characterised by greater scope and depth in topics (Weitz and Jap 1995). Cunningham and Homse (1990) present evidence to support this view.

However, relatively little is known about the types of information exchange and the specific processes by which it impacts upon trust in the relationship. Most research considers information exchange (often described more generally as communication) as a utilitarian transfer activity. Such conceptualisations often rely on information exchange frequency/scope. When trust is considered in tandem with information it is often in terms of “trusting” in the quality of information provided” or “trusting” that needed information will be provided. The process of exchanging information and impact of this on continual recreation of the relationship and the trust within it is not considered. We argue that it is the deeper structures in interfirm information processes need to be explored.

We explain this using the Actor-Activity-Resource (AAR) model from business network theory (Axelsson and Easton 1992). Following Denize et al (Denize 2005; Denize et al. 2005) we argue that information exchange comprises actor, activity and resource dimensions but in the main extant conceptualisations focus on utilitarian, activity–resource bases of information exchange. This is a reasonable starting position. At its core, information exchange comprises transfer activities and exchange resources. Transfer activities can be characterised by their direction/reciprocity, complexity, intensity, variability and scope (Arndt 1985). Resources are described by the type of information that is exchanged, the exchange medium and properties of the resource (that correspond to properties of the transfer activity). These dimensions are central to the conceptualisation of the phenomenon and represent the core activity–resource coupling (refer to Figure 2).

Figure 2: Information Exchange; actor-activity-resource dimensions (following Denize 2005; Denize et al. 2005)



We argue that other dimensions of the AAR Information exchange model can be usefully incorporated in a conceptualisation of the role of information exchange in the development of relational trust. Specifically, we propose that the relational properties of information exchange, at the heart of which lies trust, can best be understood by also considering the transformational and actor-based properties of inter-organisational informational processes (Denize 2005; Denize et al. 2005). Incorporating “actor” dimensions within the information exchange construct makes it possible to more deeply explore the forms of information exchange. These dimensions include the motivation of each actor in the relationship with respect to information exchange as well as the transformational activities they engage in. Communication behaviours, often discussed in terms of influence tactics, can alter the behaviours of actors. In the longer term this would most probably alter the nature of the actor bonds, as is indicated in Figure 1. These are transformational activities that are often linked to information transfer and constitute the activity links that connect actors. Finally, actor dimensions also include the

type of actors and the relationships in which they are involved as well as the co-created expectations about information exchange which are often referred to as relational/informational norms. Figure 2, above, presents our conceptualisation of a rich interconnected actor-activity-resource conceptions information exchange as proposed by Denize et al (Denize 2005; Denize et al. 2005).

The process of information exchange in relationships

Information exchange and trust are both processes which are embedded in and emerge from inter-organisational interaction. They are simultaneously create and are created by each other. So here, rather than develop hypothesis, we reflect on how the various parts of information exchange and trust might be embedded in each other.

As shown in Figure 2, information exchange in a complex bundle actor-activity resource couplings. We first consider the activity-resource dimensions. Transfer activities are characterised by their direction/reciprocity, complexity, intensity, variability and scope (Arndt 1985). *DIRECTION* and *RECIPROCITY* describe the orientation of the flow, to or from or both to and from one actor to another. Information flows may be unidirectional or reciprocal. Mohr, Fisher and Nevin (1996) reported a significant ($p=0.05$) but weak positive correlation between communication bidirectionality and commitment satisfaction and coordination. From Balance Theory, we argue that when information exchange asymmetries exist a disuniting effect will be created in the relationship – in such circumstances distrust may thrive (Alessio 1990; Heider 1958). But relationships comprise a series of transactions with a number of exchange resources. So, even when a single transaction has created a disuniting effect in the relationship, the actual relationship outcome will be influenced by the preceding transactional pattern and expectations of future transactional outcomes (Alessio 1990). In other words, actors in relationship keep “tallies” (either consciously or more probably unconsciously). The ultimate character of the relationship will be determined by both the pattern of information exchange events as well as the expectations for future benefits. Gouldner’s (1960) work on reciprocity confirms this. We cannot therefore expect a simple connection between information exchange reciprocity and trust.

INTENSITY describes the frequency of information exchange while *SCOPE* explores the breadth and depth of the exchange (its extent). There is compelling empirical evidence that both the intensity and scope of information exchange will be positively related to trust (Maltz and Kohli 1996). *COMPLEXITY* describes the degree to which multiple information transfer links exist between firms. The complexity of information exchange has not been considered in studies involving interfirm relationships. However, work describing the evolution of interfirm relationships suggests that the information exchange process will become more complex as the relationship matures and exchange partners make adaptations. We might speculate that trust is necessary for complex information exchange processes to develop (Cunningham and Homse 1990; Ford 1980; Ford 1984; Hallén et al. 1990; Weitz and Jap 1995).

