

The relationship among trust conflicts and perceived satisfaction in B2B context

Work in progress paper

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the elaborated effects of trust on conflicts and perceived satisfaction among organizations in existing business relationships.

Concerning marketing literature several controversies can be found and these can lead to the different meaning recognized to trust construct and consequently, to the distinction between determinants and consequences. More authors have defined trust with elements that others, instead, have considered as its determinants. When the relationship develops, a high trust stock can affect the quality and quantity of communication between parties, and consequently the understanding of customer expectations, and the correct formation of expected performance that the firm can offer. Afterwards, in a dynamic prospective, trust affects satisfaction. Commitment trust and satisfaction are often mentioned as key elements determining the quality of business relationships (Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Gremler, D. D. 2002). Baron et al. (2010) think that satisfaction has likely impact on other contributors of relationships.

According to more researchers (e.g. Hunger and Stern 1976) the contrary of conflict is cooperation. Why are there conflicts among business partners? Logical answer is permanent changings in the fields of politics, economies, regulations, social norms and technological systems. It can also happen that in a new business network a company has to cooperate with its former competitor (Hagberg-Andersson and Tidström 2008). Gadde and Håkansson

(1993) claim cooperation conflict and even competition can exist among each other. We also investigate how trust affects conflicts.

In this empirical paper we used quantitative research methods and could analysed 315 valid questionnaires what we received from organizations registered in Hungary, independently from sizes and sectors of economy. In our research we find that trust is really affected both satisfaction (positively) and conflict (negatively) which conclusions belong to the main stream of relevant investigations. The surprising findings are the elaborated connections with trust and the possible reasons of this complex situation. We also investigate the possible interaction between perceived satisfaction and conflict.

Due to lack of widely accepted definition of trust in business and determinants of it, our quantitative research may bring new thoughts to researchers or even can support earlier models as well. If managers can use trust and its variables in more efficient way, there is big chance for them to develop a relatively stable competitive advantage.

Introduction

“Without trust, there is no open society, because there are not enough police to patrol every opening in an open society. Without trust, there can also be no flat world, because it is trust that allows us to take down walls, remove barriers, and eliminate friction at borders. Trust is essential for a flat world...” (T. Friedman) Thomas Friedman, American journalist, columnist and author winning the Pulitzer Prize three times, means that flat economy focuses on partnering and relationships.

“Relationships of all kinds are built on and sustained by trust. They can also be broken and destroyed by lack of trust. Try to imagine any meaningful relationship without trust. In fact, low trust is the very definition of a bad relationship.” (Covey 2006:21)

“There is an interaction between goals and means” (Håkansson, Harrison, and Waluszewski, 2007). In other words means do not necessarily follow goals; they may co-produce one another. “Trust always affects two outcomes: speed and cost. When trust goes down, speed will also go down and costs will go up.” (Covey 2006:22) Covey also brings more stories, merges, acquisitions from US business life to prove his view.

We are in a process of empirically finding the building elements of trust and this time we focus on two naturally influencing notions such as conflict and satisfaction. So the paper is structured as follows: After a short focused literature review we show the findings of our quantitative trust investigation, more concretely we try to understand how trust relates to conflict and satisfaction furthermore how satisfaction and conflict relate to one and another.

Views about trust conflict and satisfaction from economic aspect

Trust. In this chapter we approach trust as soft resource which can support relationships among organizations. This support has been fulfilled in several ways, directly and indirectly. Therefore we give a broad but short literature review about trust. Sociologists argue that trust can be defined as the basis for individual risk-taking behaviour (Coleman 1990), co-operation (Gambetta 1988), reduced social complexity (Luhmann 1979), order (Misztal 1996), and social capital (Coleman 1988, Putnam 1995).

Moorman, Zaltman and Deshpandé define trust as "(...) a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence"(1992:315). But trust involves not only the belief in the benevolence in the partner's actions but also the vulnerability against the partner (Morgan and Hunt 1994:23). It means that trust, whether in someone or something, can be defined as an attitude, characterised by the belief in the counterparty's reliability, for example supplier or client. From a bit different aspect trust has been viewed as the perceived credibility and benevolence of a target of trust (Ganesan 1994; Kumar, Scheer and Steenkamp 1995).

The second dimension of trust, benevolence, is the extent to which one partner is genuinely interested in the other partner's welfare indeed without trust, risk is unmanageable and thus business relationship development, including adaptation, would not be possible (Morrison and Firmstone 2000). Trust has essential role in supply chains and business networks in general (e.g. Hagberg-Andersson and Tidström 2008; Brányi 2010).

Trust can be simply defined as a willingness to take risk (Mayer et al. 1995). It seems that trust exists when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Morgan and Hunt have the opinion that commitment is "an exchange partner believing that an on-going relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes the relationship endures indefinitely," (1994:29) and commitment is central to all of the relational exchanges between the firm and its various partners.

