Sitting on the other side of the table: Assessing the relational attractiveness of the customer (RAC) applying fuzzy set QCA

Competitive Paper

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Abstract

In the case of a number of industrial markets, market power is relatively concentrated. Consequently, suppliers may not dedicate their resources equally to all their customers, and become more selective. Therefore, they will choose to allocate relational resources according to their perceived attractiveness of different customers. How suppliers make such attractiveness judgments is an important aspect in business relationships, and has also implications for customer companies, i.e. in order to be able to collaborate with the best suppliers and to maintain already existing trade links, customers need to be more attractive for the suppliers than their competitors are. This paper introduces the concept of the relational attractiveness of the customer (RAC) as part of the on-going conceptualisation process in the field of customer attractiveness, and applies a Social Exchange Theory framework to identify the antecedents of RAC. To explore different configurations leading to RAC, fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) was used.

Keywords: customer attractiveness, relational attractiveness, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), business relationships

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1. Introduction

In everyday business interactions a supplier works with various different customers, ranging from small to large, local to international, highly to less profitable and there are several further differences. Are all of these customers equally attractive for the supplier? Presumably not all of them; therefore, we seek to understand what makes an existing relationship with a customer company attractive or unattractive for the supplier company.

Previously business researchers put more emphasis on the customer`s perspective: an important sourcing decision for firms relates to the need to mobilise resources through relationships with suppliers (Penrose, 1959, Araunjo, Dubois & Gadde, 2003, Håkansson & Johnason, 1992, Håkansson & Snehota, 1989). Resource-dependence theory provides the rationale for such buying decisions in supply networks (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). Thus, suppliers have to find ways to make themselves 'attractive' to such customers. They can do this in manifold ways, e.g. through a differentiated offering which provides the customer company with superior value, or through relationship-oriented activities, such as customer-specific adaptations and cooperative behaviours, which provide relational value (Möller, 2006, Lindsgreen & Wynstra, 2005). Drivers of supplier attractiveness, for example financial, economic, performance, technological and organisational factors, have been discussed in the literature on business marketing and supply chain management (Olsen & Ellram, 1997).

However, the focus of our research relates to 'sitting on the other side of the table', i.e. taking *the perspective of the supplier* which assesses *the attractiveness of the customer* firm in order to make decisions about with which customer to deepen the business relationship and make business with. This `reverse` perspective is especially relevant on oligopolistic supply markets where a limited number of key suppliers play a significant role as well as in innovation projects where in many cases supplier involvement is crucial, therefore suppliers tend to be more selective (Schiele et al., 2010). Therefore not only suppliers, but also customers need to work on their attractiveness.

Suppliers have their own strategies and performance requirements directed at the customer firms, therefore the examination of the supplier`s perspective is of great importance. The managerial rationale for a customer firm to achieve attractiveness in the eyes of a supplier relates to the fact that attractive customers receive a greater proportion of their suppliers` resources, for example, the most qualified employees as part of a project (Cordón, & Vollmann, 2008), attractiveness fosters voluntarism to pro-actively invest in the business relationship (Mortensen, 2012) and it can minimise relational costs (Christiansen and Maltz, 2002).

Customer attractiveness is not a new concept. However, introducing RAC can be a step further in the on-going conceptualisation process of CA. Although a number of previous articles are focusing on the investigation of the antecedents of CA (Fiocca, 1982, Christiansen & Maltz, 2002, Ramsay & Wagner, 2009), and a part of the explored antecedents can be certainly regarded also as antecedents of RAC, different configurations of antecedents leading to RAC has not been explored yet. The methodological challenge behind the investigation of these configurations is that more common data analysis techniques (for

example, linear regression or SEM) have not been successful to explore numerous different combinations leading to the same outcome (RAC). In order to fill this research gap, our study is informed by Gestalt-ontology (Ketchen et al., 1993 and Veliyath & Srinivasan, 2005) which incorporates a more holistic view by allowing different causal recipes at the same time for RAC instead of linear causation.