VARIABILITY describes the extent to which the information exchange process changes from transaction to transaction. This property of information exchange is similar to the formality construct described by Mohr and Sohi (1995) and Mohr, Fisher and Nevin (1996). These authors describe formality as the extent to which the information exchange is structured, planned, and explicit (these formal structures are not variable). They report a positive association between formality and cooperation and commitment within the relationship, as well as a significant negative association between formality and opportunism (distorting and withholding information). One might expect a similar connection between trust and information exchange variability. Research regarding evolution of the relationship also supports this work. Mature relationships tend to be characterised by high trust and less variability in information exchange process (as adaptations are made between the organisations) (Cunningham and Homse 1990).

A number of marketing theorists point out that the various properties of information make its exchange quite different from other exchange resources (Freiden *et al.* 1998; Glazer 1989; Glazer and Weiss 1991; Macdonald 1996). The AAR model suggests that transfer resources are connected to transfer activities (Axelsson and Easton 1992; Håkansson and Snehota 1995). For this reason we use the framework developed above to describe transfer activities: information complexity, variability and intensity/scope.

INFORMATION COMPLEXITY refers to the density/simplicity of information resources. Simple resources will usually be highly factual, whereas more complex information will be conditional and interrelated. Information requires considerable processing before it can be integrated into the knowledge structures of the actor receiving it. Information *INTENSITY* describes the range of different types of information in a transaction. As the number of types increases, the information intensity rises. *SCOPE* refers to the amount of information. As the volume of information transferred increases, information scope increases. Together these properties describe the richness of the information. As relationships mature and exchange partners increasingly make adaptations to one another, it becomes possible to transmit increasingly complex information, with more intensity and of a broader scope. Cunningham and Homse (1990) argue that, as the breadth and depth of the information that is exchanged increases, the level of trust in the relationship also increases. Positive associations between trust and information “richness”; complexity, intensity and scope are anticipated.

Information *VARIABILITY* describes the newness (or novelty) of the information and the changes in the type of information that is exchanged. Research pertaining to relationship evolution, knowledge acquisition, and social networks all suggest that there will be a reduction in the variability of information as the ties between firms become stronger (Constant et al. 1996; Granovetter 1973; Hansen 1999). Firms engaged in trusting relationships have institutionalised their information exchange behaviours. In these circumstances information known to one actor is also known to the other. There is little new information to be transferred. Conversely, less mature relationships offer the opportunity for variable (novel) information. We expect the relationship between information variability and trust to be negative.

The specific content of the information flow will have considerable bearing on the quality of exchange relationships. Weill (1990a; 1990b) suggested information can be characterised as transactional, operational or strategic. *TRANSACTIONAL* information is that which is relevant to the day-to-day activity of firms, while *OPERATIONAL* information is that which pertains to the smooth functioning of the firm. Transactional information exchange includes information about the sale of goods and services, while operational information could include details of inventory levels, and so forth. A great deal of the information that is exchanged between organisations is of this transactional nature. EDI usually involves the exchange of transactional and operational information (O’Callaghan et al. 1992). The efficient exchange of this type of information will enable actors to reduce specific transaction and relationship costs (Weill 1990a, 1990b). This in turn may improve relationship atmosphere, however, the impact is likely to be negligible. The absence of appropriate flows of such information can have a damaging effect on relationship atmosphere and could be associated with lower trust. *STRATEGIC* information provides a firm with opportunities to increase revenue through the competitive advantage that this information affords (Weill 1990a; 1990b). The exchange of this type of information represents a considerable investment in the relationship and is only likely when there is a high level of trust.

Many of the attributes of the information resource are embedded in the exchange media. Kaye (1995b) suggests that information sources can be classified in terms of their format, status and location. The dimensions proposed by Kaye (1995b) reflect changes to the status of the complexity of the media. The *COMPLEXITY* of the media captures the amount of processing required to embed data – it reflects the number of processes involved in using a particular medium. Oral media formats are the least complex, text-based and multimedia documents are more complex and electronic media formats are the most complex. Findings regarding the evolution of the relationship suggest that as relationships mature and adaptations are made, increasingly complex media formats are supported (Dwyer et al. 1987; Ford 1980). So a positive connection between media complexity and trust is expected.

The status of the source/media distinguishes between personal and impersonal media, formal and informal media, and published and unpublished (confidential) media (Kaye 1995b). Not all these dimensions are included in the model, only personalisation is considered here. Media *PERSONALISATION* relates to the degree of interpersonal contact that occurs when using a particular medium. For example, a telephone is more personalised than computer-based information exchange protocols. There is considerable case and theoretical evidence regarding the role of personalised media in the formation and maintenance of relations. Cunningham and Homse (1990) pointed out that the use of personalised media is necessary for relationship development. Interestingly, they argue it is not only the use of personal media that creates the conditions for relationship development, but the intensity and scope of information exchange using this media is also important. Evidence also

suggests that personalised media are also utilised in the resolution of relational conflicts and in crisis management (Cunningham and Turnbull 1982). It is also argued that personalised media have a more immediate impact. The use of personalised media in this context requires a solid foundation of relational trust. This work, when combined with the various perspectives of relationship evolution, suggests that developing and secure interfirm relationships will, of necessity, entail some information exchange, involving personalised media. The use of such media is necessary for the maintenance and development of trusting relationships.