Table 1: **Consequences of trust in business**

commitment	Moorman, Zaltman and Desphande 1992; Morgan and Hunt 1994; Ganesan 1994; Geyskens et al. 1996; Nielson 1998
decrease the level of conflict	Anderson and Narus 1990; Morgan and Hunt 1994
non-coercive power	Morgan and Hunt 1994
greater probability of allocating resources	Anderson, Lodish and Weitz 1987; Nielson 1998
reduction of transactions costs	Zaheer and Venkatraman 1995; Cummings and Bromiley 1996
redefinition of roles of business partners	Huemer 2004
greater ease in persuading or influencing the partner	Swan and Nolan 1985; Swan, Trawick and Silva 1985
greater sales and performance	Crosby, Evans and Cowles 1990; Dion, Easterling and Miller 1995; Dahlstrom and Nygaard 1995; Kumar 1996; Doney and Cannon 1997
facilitation of collaborative behaviour and continuity of the relationship, cooperative goals	Anderson and Weitz 1989; Crosby, Evans and Cowles 1990; Ganesan 1994; Mohr and Speckman 1994; Kumar 1996; Tjosvold and Chen (2010)
developing and strengthening alliances	Sherman 1992; Moberg et al. 2003; Chaturvedi and Gaur (2008)

Trust can be viewed as a psychological state which implies tolerance of another's freedom of action under uncertain conditions. But "trusting is seen as a dynamic capability, i.e. trusting actions are inherent in processes that organizations set in motion to integrate, reconfigure, gain and release resources. It is a 'meta'-capability due to its potential impact on other dynamic capability processes such as alliancing and decision making. Hence, whereas the twin of trust is risk, the twin of trusting is freedom of action." (Huemer, 2001:23)

An awareness of the relationship functions will help both partners to clearly define their requirements and develop strategies to create trust and mutual value creation in the relationship. Therefore consequences of trust are summarized in Table 1 (above). We add that trust is somehow connected with persons, affected by persons and frequently reciprocity is assumed. (Bremmels 1995; Lenney – Easton, 2009)

Francis Fukuyama approaches trust as a tax: “Widespread distrust in a society imposes a kind of tax on all forms of economic activity, a tax that high-trust societies do not have to pay” (Fukuyama 1995) such as for example Scandinavian countries. But Covey steps further saying “just as the tax created by low trust is real, measurable, and extremely high, so the dividends of high trust are also real, quantifiable, and incredibly high” (Covey 2006:28) Besides tax and dividend we can also see trust as the “hidden variable” in the formula for organizational success (Covey 2006).

So in this paper we approach trust as calculable, risk-decreasing, relationship-based, soft resource embedded in a permanent changing environment. This includes the reliable behaviour of business partner and commitment as well. (Dyer - Chu, 2003, 2000; Klein, 1980; Williamson, 1983)

Conflict. Scholars identify factors which are assumed to negatively influence trust are opportunism, power asymmetries and structural bonds where structural bonds include the perception of marketing alternatives (Bahlmann – Schulze - Spiller, 2007). But conflict is less frequently added to this list. Conflict is called an expressed struggle between at least two inter-dependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals (Hocker - Wilmot, 1985). In other words “conflict is a way of life in relationships that can be explicitly and implicitly expressed, but it is the way in which we handle or manage these conflicts that determines the quality of our relationships” (Tatum and Eberlin, 2006). Celuch, Bantham and Kasouf (2011) state that trust has an important role in understanding conflict resolution.

The organizational conflict literature has identified three common forms of conflict: relationship conflict or affective conflict, task or cognitive conflict and process conflict (Panteli – Sockalingam 2005). Hagberg-Andersson and Tidström (2008) state conflict in business life is usually short-term while other scholars rather focus on the management of conflicts because this basically determine the quality of a business relationship (Tatum – Eberlin 2006).

A conflict also can be equal to a process which includes naturally more stages (Thomas 1992) and can be distinguished more characteristic types as well such as 1) latent conflict, 2) perceived conflict, 3) felt conflict, 4) manifest conflict and 5) conflict aftermath (Pondy 1967). According to Kemp and Ghauri (1999) trust means such norms which are the results of long-term relationship development and are able to decrease the possibilities of conflict. This view was proved by Hausman (2001) as well who finds less coercion and conflict in case of longer relationships. Morgan and Hunt (1997) posit that “it is trust that leads partner to perceive that future conflictual episodes will be functional” (1997:26).