2. Initial Interest in Customer Attractiveness

While plethora of research in business marketing addresses the attractiveness of the supplier, the issue of CA has only been recently discussed in the literature but with increasing interest (Ellegaard and Ritter, 2007; Cordón and Vollmann, 2008; Hald et al., 2009; Mortensen et al., 2008; Schiele et al., 2012). Olsen and Ellram (1997) identify relative supplier attractiveness is an important aspect of the success of the business relationship. The authors suggest that the customer company needs to evaluate the relative supplier attractiveness and the strength of relationships and then categorize supplier relationships and develop action plans to allocate resources accordingly. Hald et al. (2009) examines the differences of supplier and customer attractiveness and considers expected value, trust and dependence from both sides leading to attractiveness. Their study shows that the expected value is more connected to cost reduction, time compression and innovation from the customer`s perspective (related to supplier attractiveness), while for the supplier the balance of price and volume and growth potential seem to be of more importance (related to customer attractiveness).

To the best of our knowledge, the Special Issue of Industrial Marketing Management on `a reverse perspective` in 2012 represents the first systematic journal contribution in this area. Different perspectives on customer attractiveness were brought together, including extensive literature reviews (Mortensen, 2012; Hüttinger et al., 2012), investigations of preferred customer status (Schiele et al., 2012a; Nollet et al., 2012; Baxter, 2012), and the interpersonal level of attraction in customer-supplier relationships (Ellegaard, 2012). La Rocca et al. (2012) addressed customer attractiveness in a quantitative way. To gain quantifiable, reliable data that are more generalizable to a larger population, this quantitative way needs to be further developed. At the same time, the conceptualisation, and contextual understanding of CA also need to be elaborated (Ellegaard, 2006; Mortensen, 2012).

To explore the supplier`s perspective we introduce the concept of *the relational attractiveness of the customer* (RAC). RAC relies upon the concept of customer attractiveness (CA) with a distinction and specification between relational and transactional orientation.

3. The Relevance of CA – the Consequences

One of the most powerful consequences of CA is the supplier`s decision about the extent they want to make relationship-specific investments in the business relationship (as shown by Bensaou (1999) and Dyer & Singh (1998)). It is assumed that increased CA has a positive effect on the supplier`s intention to invest in a particular business relationship. Ellegaard et al. (2003) suggest that if the customer is attractive to the supplier, then continued commitment to the relationship will follow. Mortensen and Freytag (2010) consider the positive effect of CA on becoming an `interesting` customer to the supplier to do business with. Schiele et al. (2012a) hypothesize causal relationship between customer attractiveness, supplier satisfaction and preferred customer status.

According to Cordón and Vollmann (2002), attractive customers could get the best human resources and supplier commitment. Mortensen et al. (2008) as well as Kettinen et al. (2009) note the positive impact of increased levels of CA on performance, loyalty, trust and commitment. Ramsay and Wagner (2009) mention that suppliers are more willing to accept the customer`s offer in case of higher CA. Ellegaard and Ritter (2006) also mention the mobilisation of resources besides process improvements and potential technology transfer.

Ramsay (2005) points out those powerful, arrogant customers who treat salesmen inappropriately are unlikely to be favoured. The negative effects could be particularly influential in case of SME suppliers where limited staff numbers lead to less supervision in decision making. Numerous conceptual studies confirm the importance of attractiveness from a supplier perspective.

The growing academic literature on customer attractiveness contributes in conceptual development and provides suggestions for the antecedents. While customer attractiveness has enjoyed a certain degree of attention in business marketing research, further conceptual development is needed to develop this field of study. Also, there is a notable gap in the examination of the different drivers, including the different configurations of these drivers.

4. Antecedents of CA – the Drivers

Among the pioneers in the field of studies on attractiveness, Harris et al. (2003) identified three major dimensions of attractiveness: economic attractiveness, resource-based attractiveness and socially based attractiveness. Their view on the drivers of attractiveness can be characterised by assimilation and accommodation. On the one hand, accommodation refers to the way in which relational knowledge changes as a direct result of interaction. For example, more frequent interaction can reduce ambiguity and uncertainty about a counterpart's attractiveness. On the other hand, assimilation refers to the way relational knowledge is interpreted through interactions. For example, positive judgements based on on-going experiences can increase attraction between the parties. Harris et al. (2003) focus on exploring attraction in exchange relationships between legal professionals, applying a social exchange perspective. Their empirical analysis is focused on inter-personal aspects, although it provides important insights for the inter-organisational for business exchanges.