In describing the exchange process, Davis (1992) outlined a compelling argument for the relevance of the actor and the *NATURE OF THE INTERFIRM RELATIONSHIP*. Ties between two actors may be characterised in a number of ways, as buyer and seller, as friends, as leader and follower, or as franchisee and franchiser. In any actor dyad, there are multiple relationships. This ambiguity provides some flexibility in interpreting the appropriateness of exchange resources as well as the outcomes of an exchange. For example, as friends, we might share different types of information from what we would share if we were franchisee and franchiser and the intended results might be considerably different. It follows that it is not the objective relationship (for example, wholesaler-retailer) that influences the character of the information exchange process and relationship atmosphere, but the actors' expectations (norms) of the exchange and their intentions (motivations) regarding the exchange activity that are important. Most research into information exchange deals with buyer–seller relationships. Empirical work dealing with information exchange in non-trading interfirm relationships is rare. Easton and Araujo's (1992) work on non-economic exchange suggests there should be no compelling differences in information exchange and relationship atmosphere arising from the objective type of relationship. Their work suggests that affective dimensions of the relationship type will have a greater impact.

Intentions, or motives, regarding the use of information that is exchanged can be used to characterise alternative information exchange situations (Davis 1992). The work of the IMP group also supports this view. Transfer activities (for example, information exchange) are inextricably linked to the transformational activities (for example, information use) that precede and follow them. So, information exchange is, in part, characterised by how the information resources will be used (Håkansson and Johanson 1992; Håkansson and Snehota 1995). A literature review reveals no empirical work within the marketing and business literature dealing with information exchange motivations. Intentions about information use can be used to reflect information exchange motivations. To this end the knowledge/information utilisation literature suggests a possible framework for understanding information use motivations.

Most typologies of information use are similar – they are primarily based on specific behavioural or cognitive changes that can be observed as a consequence of supplying information (Anderson et al. 1981; Weiss 1980). Early utilisation research focused primarily on the application of information in decision making. This type of use is called *INSTRUMENTAL* utilisation and implies a specific behavioural response on the part of the receiver – for example, a price change, a call to a customer, calling a sales meeting, adjusting goals and so forth. Within the marketing literature Menon and Varadarajan (1992) describe this type of information use as action-oriented. Generally, this is related to risk reduction in information exchange. Strong evidence for types of use not purely instrumental, emerged in the 1980's (Weiss 1980). This type of utilisation is now characterised as *CONCEPTUAL* use. It occurs when information is used indirectly to enhance knowledge. Menon and Varadarajan (1992) describe this as knowledge-enhancing use. Knowledge creation has been identified as an important role of information exchange. Instrumental and conceptual motivations for information exchange are likely to have a conditional impact on the relationship. When information flows are bidirectional (both actors benefiting from reduced decision-making risk and knowledge enhancement), exchange motivated by instrumental and conceptual concerns will have a positive impact on the relationship. This is because both actors benefit from the relationship. Conversely, when only one party benefits from information exchange, the other is likely to feel at best, ambivalent. If these asymmetries persist it is more likely that this party will ultimately resent the imbalance. As previously discussed, balance theory suggests that if reciprocity is not forthcoming the relationship will deteriorate (Alessio 1990).

Social theorists have proposed a third type of information use: *SYMBOLIC* information use (Weiss 1980). This describes the use of information that is inconsistent with the intended purpose or function of the information. Symbolic use of information is somewhat analogous to affective use as described by Menon and Varadarajan (1992, p. 62). "Affective use ...is the use of research with the intent of

‘feeling good’”. The identification of an affective dimension of utilisation represents a departure from earlier conceptualisations in its focus on the changes in the general psychological state of the user. Much of what earlier researchers regard as symbolic use of information would be included here. In this research, symbolic motivations include intentions to use information exchange to enhance the relationship (interaction theory) or to control the relationship (agency theory). Relationship-enhancing motivations for information exchange are important in new relationships, for the formation of information sharing norms and the development of trust. Relational motivations will have a positive effect on the relationship even when information flows are unidirectional. However, when information exchange is motivated by desires to control and manage the relationship, this will be detrimental to the relationship. In particular this will be the case when information flows are unidirectional.