The base of cooperation is trust and planning (Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987). Waluszewski and Håkansson (2006) however state that in case of trust asymmetry can cause difficulties furthermore trust is just a small part of the whole gamut of feeling. Tahtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997) suggest that termination of a business relationship can affect all actors directly connected (e.g. buyer-seller) as well as future actors in both companies and other companies that are related to them within the overall network. Thus, they highlight the multi stages that characterize the dissolution of relationships as comprising intrapersonal, intra-company, dyadic, and network stages. In summary, the focal company either negotiates with its partner in order to restore the relationship (voice strategy) or terminates the relationship (exit strategy).

How can practitioners solve conflicts? It can be a comfortable method to involve neutral person or mediator as the third side (Jameson 1999) or well-based communication program (Magrath – Hardy 1989). Focusing on settlement of conflict we should deal with the question of power. Power has been defined as the ability to manage the perceptions of the other party (French and Raven, 1959), the ability of a firm to affect decision-making and/or behaviour (Wilkinson, 1996), and the ability to influence the decision-making and actions of the other party (Kähkönen and Lintukangas, 2011). Meanwhile Johanson and Mattsson (1992) state, that relationship between firms define their positions, and the firm's position depends on the nature of its direct and indirect relationships with the other firms. Additionally many business relationships, although asymmetric in power terms, last for decades with all members of the network, in spite of difficulties and conflicts, appearing to remain successful (Blois, 2008).

Satisfaction. "In a focal-node context, satisfaction can be seen as the degree to which a focal firm rises up to or exceeds expectations of the nodes in relation to their motives to collaborate." (Yaqub et al. 2010:135) Concerning satisfaction with business partner Chiou et al. (2002) think that general or increasing satisfaction develop as a summary of transaction experiences. In Oliver's (1999) view satisfaction in economic sphere means pleasant fulfilment. There are the following preconditions of satisfaction: 1) If the buyer does not trust in the seller's quality based on earlier experiences, surely he or she will not be satisfied with the supplier next fulfilment. 2) Based on social exchange theory Singh and Sirdeshmukh (2000) suggest that buyers' trust before transaction directly effects their satisfaction after transaction. Therefore accumulated perceived trust likely influences satisfaction. They also add that this relationship may be palindromic. 3) Gwinner, Gremier and Bitner (1998), Chaudhuri et al. (2001) state the buyers in long term relations see three basic advantages: trust, social advantages, benefit of special treatment.

Trust can emerge from successive collaboration experiences among the firms in other words satisfying with each other. As a natural consequence of these collaborations, the partners develop mutual understanding and goodwill about each other over time; therefore, the stronger form of trust, i.e. process-based trust starts to replace the initial characteristic-based trust (Zucker, 1986).

“Personal value is connected to another relational outcome - non-economic satisfaction.” (Biggeman et al. 2005, p.1.) Experience also has impact on customer satisfaction (Rosen, Suprenant 1998) and certainly the more satisfied the buyer, the more possible the relationship will be sustained (Baron et al. 2010). Relationship satisfaction can be seen to be needed for relationship quality (Storbacka et al. 1994). They address if customers are dissatisfied they may defect so either the relationship will end or there may be „a zone of tolerance” which makes the relationship fragile. In this research we approach satisfaction as non-economic and relationship satisfaction.

Additionally in the research models of Suh-Yueh Chu Wen-Chang Fang(2006), Debrah et al. (2006) and Ratnasingam(2005) also investigated satisfaction and perceived conflict as determinants of trust. From the relevant literature review we understand that variables and mechanism of trust are frequently investigated meanwhile interactions among possible determinants of trust are hardly mentioned. Therefore our **research questions** are:

- How does conflict relate to trust in a business relationship?
- How does satisfaction relate to trust in a business relationship?
- How does conflict and satisfaction relate to one another in a business relationship?

Methodology

In this study the empirical research of trust is part of an international investigation. The pilot research was fulfilled in Korea in 2006 where the variables were defined that build trust for satisfying, long-term partnerships (asset specificity, information sharing, partner’s reputation, and perceived conflicts) (Kwon and Suh, 2004; Suh and Kwon, 2006, Hong and Kwon, 2009). This research is different from previous studies while it focuses on the effects of trust on the sustainable distribution network management which goes beyond the long-term partnership and cooperation. The results of this international research, based on a series of comprehensive studies conducted among supply chain practitioners shows how transaction cost variables (replaceability, asset specificity, behavioural uncertainty) and social exchange variables (perceived satisfaction, partner reputation, perceived conflict) affect trust-commitment variables in partnership based supply chain relationships. The trust factors in this study are based on the results of Kumar et al. (1995). The variables used in the studies of Kwon and Suh (2004) and of Chu and Fang (2006) were considered to select the variables for this study. The surveys were conducted in five countries (France, Hungary, Tunisia, USA and Korea) and applied statistical methods as well as a structural equation model to find out the results (Hong, Kwon, Roques, Mandják, Brahim and Piricz, 2011).