For business exchanges, Ramsay (1994) examines customer and supplier attractiveness in the context of purchasing power as a driver construct. He introduces the definition of purchasing power and supplier selling power, both of which could be potential or actual. Power is defined as the capacity of the company to produce intended changes in the partner`s purchase/product specification which creates a closer match between the two companies' specifications while increasing the partner`s costs without increasing the costs of the focal company. The author identifies different types of resource attractiveness, i.e. money and product attractiveness. Thus, power and dependence are generally considered to be important for understanding customer attractiveness.

Based on extensive literature review, Hüttinger et al. (2012) identified five main groups of antecedents of CA: market growth factors (e.g. size, market share, growth rate); risk factors (e.g. risk sharing, standardisation of product, political risk, market stability); technological factors (e.g. the customer`s ability to cope with changes, depth of skills, knowledge transfer); economic factors (e.g. margins, price/volume, capacity utilisation) and social factors (e.g. familiarity, tight personal relations or information exchange).

Ramsay and Wagner (2009) relate customer attractiveness to supplier value. Their categorisation is relevant from an attractiveness perspective as well: different aspects of what makes the customer attractive encapsulate value on the supplier side. Based on previous literature the authors identified eight main sources of supplier value: (1) finance (e.g. overall profit, revenue elements, cost elements, sales volume); (2) efficiency (e.g. supplier learning opportunities, appropriately trained staff); (3) overall trading relations and communication (e.g. good inter-organisational staff relations, contact stability, long term interactions, joint teams); (4) ethical behaviour (fairness and trustworthiness); (5) risk and uncertainty (e.g. risk sharing, demand stability, dependence and power); (6) technology (customer-led innovation and supplier-led innovation support); (7) market linkages (e.g. market access, institutional access, market information) and (8) corporate image (reputation). These aspects of supplier value can potentially be examined from an attractiveness point of view, i.e. what represents value for the suppliers, makes the customer firm attractive to them.

La Rocca et al. (2012) explored four factors of customer attractiveness, which are as follows: (1) development potential, (2) intimacy, (3) relational fit and (4) profitability. The data analysed by the authors was collected among sales people and related to the top five customers of their companies. While in La Rocca et al. (2012) only the development potential represents future orientation, this study sees AC *ab ovo* future-oriented and this future-orientation is built in the construct already. The authors characterize AC by future intimacy, future profitability/performance and future relationship frequency.

Mortensen et al. (2008) suggest a `matureness model` of attractiveness. Depending on the complexity and maturity of the relationship and the maturity of the relationship the authors distinguish standard, simple, evolving and developing relationships, as well as partnership based relationships. Some of the significant factors considered for influencing customer attractiveness are the maturity of the relationship and the availability and influence of the alternatives. Relationships at different maturity levels show different natures of attractiveness, especially in terms of the intensity of attractiveness.

The IMP Interaction Model (Håkansson, 1982) greatly contributed to understanding the dynamics of business interaction by emphasizing the importance of the context for the actors involved, which cannot be characterised only by the actors own interests, but also by mutuality and different considerations. The system of interacting participants is influenced by the firms' strategy and structural as well as technological background. The interaction process can be defined from a short-term (negotiations, incidents, etc.) and from a long-term (resource-allocation, stability, etc.) perspective as well. The atmosphere indicates the business climate exists between the partners. The features of the atmosphere are the following: power/dependence, co-operation/conflict, social and cultural differences, collective and individual perceptions. The general environment provides a broader context: political and economic context, cultural and social context, market and its internalisation, market dynamics. Although inter-organizational attractiveness in not mentioned directly in the model, it can be identified as a major characteristic of the atmosphere, which includes the above mentioned features as well as further aspects. Johnson and Selnes (2004) suggest using a dynamic theory of exchange relationships in customer portfolio management and state that relationship-specific investments are based on attractiveness over time.