Influence tactics are behaviours designed to alter the actions/beliefs of relationship partners (Gundlach and Cadotte 1994; Hunt and Nevin 1974; Wilkinson and Kipnis 1978). These transformational activities have been conceptualised as a type of communication behaviour (Mohr and Nevin 1990; Mohr et al. 1996). Mohr and Nevin (1990) describe two broad types of communication behaviour – coercive and collaborative communication. These transformational activities have not normally been considered part of information exchange, but the AAR model illustrates that transfer and transformational activities are linked and together constitute an activity chain. *COERCIVE COMMUNICATION* involves behaviours for gaining compliance that refer to negative consequences for non-compliance. These strategies include threats, demands and negative normative communications. Conversely, *COOPERATIVE COMMUNICATION* involves behaviours that refer to positive consequences for compliance. These strategies include promises, information persuasion, requests, and positive normative communications (Gundlach and Cadotte 1994; Hunt and Nevin 1974; Wilkinson and Kipnis 1978). Empirical work suggests that influence attempts have negative consequence for relationships, even when cooperative strategies are used. These effects are likely to be far more damaging when the transformational activities are coercive in nature (Frazier and Rody 1991; Håkansson et al. 1990).

Information-sharing *NORMS* are joint expectations concerning information exchange behaviours within the relationship (Heide and John 1992). As previously discussed, information-sharing norms constitute one of three norms that together describe a higher-order relational norm. The impact of information exchange norms on interfirm relationships is well documented. Mohr and Nevin (1990) predicted a strong positive impact on relational trust. This has been substantiated empirically (Campbell 1997; Cannon and Perreault 1999; Doney and Cannon 1997; Doucette 1997; Mohr and Spekman 1994; Mohr et al. 1996; Mohr and Sohi 1995).

Study of Trust and Information Exchange

This research has as its focus the interfirm relationship. Structured interviews were conducted with key informants from a broad cross-section of firms about the information exchange relationships that their firm engaged in. Informants and relationships were selected using a purposeful sampling framework that produced a non-random sample of known characteristics.

Informants were asked to identify information exchange relationships (with which they were familiar) between their organisation and four others (a customer, a supplier, a competitor and another non-trading relationship). The interviewer then selected the focal relationship for the interview according to a predetermined random framework. After an initial interview informants were asked to complete a questionnaire that examined the information exchange relationship in more detail.

The results presented here are drawn from the reports of 355 informants regarding an information exchange relationship between their organisation and another. These relationships comprised both trading (n=267) and non-trading relationships (n=88). Three-quarters of the sample described information exchange relationship in which the organisations were also engaged in trade (i.e. Buyer-seller relationships). The remaining relationships (25%) were non-trading, where the information exchange was the main activity between them. Many of the non-trading relations were between competitors (n=32) although they also included relationships between organisations and industry organisations, unions, government departments and so forth (n=37). A proportion of these non-trading relationships had contractual or ownership ties but did not trade (i.e. same parent company, subsidiary-parent, franchisee-franchisor) (n=19).

Measurement of Trust

In this research for measures of trust we use items drawn from earlier work (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Young 1992; Young and Wilkinson 1989; Young and Wilkinson 1997) and included items captured beliefs about partners' confidence in each other, reliability, truthfulness and trustworthiness. On the surface this is similar to other trust scales in its mixture of direct (use the word "trust") and indirect measures of trust and in the inclusion of behavioural (provide a truthful picture) and affectual (have confidence) aspects. Young (1996) has commented on the problems associated with combinations of items, when the researcher has not thought through the composition of the scale. In this case, however, the design of the scale is deliberate and in line with our conceptualisation of trust and its role in the relationship processes. The scale includes direct measures of relational trust and trustworthiness, in other words the items consider trust in terms of what is happening on both sides of the exchange rather than considering in isolation the affects and behaviour of the source or object of trust. In addition the scale reflects the interpersonal reciprocity of trust and trustworthiness. Early experimental results (Rotter 1971, 1980, 1967) showed the propensity towards trustworthy behaviour is the best predictor of likelihood to trust and vice versa. The indirect measures are similarly relational and are focussed on credibility, in particular on the motivational aspects of credibility, i.e. the honest, truthful aspects of credibility as distinct from the competence aspects that are to do with the quality of the information emulating from the source. Interestingly, these items dealing with competence aspects of credibility such as accuracy of information provided had somewhat lower factor loadings and were excluded because they slightly lowered the alpha (0.89). Confirmatory factor analysis provided confirmation that the four-item solution had good fit and reliability ($\chi^2(2) = 15.14$; $\Delta\chi^2(12) = 65.45$, $p = 0.0000$; GFI=0.979; TLI=0.952; CFI=0.984; IFI=0.984, explaining 68% of the variance with a composite reliability of 0.89).

Measurement of Information Exchange¹

TRANSFER ACTIVITIES can be characterised by their direction/reciprocity, complexity, intensity, variability and scope (Arndt 1985). Existing measures of information exchange only consider the extent and direction of these activities (Butler 1999; Maltz and Kohli 1996; Mohr et al. 1996; Mohr and Sohi 1995; Wafa et al. 1996). Accordingly, a series of single-item measures based on the work of Johan Arndt (1985) were developed specifically for this research. Direction and reciprocity were measured on a seven-point rating scale. Informants were asked to consider "who provides most information", where the informants' Firm = 1 and Firm X = 7. A mid-point was provided on this scale to provide for cases where information exchange was balanced. Complexity, intensity, scope and variability were each measured using six-point semantic differential rating scales. Similar single item measures were used to describe the *PROPERTIES OF INFORMATION RESOURCE* that are systematically associated with the transfer activity (complexity, variability, intensity and scope).