This paper focuses on one part of the Hungarian investigation so more concretely relationship among trust conflict and satisfaction. At the beginning of the Hungarian research we translated the original English questionnaire into Hungarian and controlled it in two steps (one step was depth interviews). The final Hungarian version was retranslated in English and controlled by the project centre too. We chose a bit tiring but reliable personal questioning,

more concretely convenience sampling. In this case members of the population are chosen based on their relative ease of access so it tries to collect samples from close and reachable elements. Although in this case the interviewer's one of the main tasks is to choose the samples this method is frequently used – especially with large samplings – while it is very cheap and quick. (Malhotra 2008)The personal questioning was fulfilled by correspondence students(of Business Engineering) in 2009 which worked and were ready to use their business relationships. The questioning process was closely monitored and we frequently discussed the experiences. Companies registered in Hungary were asked about trust in their supply chain independently on sizes and sectors of economy. This time the largest problem was that many interviewed firms did not want to give information about their annual sales revenue, which was necessary to identify the category of size of the respondent. From the received 400 questionnaires we found 315 valid.

Table 2 summarizes the questioned samples by size (Micro entrepreneurship: the annual revenue of the previous year maximum EUR 2 Million, small entrepreneurship: maximum EUR 10 Million, Medium entrepreneurship: maximum EUR 50 Million, Large entrepreneurship: more than EUR 50 Million) which shows that the large companies are overrepresented compared with the Hungarian national data. The reason can be that the majority of the questioned organizations are situated in the middle part of Hungary (Budapest, Pest and Fejér counties). This region has a leading economic role, for example 39.4 per cents of the operating entrepreneurships are here while the national regional average is only between 8.6 – 11.5 per cents. (Statisztikai tükör 2009/65:2)

Table 2: **Size of sampled organizations compared with the Hungarian national data**

	Organizations (in number)	Organizations (in per cent)	Operating enterprises in Hungary (in % 2007)
Micro	171	54.3	95
Small	19	6	4.2
Medium	18	5.7	0.7
Large	107	34	0.1
Total	315	100	100

Source (4th column): Statisztikai tükör 2009/65:2

The valid questionnaires were analysed by SPSS (PASW) software using factor analysis, and regressions. The measurement of trust is mostly based on seven-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). In this study we used exploratory factor analysis and Bartlett – test to control variables(See Appendix). In order to get to know the number of factors effecting trust we chose Principal component analysis (PCA) and Varimax rotation. The results show a 10-factor solution with a 64 percent variance explained (See Appendix). This percentage is acceptable in social sciences (Hair et al. 2003).A factor with

fewer than three items is generally weak and unstable. With further research and analysis it may be possible to reduce the item number and maintain a strong factor (Costello – Osborne, 2005). Our factor analysis has resulted three factors with only one item while others included three or more items. We added these ‘lonely’ items to the factors of similar content by using MEAN in PASW software. Therefore we created seven factors from ten. The variables of each factor represent clearly separated contents as it can be seen in the Appendix. But in this paper we focus on only three factors such as trust (TRUST), perceived satisfaction (SAT) and perceived conflict (KONFL).

Quantitative Data Findings

Analysing the questionnaires by activity we see that 41 questioned firms deal with whole sale, 69 organizations with retail trade and this commercial group is the largest in this investigation (Commerce: 34.9 per cent) (total N = 315). The second largest group belong to heavy industry (54 questioned firms, 17.1 per cent) while the third largest activity group is light industry (44 questioned firms, 14.0 per cent). These resulted activity groups fit to the Hungarian national activity categories. The concrete interviewees are (middle and top level) leaders. During answering the questions they were asked to choose freely one of their buyers or sellers and after it they should focus on the chosen concrete business relationship.

In Table 3 there are some information concerning the chosen relationships (by respondents). In the first column (duration of relationship) the average is 5 years (Modus and Median are 5 as well). But 51 per cents (159 answers) of the relationships have lasted for only 1 year! This means that the 5 year-duration seems to be a bit high due to the large difference between minimum (1) and maximum (40) values. However we keep these peak values because this also represents a real situation – although exceptional at least in Hungary – and on the other hand this special case is under-represented in the investigated sample (Sajtos - Mitev 2008). These very different values also point out the board variety of relationships. Furthermore in Hungary after the change of political and economic system in 1990 (read more e.g. Mandják et al. 2011; András - Molnár, 2011) not only crowds of entrepreneurship went bankruptcy but the earlier business ties were destroyed as well (Hámori – Szabó – Derecskei – Hurta – Tóth 2007) (the economic change however was gradual starting from so called Gulash communism and accelerated in the 1980’s).