Insert **Table 1** about here

5. Conceptualisation of the Relational Attractiveness of the Customer (RAC)

The construct of RAC is *an attitude of the supplier towards the customer, which encapsulates previous experiences and future expectations with it; therefore RAC brings partners together and fosters voluntarism* (pro-active approach to invest in the business relationship) *to maintain and/or to improve an existing business relationship with the customer.*

Customer attractiveness (CA) can be characterised as "a supplier's assessment of a customer, made on the basis of anticipated outcomes arising from customer-supplier interaction within a relationship" (La Rocca et al., 2012, p.1244). Mortensen and Arlbjørn (2012) see it as an alternative management approach that may foster voluntary actions from suppliers. In this respect the more attractive is the customer, the higher their ability is to foster voluntary actions from their suppliers.

Still the relational or transactional nature of this attractiveness can make a difference. The dichotomy has been of interest in different marketing studies, for example, in studies on relational and transactional customers (Agustin & Singh, 2005) and on the relational and transactional approach in marketing (Grönross, 1997, Styles & Ambler, 2003). Furthermore Sharma & Pillai (2003) examined different transactional and relational strategies; Le et al. (2010) explored relational as well as transactional factors in customer project selection and Liu et al. (2009) identified transactional and relational mechanisms in governing customer-supplier relationships. The argumentation of Liu et al. (2009) is rooted in social exchange theory – they say that transactional investments are gradually embedded in social relations and this can lead to the creation of relational mechanisms.

Similarly, we see RAC more long-term oriented and relational in nature than transactional customer attractiveness (TAC). For example, a particular partner can be attractive for a single transaction (transactional aspect), whereas it might not be yet necessary attractive for deepening a business relationship with (relational aspect). Consequently, RAC fosters investing not only in further exchanges with a customer but also in intensifying relational activities through relationship-specific investments (Heide and John, 1988, Williamson, 1985, Lindskold, 1978, Shelanski and Klein, 1995, Jonsson and Lindbergh, 2010). Thus, the behavioural intention which is triggered by RAC is different from a transactional approach, where attractiveness relates more specifically to the next transaction.

For the conceptualisation of RAC as well as for investigating its drivers and their configurations, the IMP Group perspective and aspects of Social Exchange Theory (SET) were integrated. Håkansson (1982) made a basic observation in the IMP studies that interaction between individually significant actors is a primary characteristic of the business landscape. Business relationships are created and developed voluntarily by the companies (Håkansson and Snehota, 1995) through business interaction. Ford et al. (2008) points out that to understand this interactive world, researchers need to investigate and understand a number of its different dimensions as well as its outcomes and drivers. Inter-organisational attractiveness is such an important driver of strategic decisions in business relationships, i.e. an important aspect of voluntary efforts in relationship development (Kettunen et al., 2009; Mortensen, 2012). By fostering voluntarism to invest in the business relationship RAC brings partners together. Therefore RAC is a significant element or creating and intensifying interaction between the supplier and the customer. Social exchange theory (Thibault & Kelley, 1959) provides an excellent framework how different costs and rewards attached to a

particular customer are evaluated and considered on the supplier side, i.e. when we investigate the antecedents of RAC.

In the conceptualization the idea of Ellegaard and Ritter (2006) is also considered, i.e. the authors note that one`s attractiveness is perceived by the other side and thus belongs to the "eye of the beholder". The authors mention also, that nonetheless, the company can work on its attractiveness in order to improve (or decrease) its attraction potential.

Thus, this study focuses on the relational attractiveness of existing customers in already existing business relationships. The decision to focus on the supplier`s perspective and not on the customer`s, was informed by two focus groups with business-to-business managers. Also we found that suppliers perceived a more articulate managerial relevance of the attractiveness of already existing relationships than exploring the attractiveness of potential business relationships with customers. Nonetheless, the examination of the relational attractiveness of potential customers might be also interesting, yet challenging from a methodological point of view.