TYPE OF TRANSFER RESOURCE – Information content was classified as transactional, operational or strategic using Weill's (1990a; 1990b) research. A pool of twelve items was used to measure exchange of particular types of information content. The final formative, three-dimensional measure revealed the extent/scope to which transactional, operational and strategic information resources were exchanged.² A similar approach was used to develop identify the *PROPERTIES OF THE INFORMATION EXCHANGE MEDIA*. Information resources draw many of their attributes from the media used in the exchange. Transfer media (e.g. telephone, in-person, EDI and so forth) were characterised by their complexity and the extent to which they were personalised. These characteristics of information exchange media were measured using a formative multi-item scale capturing the use of various types of information exchange media.

MOTIVATIONS FOR INFORMATION EXCHANGE – Theory about knowledge and information use was used to identify different motives for information exchange: these included instrumental, conceptual and symbolic motivations. Information exchange motivations have not been considered by other

¹ This section provides an overview of the operationalisation of information exchange (as outlined above), item descriptions for each measure is provided in Appendix 1, more detailed operationalisation information and item performance information is available from the corresponding author.

² These variables were created by taking the sum of the relevant variables. Higher scores on the summary variable indicated more widely based exchange of this type of information. The minimum and maximum values for transactional information are 0 and 3 respectively. Similarly, the values for operational information are 0 and 3, and for strategic information are 0 and 6.

researchers but information/knowledge use is a well-developed concept within both the marketing and utilisation literature. This literature was used to develop a multi-item reflective measure of information exchange motivations. The final scale comprised twelve items reflecting the three motivational dimensions identified in the literature. Items were measured on a six-point rating scale indicating agreement. Exploratory factor analysis provides reasonable confirmation of anticipated dimensionality. A four-factor solution was obtained with Eigen values greater than (or near to) one. This solution explained 61.8% of the variance. All items loaded on the theorised dimension, but items reflecting symbolic motivations split into two groups (relational and forced motivations). Table 3 illustrates the anticipated dimensionality and the result obtained by exploratory factor analysis; reliability statistics are also reported. Confirmatory factor analysis provide evidence of fit with the theoretical structure of the motivation construct ($\chi^2(49) = 137.55, p=0.000, GFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.86, CFI = 0.90, IFI = 0.90$).

TRANSFORMATIONAL ACTIVITIES – The transformational properties of information exchange are reflected in the communication behaviours or influence tactics employed by exchange partners. Influence tactics have generally been operationalised using reflective multi-item scales (for each type of influence tactic, for example, threats, demands, promises etc.). However, given the overall length of the research instrument, an alternative approach was adopted. Two multi-item formative measures were developed (along the lines of Young (1992)) to capture the coercive and non-coercive dimensions of the transformational activity. Six point rating scales were used to measure the likelihood of using each of these transformational behaviours within the relationship. A pool of ten items was used to form the dimensions of coercive and cooperative communication behaviours discussed in the literature (Gaski 1984; Gaski and Nevin 1985; Mohr and Nevin 1990; Mohr and Spekman 1994; Mohr et al. 1996; Mohr and Sohi 1995; Stern 1972). Three of the items measured particularly strong coercive or confrontational communication behaviours, while the remaining six items measured a range of more cooperative, less confrontational communication behaviours.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE NORMS are joint expectations about information exchange behaviours within the relationship (Heide and John 1992). There have been a number of studies using measures of information exchange norms and most of these have been based on the work of Heide and John (1992) and Heide and Miner (1992). Measures of information exchange norms have typically included items reflecting expectations about information exchange as well as items reflecting information exchange behaviours. As a result, there is some correspondence between the potential item pools used to operationalise information exchange norms and items that reflect aspects of trust (refer to Appendix 1 for items descriptions). Face validity suggests these “trust-like” items are more appropriately identified as reflecting information exchange norms. Expert panel evaluations during pre-testing consistently placed them as part of an information exchange norms construct. Furthermore, as discussed above these items are less central to the trust scale. The final measure comprised five items reflecting a single dimension with good reliability ($\alpha = 0.82$). Confirmatory factor analysis provided further verification of the theoretical structure of the information exchange norm construct ($\chi^2(5) = 135, p=0.93; GFI=0.99 TLI=1.00 CFI=1.00$, composite reliability = 0.834 and the variance extracted = 0.506).

NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP - A number of items describing the nature of the ties between information exchange partners were included in the research instrument. Single item measures were used to distinguish between trading and non-trading relationships, and the nature of the ties between firms (the nature of the contracts and agreements between exchange partners as well as the content of the ties, that is, the ownership structure).