In the second column (number of “man-days”) of Table 3 the difference between minimum and maximum values is even larger. It happened in case of a problematic but strategically important tie that more employees (e.g. from the departments of commerce, logistics, finance or production) have to contact the same business partner even more times a day. Despite of these difficulties they do not want to terminate this relationship due to strategic importance and high proportion in their turnover (Piricz 2010). The mean of “man-days” is relatively low (31 days) which can indicate that the interviewees concentrated on their less problematic relationship.

The third column of renewal time also shows that business partners could renew their connections generally in 8 days. In this column the Standard deviation is high (26 days), the maximum is 365 which indicates that business relationships can be very different however organizations even fight to maintain most of them.

Table 3: **Descriptive statistics of the samples**

	How many years' experience do you have in doing business with this particular partner? [years]	The annual "man-days" that your firm and the partner firm spent in face-to-face contact during the past year [days]	The number of days that the relationship with partner firm had been renewed [days]
N	315	315	315
Mean	7	31	8
Modus	5	10	0
Median	5	12	0
S.D.	5	59	26
Minimum	1	0	0
Maximum	40	480	365

Source: PASW software using own empirical data

Trust and conflict. We made regression between trust (TRUST) and perceived conflict (KONFL) where TRUST was the dependent variable (Table 4). In the Model Summary the correlation coefficient is 0.422. This value of r suggests a moderate linear correlation between trust and perceived conflict. The coefficient of determination is 0.178; therefore about 17.8% of the variation in trust is explained by perceived conflict. This means that appearance of conflict does not close off trust or developing trust. We also state that perceived conflict does not play a dominant trust affecting role.

Table 4: **Model Summary^b**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.422 ^a	.178	.176	6.01865

a. Predictors: (Constant), KONFL

b. Dependent Variable: TRUST

Source: PASW software using own empirical data

In Table 5 significance level is acceptable where $TRUST=36.178-0.596*KONFL$ ($p < 0.05$). Perceived conflict has negative effect on trust however this impact is not strong. (See ANOVA in the Appendix.)

Table 5: Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
KONFL	-.596	.072	-.422	-8.232	.000
(Constant)	36.178	.808		44.775	.000

Source: PASW software using own empirical data

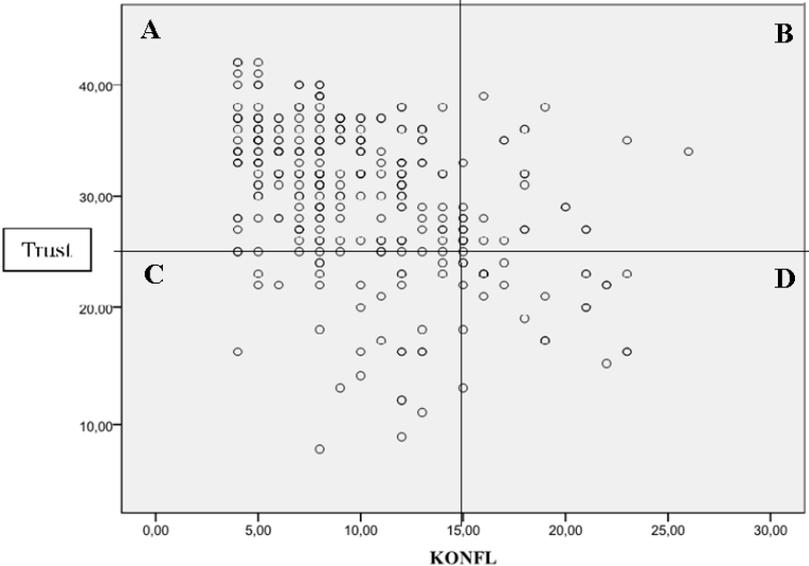
The graphic illustration between trust and conflict also indicates a tendency – in case of high trust generally there is low level of conflict and vice versa – but the picture is more elaborated (Graph 1, section A, below). It is a bit surprising that there are cases in the other sections as well. This means that there are business relationships with low trust and low conflict in section C. For example arm's length relationships could be in this section dealing with standard products where sellers are easily replaceable. At the same time there are a few values with high trust and high conflict in section B! This seems to be a bit unusual situation but it can happen that there are more or many conflicts in a business relationship despite of its long duration due to crisis or very changeable environment. In section D – low trust and high level of conflict – could identify relationships in early stage or common projects of competitors. As conflicts can be considered as inevitable in inter-competitor cooperation it is important for competitors to find ways of managing conflict as it occurs. (Hagberg-Andersson and Tidström, 2008) According to Kemp and Ghauri (1999) trust and norms, which is a result of long-term development, reduce the potential for conflict.