While RAC is higher when a supplier finds the continuation of an existing business relationship with the customer attractive, this needs to be delineated from the transactional attractiveness of the customer (TAC), which refers only to the attractiveness of a further (next) transaction with that customer. In case of positive RAC the transactional aspect may or may not also be present (coexistence of RAC and TAC); however, situations may exist where a next transaction is not attractive (i.e. the value of one further transaction is negative) while a longer-term relational attractiveness nevertheless exists, e.g. due to expectations about future strategic importance of a customer. Furthermore, a supplier may find a transaction with a customer attractive (i.e. a situation of high TAC) while it does not see merit in relational investments, i.e. it does not wish to foster a business relationship.

RAC is suggested to be context-specific as well as future-oriented in nature. Mortensen and Albjørn (2012) stated about this issue: "to be attractive, the buying company needs to understand and create value for the suppliers and, moreover, observe this in a relational context influenced by future expectations of the suppliers" (p. 160). Hence, RAC develops in the relational context of the dyad, but can be influenced by the customer company.

6. Theoretical Framework – Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) is the primary theory informing this research on customer attractiveness. Due to its explanatory power regarding (a) rules and norms of exchange, (b) resources exchanged, and (c) relationships that emerge, it is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms in organisational behaviour (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Although different views of social exchange have emerged, researchers mostly agree that social exchange involves rewards and costs, as well as it evolves in a complex environment which could be characterised by dependence of relationships (Standford, 2008). The question of dependency and interdependence between companies plays a significant role in the IMP literature as well and has been examined both at a national and international level (Ritter, 2000, Johanson and Mattsson, 1988).

The core idea of SET is that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process. The purpose of social exchange is to maximise benefits and minimise costs for focal actors, i.e.

these actors weight the potential benefits and risks of social relationships. When the risks outweigh the rewards, people will terminate or abandon the exchange relationship. Attraction in SET is the source of interest to initiate, continue, or deepen such relationships; it pulls actors towards each other (Thibaut and Kelly, 1959; Blau, 1964; Ellegaard et al., 2003).

Lambe et al. (2001) pointed out that SET also explains business exchange governance. They draw attention to Kelley and Thibaut`s (1978) observation that the exchange partners weigh their economic outcomes through the lens of anticipated past and future interactions and the social benefits, for example, trust. Concepts such as the comparison level and the comparison level of alternatives are used to explain exchanges in SET (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959) – the former refers to the evaluation (especially regarding satisfaction) of a current relationship, while the latter is about the best available alternatives outside of the relationship.

Schiele et al. (2012) demonstrates the application of SET to the examination of CA and posits that in SET it is implicitly assumed that the perception of initial attraction is based upon beliefs and expectations about the future by both parties. Mortensen et al. (2008) and Ellegaard and Ritter (2006) also apply SET to investigate attractiveness at a business-to-business level.

Some antecedents of attraction were identified in social exchange theory: Firstly, *trust* is thought of as an important social factor, which represents the lack of opportunistic behaviour (Young-Ybarra & Wiersema, 1999); trust refers to the faith in expectations (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Secondly, *dependency* is the association between the person`s rewards and the behaviours of others; one who possess more attractive alternatives is regarded being less dependent on the relation for rewards (Emerson, 1969). Finally, rewards and costs are core elements of SET – rewards are seen as desired physical objects, psychological pleasure or social gain (Bagozzi, 1974), whereas costs are noxious objects, psychological or social punishments (Bagozzi, 1974). People intend to maximise rewards and minimise costs in a long run (Emerson, 1969). To apply this theory in a business context, rewards were divided into financial and non-financial rewards (benefit), analogously to physical and psychological rewards.

In summary, SET can be used as a framework to explain business-to-business governance. Business exchange is governed by attraction (Mortensen, 2012), which means that at an inter-organisational level, perceptions about customer and supplier attractiveness matter when deciding about crucial managerial behaviours (such as investing or not investing in a business relationship). Customer and supplier attractiveness play a significant role in social exchange; this is why SET as a framework can help in the conceptualisation of CA/RAC.

Based on SET the following antecedents of RAC were identified: Trust, Dependency, Benefits (with two separate groups: financial benefits and non-financial benefits) and Costs. Furthermore, both inter-personal and inter-organisational trust are included in the term `Trust`.