Results

Analysis of variance was used to investigate the connections between the various dimensions of information exchange and trust. All information exchange variables (except information exchange norms were included in the initial model). Only the main effects were included (interaction terms were omitted). Information exchange attributes which did not significantly impact on trust were deleted. The final model showed that different dimensions of information exchange had significant, varied and particular impacts on trust. These are set out in the following table.

Table 1: ANOVA Trust and Information Exchange Dimensions, Excluding Norms (Dependent variable = trust, main effects only)

Source	F	Sig.	Parameter Estimate (Beta)	T (Sig.)
Corrected Model	13.316	.000		
Intercept	293.707	.000	4.003	17.138 (.000)
Relational motivations	11.775	.001	.139	3.431 (.001)
Coercive influence tactics	22.413	.000	-.185	-4.734 (.000)
Information exchange complexity	4.094	.044	-.075	-2.023 (.044)
Information exchange intensity	21.887	.000	.151	4.678 (.000)
Transactional information	6.122	.014	.134	2.474 (.014)

R-Squared = .177 (Adjusted R-Squared = .164)

As shown in Table 1, relational motivations, information exchange intensity and the exchange of transactional information have positive effects on trust, while the use of coercive influence tactics and the complexity of the information exchange process impacts negatively on trust. Together these variables explain approximately 17% of the variation in trust. Scrutiny of the parameter estimates shows that with the exception of information exchange complexity the magnitude of the effects are similar. There were no apparent differences between firms engaged in trading and non-trading relationships. Next the role of information exchange norms was considered. The initial analysis was repeated including all information exchange variable as well as information exchange norms. Only variables with significant main effects on trust were retained in the final model. This analysis is set out the in following table.

Table 2: ANOVA: Trust and Information Exchange Dimensions, Including Norms (Dependent variable = trust, main effects only)

Source	F	Sig.	Parameter Estimate (Beta)	T (Sig.)
Corrected Model	216.412	.000		
Intercept	64.976	.000	1.585	8.061 (.000)
Information exchange norms	390.395	.000	.779	19.758 (.000)
Coercive influence tactics	17.347	.000	-.112	-4.165 (.000)

R-Squared = .554 (Adjusted R-Squared = .552)

As shown in Table 2, a profoundly different picture emerges when information exchange norms are considered. Apart from the use of coercive influence tactics none of the other information exchange dimensions were retained in the final model (when information exchange norms were considered). Together, information exchange norms and the use of coercive communication strategies explain over fifty per cent of the variation in trust. A shift in information exchange norms will provide a relatively large change in trust within the relationship. In contrast, the use of coercive information strategies has a negative (and much smaller) impact on trust. No differences were observed between firms engaged in trading and non-trading relationships.

This analysis suggests that very few of the dimensions of information exchange appear to have direct effects on trust. Given the pivotal role of trust in interfirm relationships (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Young and Wilkinson 1988), the apparently limited direct impact of information exchange on its development raises questions about the extent to which relationships and the trust within them can be actively managed, as has been proposed by some researchers (Mohr et al. 1996; Sheng et al. 2006).

The work of Heide and John (1992) suggests that information exchange norms might mediate the impact of other dimensions of information exchange on Trust, thus explaining the limited direct impacts found in respect to other information exchange dimensions. This was investigated, by examining the main effects of information exchange on Information exchange norms, and is shown in the following table.

Table 3: ANOVA: Trust and Information Exchange Dimensions, (Dependent variable = Information exchange norms, main effects only)

Source	F	Sig.	Parameter Estimate (Beta)	T (Sig.)
Corrected Model	17.714	.000		
Intercept	237.825	.000	3.240	15.422 (.000)
Relational motivations	11.333	.001	.122	3.367 (.001)
Coercive influence tactics	7.150	.008	-.090	-2.674 (.008)
Information exchange intensity	37.541	.000	.171	6.127 (.000)
Conceptual motivations	10.714	.001	.122	3.273 (.001)
Information exchange variability	5.895	.016	-.064	-2.428 (.016)

R-Squared = .207 (Adjusted R-Squared = .195)

As shown in Table 3, the analysis of variance was significant, explaining approximately twenty per cent of the variation in information exchange norms. Exchange intensity and coercive communication are important predictors of information exchange norms. Furthermore, a number of other information exchange variables have an important effect on norms. These include the motivations for information exchange (in particular, conceptual and relational motives), which have a positive impact on information exchange norms. There is also evidence that variability in the information exchange activity negatively impacts on the development of norms, as does the use of coercive influence tactics. When considering the impact the nature of the interfirm relationship has on the formation of relational norms an interesting effect emerges³. Information intensity has a positive impact on norm formation ($\beta = .273$, $t = 5.348$, $p = .000$)⁴, and this effect is strongest in non-trading relationships. However, in trading relationships we see the impact of intensity on exchange norms is dampened, more so for sellers ($\beta = -.176$, $t = -2.664$, $p = .008$) than buyers ($\beta = -.126$, $t = -1.850$, $p = .065$).