This board variety of relationship between trust and conflict may prove the earlier views saying conflict is normal part of business life (e.g. Tatum and Eberlin, 2006; Waluszewski and Håkansson, 2006) Pondy (1967) also stresses role of conflicts as important types of latent conflict. Latent conflict is naturally embedded in every relationship and it can be considered as a “silent” or invisible factor that either remains as such or is perceived by the actors. Trust can be also called as an invisible factor which is often difficult to punctually determine and it is easier to experience when it is missing.

From an inter-organizational perspective Vaaland and Håkansson (2003) distinguish between formal and informal governance mechanisms. Formal conflict management mechanisms are related to compliance, awareness, comprehensive planning and structure. Informal conflict management mechanisms are related to trust, flexibility, lack of planning and process. Debrah et al. (2006) claim that business partners have minor problems those are obvious in their daily activities and business operations. The buyer is aware of the possibility of the problem happening in a real life situations. This is amicably solved by the two companies. Similarly to

the empirical results of Debrah et al. (2006) our research does not confirm the results of Suh-Yueh and Wen-Chang (2006) that a partner's perceived conflict leads to a strong negative impact on trust. This means that though there is a perceived conflict by the buyer, it has not got a direct effect on the trust he has got for the supplier. In addition to this, the supplier is willing to continue the relationship with this supplier. If the perceived conflict can have a massive effect on the company products, it may lead to a reduction in the trust.

Graph 1: Graphic relationship between Trust and Conflict



Source: PASW software using own empirical data

Tjosvold and Chen (2010) state managing conflict cooperatively can strengthen trust. Trust is critical for strengthening perceived cooperative goals and mutually beneficial interaction. Partners can develop their trust as they deal with the many conflicts they confront in groups, organizations, and alliances.

Trust and satisfaction. In regression between trust (TRUST) and perceived satisfaction (SAT) TRUST was the dependent variable (Table 6). In the Model Summary the correlation coefficient is 0.413. This value of r suggests a moderate linear correlation between trust and perceived satisfaction. The coefficient of determination is 0.168; therefore, about 17% of the variation in trust is explained by perceived satisfaction. So it seems that although satisfaction influences developing trust this is not the only one or even dominant building element of trust. (See ANOVA in the Appendix.)

Table 6: **Regression of Trust and Satisfaction - Model Summary^b**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.413 ^a	.171	.168	6.04708

a. Predictors: (Constant), SAT

b. Dependent Variable: TRUST

Source: PASW software using own empirical data

In Table 7 significance level is acceptable where $TRUST = 16.156 + 0.53 * SAT$ ($p < 0.05$). We state that perceived satisfaction affects the level of trust but not dominantly and it seems that there are more other influencing factors as well. We can investigate and represent the more detailed interaction between them when we have a look at their graph.

Table 7: **Regression of Trust and Satisfaction - Coefficients^a**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	16.156	1.779		9.083	.000
SAT	.530	.066	.413	8.012	.000

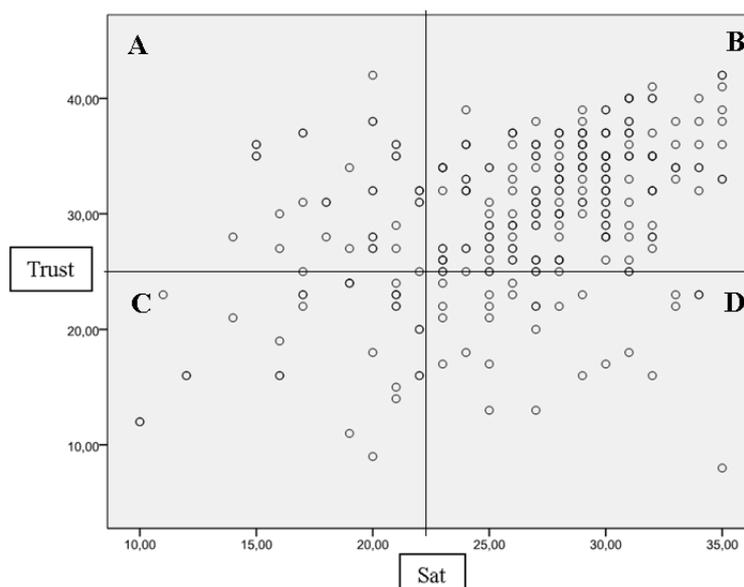
a. Dependent Variable: TRUST

Source: PASW software using own empirical data

When we illustrate Trust and Satisfaction graphically we see certain tendency; usually larger trust belongs to larger satisfaction and vice versa (Graph 2, section B, below). This finding strengthens earlier relevant researches. Walter et al. (2003) state – using Drosch et al.'s view – that customer satisfaction, trust and commitment constructs relationship quality. Anderson et al. also approach trust determinants by research on satisfaction (Anderson and Narus, 1990).