Conclusion and Discussion

The substance of these findings confirms the view that information exchange is a multi-dimensional construct with aspects of information exchange playing various roles in the generation of trust. These findings indicate that few, if any, of the “traditional” ways in which information exchange is considered are good predictors of trust. However we continue to argue, as we have throughout this paper, that the relationship between trust and information exchange is a complex one. By this we mean that information exchange is an integral part of business relationships and that these exchanges display properties of a complex adaptive system. Exchange relationships are more than the sum of their transactions, emerge in a bottom-up way and are non-linear (e.g. the future cannot necessarily be predicted from the past) (Holland 1995). This complexity makes it difficult to predict the way aspects of information exchange combine and what the combined impact of information exchange on the trust is.

While the study presented has attempted to take account of these emergent processes of relationships in the way instrument and scales are designed, it is necessarily limited in its capabilities. Authors who consider methods of studying complex adaptive systems (Abbott 2001; Easton 2002; Van de Ven and Poole 2005; Wilkinson and Young 2005) argue that cross-sectional survey data is of limited use and that alternatives such as case studies, narrative event sequence analysis and/or simulation should be used. We agree that there are substantive limitations associated with surveys – whether cross sectional or longitudinal (which are really comparative static) are used. However we would argue that the reality of research in marketing is that survey use, including in the context of the study of business relationships will continue. There is merit in having “snapshots” of the market for comparison and generalisation – as long as we do not limit ourselves to these. A challenge for researchers, we would argue, is to also develop methods of survey research design and data analysis

³ This was investigated by considering the interaction effects between each of the information exchange dimensions with the nature of the relationship (trading and non-trading; buyers and sellers and so forth).

⁴ This parameter estimate varies from Table 3 because here the main and two-way interaction effects are considered.

that are more sympathetic to a complex adaptive system stance and enable us to retain awareness of relational process. At present, we would argue that the opposite is happening. Ever-increasing use of structural equation modelling as the means of understanding what is driving business relationships provides explanations of simple causality but actively obscures exploration of relational process. The fragility of variance-covariance-based methods to violations of assumptions and the impact of multicollinearity on path estimates means are further limitations. Most concerning we believe is that this is leading to “the tail wagging the dog,” such that researchers are now likely to believe that this modelling provides comprehensive depictions of business relationship reality where in fact they provided only a very limited and often inaccurate view. The scale of the work and the need for self-validation by researchers leads to self-perpetuation and research agendas and dangerous paradigms that impede our understanding of relationships and their complex, emergent processes.

No doubt in part researchers in business marketing avoid considering relationships as complex adaptive systems because of the very unsatisfactory management implications that such a perspective provides (Wilkinson and Young 2002). The result reported here is no exception. We move beyond the narrow conceptualisations and resulting operationalisations of information exchange and in doing so find that most of the information exchange dimensions that have any substantive/relatively important effect on trust are not really controllable. The aspect that has the greatest effect on the level of trust is information exchange norms (positive impact) and these norms emerge as part of the long term co-production of the relationship itself rather than because of simple managerial action that can “manufacture” trust. Norms emerge out of the interactions between exchange partners; neither party “controls” their development. The impact of most information exchange behaviours instead seems to be in its effect on the growth of these norms. The next most influential aspect of information exchange is coercive communication behaviours/influence tactics which has a negative impact on trust. Here there is also limited managerial value as managers presumably do not want, in the main, to reduce trust. The finding is reflective of writers in sociology who argue that building trust is a long term and rather unmanageable process but that trust can be easily destroyed and once destroyed may be impossible to rebuild (Luhmann 1979).

We conclude this paper by reflecting on the appropriateness of our orientation for understanding the processes (i.e. development and evolution) of relationships. We have already admitted that surveys are far from ideal for this, and yet we use a survey. We have focussed on information exchange and trust rather than on more comprehensive constructs and/or a large under of constructs. It could be argued that this is too limiting and gives an incomplete picture of the relationship and its processes. We would agree that comprehensive, holistic pictures of these processes are invaluable, but perhaps are more suited to case study methods. The purpose here is different. We have attempted to provide a close-up view of a part of process that we argue is central to understanding relationships and reflective of and connected to the processes throughout the (indeed that are the) relationship. So, have we selected the correct parts of the relationship to view? We have provided strong arguments as to the importance of communication – of which we see information exchange as being an integral part, particularly in the context of business relationships. We see communication as at the core of the process of continually reproducing the functioning of a business relationship. The choice of trust as our dependent variable is more problematic. There are two prongs to this issue. First, should it be trust or information exchange that is the dependent variable? Our discussion and models throughout highlight the need to consider neither/both as dependent. Their causality is inextricably linked and reciprocal. The findings reported here do not posit causality and the relationships reported above should be seen as two-way. Higher trust will be associated with enhanced norms and lower trust is likely to lead to increased coercive communication behaviour. Second, is there a better representation of relationship state/well-being than trust? Numerous authors have argued that cooperation, relational commitment, satisfaction and/or performance are at the heart of what we seek to understand and that trust is useful only in so far as it contributes to our understanding of one or more of these (see Young (2006) for a summary of these arguments). We do not propose to enter this argument as it is irrelevant for our purposes. Trust has been shown to play an important role in many relationship states, more so than any other construct. It is for that reason that we focus upon it here.

Future work will continue to expand our understanding of relationship process – using both the techniques of survey methods but grounding these into the more satisfying and exciting cases that we hope to build that will provide a more detailed view of the complex interplay of information exchange aspects, the more precise ways in which they act to sustain and change relationships and the underlying reasons for the processes we observe. We will do this by considering

communication/information exchange in terms of the rich interconnections of actors, activities and resources and their links, ties and bonds.

Appendix 1 – Operationalisation

(Full details are available from the corresponding author)

Trust (4-item reflective measure): Parties to this relationship...

- ... behave in a trustworthy manner toward each other
- ... provide a completely truthful picture when negotiating with each other
- ... trust each other
- ... have confidence in the fairness and honesty of each other
- ... can rely on each other to fulfil all the requirements of agreement (not in final measure)
- ... rely on each other to be informed (not in final measure)
- ... have confidence in the accuracy of information they get from each other (not in final measure)

Properties of Transfer Activities (single-item measures) semantic difference scales

Your firm provides most—Firm X provides most (directionality/reciprocity); Complex—Straightforward (complexity); Changes infrequently—Changes frequently (variability); Frequent exchanges—Infrequent exchanges, Regular exchanges—Irregular exchange (intensity)

Properties of Transfer Resources (single-item measures)

Complex—Simple (complexity); Changes infrequently—Changes frequently (variability); Many different types—Few different types (scope); Small amount—Large amount (intensity)

Type of Transfer Resource (multi-item formative measures) extent/scope exchanged

(Transactional) Information about products, prices, promotion or distribution, Transaction related information, Electronic funds transfer; (Operational) Inventory and stock details, Credit information, Statutory information; (Strategic) Information about customers, Information about suppliers or distributors, Information about competitors, Marketing strategy, Aggregate sales data, Market share information.

Properties of Transfer Media (multi-item formative measures)

(Personalisation) Use of Phone, Face-to-face conversation; (Complexity) Use of Fax, Written documents, Report/document EDI/computer-mediated; Intermediary.

Motivations for Information Exchange (multi-item reflective measures)

- My firm would make the same decisions with or without the information we share with FIRM X. ^r (Instrumental)
- The information we share with FIRM X materially influences the decision-making of my firm. (Instrumental)
- My firm shares information with FIRM X in order to improve our decision-making. (Instrumental)
- Sharing information with FIRM X enhances my firm's general knowledge rather than facilitating specific decisions. (Conceptual)
- The information my firm shares with FIRM X provides my firm new insights. (Conceptual)
- My firm's general information resources are increased by sharing information with FIRM X. (Conceptual)
- My firm shares information with FIRM X to build commitment with FIRM X. (Symbolic)
- Information is shared with FIRM X to enhance our general relationship with FIRM X. (Symbolic)
- My firm shares information with FIRM X as a way of maintaining a pattern of communication with FIRM X. (Symbolic)
- Sometimes the process of sharing information with FIRM X is more important than the information itself. (Symbolic)
- Information is shared with FIRM X to satisfy legal or professional requirements. (Symbolic)
- My firm shares information with FIRM X because of the dictates of management or company policy. (Symbolic)

Transformational Activities (multi-item formative measures)

- Simply state a request or suggest, eg. "we would like you to do this" (cooperative)
- Demand compliance with requests, eg. "we insist you do this" (coercive)
- Threaten to punish non-compliance, eg. "if you don't do this we will ..." (coercive)
- Promise rewards for compliance, eg., "if you do this we will ..." (cooperative)
- Appeal to the contract, eg. "the contract requires you do this" (coercive)
- Appeal to common business practice, eg. "it is normal for you to do this"
- Discuss the matter, eg. "let us talk this over" (cooperative)
- Offer a compromise, eg. "let us meet half way" (cooperative)
- Appeal to the relationship, eg. "do this, we've been doing business a long time ..." (cooperative)
- Use their experience or information, "if you do this you will benefit because" (cooperative)

Information Exchange Norms (5-item reflective measure): Parties to this relationship...

- ... rely on each other to be informed
- ... keep the other informed about the things they ought to know
- ... are informed about all useful information by the other
- ... have confidence in the accuracy of information from each other
- ... search for solutions to any joint problems they might have

Nature of the Relationship (single-item measures)

Trading, Non-trading; No contract, unwritten contract, written contract;

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