But we want to add that this empirically found coherency seems to be not very dominant and there are more business relationships on the other sections. Our research resulted more cases where trust is relatively high levelled although satisfaction is not high at all (section A). Meanwhile there are relationships in section D with low trust and high satisfaction at the same time. In section C – low trust and low level of satisfaction – could mean relationships in early stage. Geyskens et al. (1999) found similar results demonstrated that satisfaction is both conceptually and empirically separable from related constructs like trust and commitment.

Graph 2: **Graphic relationship between Trust and Satisfaction**



Source: PASW software using own empirical data

Debrah et al. (2006) have confirmed that result of Suh-Yueh and Wen-Chang (2006) that a firm's trust in its supply chain partners is highly and positively related to perceived satisfaction. In contrast we cannot claim such very strong and simple relationship between trust and satisfaction.

Table 8: **Regression of Conflict and Satisfaction - Model Summary^b**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.379 ^a	.143	.141	4.78809

a. Predictors: (Constant), KONFL

b. Dependent Variable: SAT

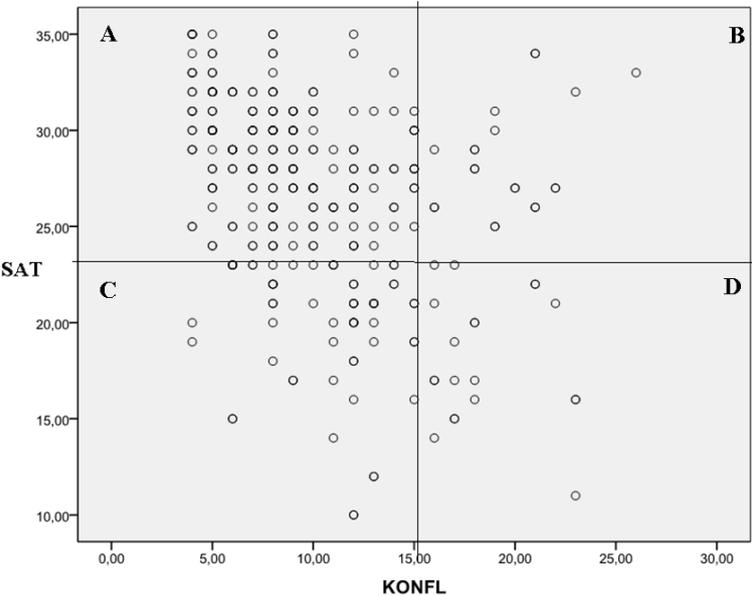
Source: PASW software using own empirical data

Satisfaction and conflict. In regression between conflict and perceived satisfaction we investigated how conflict relates to satisfaction in a business relationship (Table 8, above). (See ANOVA and Coefficients in the Appendix.) In the Model Summary the correlation coefficient is 0.379. This value of r suggests a moderate linear correlation between conflict and perceived satisfaction and this result is similar to correlation coefficient (0.422) between trust and conflict, furthermore the correlation coefficient between trust and satisfaction (0.413) as well. The coefficients of determination are also similar: 0.178 (trust and conflict), 0.17 (trust and satisfaction) and 0.143 (satisfaction and conflict). The consequence of this comparison is that conflict and satisfaction relates to one another in a business relationship as much as either conflict or satisfaction affects trust. (Certainly satisfaction positively and conflict negatively influence the level of trust.) Subsequently this points out the interactions of trust conflict and perceived satisfaction. Researchers of trust state that trust is very complex (e.g. Denize and Young 2006; Lenney – Easton 2009; Raimondo, 2000) and scholars should

take into consideration its indirect effects as well. Our investigation confirms empirically this view.

The graphic illustration between satisfaction and conflict also indicates atendency – in case of high satisfaction generally there is low level of conflict (Graph 3, section A). Conversely there are more cases in the other sections as well. Our research shows cases of low levelledsatisfaction and low conflict in section C. Arm’s length relationships could be in this section where sellers are easily replaceable. In section D – low satisfaction and high level of conflict – could we identify relationships in early stage. However there are a few values with high satisfaction and high conflict in section B!This result confirms such views that conflicts are not exceptions but rather normal in business life (Waluszewski and Håkansson 2006; Hocker - Wilmot, 1985; Tatum and Eberlin, 2006; Hausman 2001).

Graph 3: **Graphic relationship between Satisfactionand Conflict**



Source: PASW software using own empirical data

*Limitations.*In order to have general results we tried to investigate organizations independently from sizes and also from sectors of economy. The total number of sampling is 315, but the groups of sizes or activity groups are quite small. Besides this the method of convenience sampling means the other limitation.

Conclusions

A number of previous researches address the role of trust as factor to increase the outcome of cooperation and partnership between companies. This investigation also proves the importance of this soft resource however trust is extremely complex notion. Not only

satisfaction and conflict effect clearly trust but several other elements furthermore several other factors have indirect influences.

Based on our empirical investigation there is dynamic relationship between trust and conflict but the picture is much more complex and we do not find evident anti-parallel relationship between the two notions. Our investigation points out, that conflict is really part of business relationships. If practitioners are aware of it they can rather focus on handling and solving actual conflicts.

As a consequence of empirical data we have the view that although there is natural relationship between trust and satisfaction, this coherency is clearly not strong either. We have to take into consideration however that both trust and satisfaction is influenced by other elements as well. Additionally we find moderate relationship between satisfaction and conflict which makes the mechanism of trust more difficult and proves interactions among determinants of trust.

The contribution of this paper is to show empirically that besides the main tendencies in coherency among trust conflict and satisfaction there are more other colours in the picture (and in graphics) as well. This confirms the view of Gadde and Snehota (2000) that a variety of relationships provides its different benefits. So we also claim that very wide variety of business relationships can operate successfully next to each other.

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Appendix

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9,267	23,167	23,167	9,267	23,167	23,167
2	3,737	9,344	32,510	3,737	9,344	32,510
3	2,780	6,949	39,459	2,780	6,949	39,459
4	2,130	5,325	44,784	2,130	5,325	44,784
5	1,629	4,072	48,856	1,629	4,072	48,856

6	1,384	3,459	52,315	1,384	3,459	52,315
7	1,315	3,287	55,602	1,315	3,287	55,602
8	1,217	3,044	58,645	1,217	3,044	58,645
9	1,167	2,917	61,562	1,167	2,917	61,562
10	1,020	2,551	64,113	1,020	2,551	64,113
11	,946	2,364	66,477			
12	,899	2,247	68,724			
13	,874	2,184	70,907			
14	,794	1,984	72,891			
15	,749	1,872	74,763			
16	,714	1,786	76,549			
17	,690	1,725	78,273			
18	,641	1,602	79,876			
19	,602	1,506	81,382			
20	,582	1,454	82,836			
21	,549	1,372	84,208			
22	,524	1,309	85,517			
23	,504	1,259	86,776			
24	,488	1,220	87,996			
25	,461	1,152	89,148			
26	,425	1,062	90,210			
27	,411	1,026	91,236			
28	,377	,943	92,180			
29	,366	,914	93,094			
30	,330	,825	93,919			
31	,315	,787	94,706			
32	,303	,757	95,463			
33	,294	,734	96,197			
34	,280	,701	96,899			
35	,257	,643	97,542			

36	,225	,562	98,104		
37	,214	,534	98,638		
38	,201	,503	99,140		
39	,187	,469	99,609		
40	,156	,391	100,000		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,854
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5564,948
	df	780
	Sig.	,000

Content of Factors

Trust	<p>Whenever the partner gives us advice on our business operations, we know that it is sharing its best judgment</p> <p>Though circumstances change, we believe that the partner will be ready and willing to offer us assistance and support</p> <p>When making important decisions, the partner is concerned about our welfare</p> <p>When we share our problems with the partner, we know that it will respond with understanding</p> <p>In the future, we can count on the partner to consider how its decisions and actions will affect us</p> <p>Even when the partner gives us a rather unlikely explanation, we are confident that it is telling the truth</p>
Satisfaction (SAT)	<p>This partner firm has a good reputation in the market</p> <p>Even if we could, we would not drop the partner because we like being associated with it</p> <p>We want to remain a member of the partner's network because we genuinely enjoy our relationship with it</p> <p>Our positive feelings towards the partner are a major reason we continue working with it</p> <p>The renewal of our relationship with the partner is virtually automatic</p>
Conflict (KONFL)	<p>The partner has often provided us information that has later proven to be inaccurate</p> <p>A high degree of conflict exists between the partner and our firm</p> <p>The partner and our firm have major disagreements on certain key issues</p> <p>The relationship of our firm with the partner firm has been an unhappy one</p>

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2454,605	1	2454,605	67,762	,000
Residual	11301,945	312	36,224		
Total	13756,551	313			

The independent variable is KONFL.

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2347,584	1	2347,584	64,199	,000
Residual	11408,967	312	36,567		
Total	13756,551	313			

The independent variable is SAT.

ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	1201,196	1	1201,196	52,395	,000 ^a
Residual	7175,775	313	22,926		
Total	8376,971	314			

a. Predictors: (Constant), KONFL

b. Dependent Variable: SAT

Regression of Satisfaction and Conflict - Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients		
				Beta		
1	(Constant)	30.605	.642		47.692	.000
	KONFL	-.417	.058	-.379	-7.238	.000

a. Dependent Variable: SAT