7. Research Design

A mixed methods approach has been chosen for the empirical study presented in this article. The rationale for the mixed-methods design was that as a research strategy, the focus was first to understand the dynamics of RAC and how managers conceptualized it across different

contexts, second, as the interviews also revealed often several things come together, to explore RAC from a configurational perspective. Two focus groups and 12 personal interviews were carried out with business managers at different levels in several companies, which were followed by an online survey.

7.1 Qualitative Concept Test

In May 2012 two focus groups were undertaken to gain an initial contextual understanding about the differences of the supplier`s and customer`s perspective, aspects of customer attractiveness and whether managers find it more relevant and interesting to discuss already existing, potential or ideal business relationships. The discussion was moderated by two researchers in both cases and lasted about two hours. The first focus group consisted of six participants, the second of eight participants. The participants were managers who had at least 3 years relevant experience in business-to-business markets, eight of them on the supplier side and six on the customer side. The discussions were transcribed and coded (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The qualitative software package NVivo was used for supporting the content analysis.

The *profit-seeking motive* was very clear but not exclusive: “Core of the business is to make money” and “What makes a customer more attractive than another? Obviously the profit we can make from them, as well as the resources we require, with regard to manpower and whether they have offices where our company exists”.

Dependency might play a role too: “Sometimes too big customers are overwhelming. There are only a few companies like this, but we try to avoid them. Sometimes I`d prefer two buyers in some specific cases than having one big one.”

Also *future prospects* came up: “Hidden benefits for the future might be important, like we could connect to other companies through them, it has happened to my company in case of one important project”; “You should consider, what happens if you lose a business relationship” or “We might lose a future work if we don`t consider a potentially important buyer. In some cases we can allocate it to another company in our group, so that we don`t lose it”.

The *trust aspect at an inter-personal level* seemed to play an important role: “In my personal case it was the personal relationship which made the relationship more attractive. We tried to keep that connection all the time”, or an example for negative experiences: “I have found the hardest time with people who were very wishy-washy with things and let a lot of things for interpretation. I feel that this brings some insecurity in our company”.

The *reputation of the company* was mentioned several times too, mainly expressed as a *non-financial benefit* besides (or sometimes instead of) financial profit and as a factor which can *foster future business activity* with further companies which makes the customer more attractive for the supplier.

The focus group interviews helped to understand how RAC works in practice as well as to identify some details of the key aspects: dependency, profit orientation (financial benefits and costs), trust, reputation (and other non-financial benefits) and the future-orientated nature of RAC. Noteworthy is that depending on some cultural differences, the role of inter-personal trust tends to be more significant in some cases, e.g. to managers in these focus groups doing

business mostly in Saud-Arabia or in India inter-personal trust played a more significant role than to managers based in the UK.

In a further step, face-to-face interviews with managers provided more detailed information about RAC. A semi-structured interview guideline was used and the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The interviews consisted of two main parts: the first part was focusing on the experience of the respondents relevant to RAC, while the second part was about testing of the initial questionnaire using measurement models for the most prevalent constructs of RAC. The respondents were chosen based on their relevant experience on the supplier side, working in senior positions. They were asked to choose one particular business customer in relation to whom they were asked to answer the questions. However, no additional directions were given about the method of choosing the customer. Each interview lasted between 30 to 90 minutes.

Besides the short description of the supplier and the chosen customer company, the respondents were asked to speak about the length of the relationship, the customer`s share in their businesses, the role of inter-personal relationships and critical incidents in the relationship. There were also questions about the initial and present attractiveness of the partner, what is not attractive for them in the chosen case and whether they have any future plans for the development of the relationship with this particular customer. The respondent usually chose the customer with whom they had the most frequent relationship or the most attractive customer and however, in some cases the least attractive one was chosen by the respondents.

Based on content analyses (using Dubois and Gadde's, 2002, 'systematic combining' approach), the dimensions of RAC found in the data were similar to the ones discussed in the focus group as well as those derived from the conceptualization based on existing literature. For example, one of the respondents said about some of their influential customers: "our factory is changing a lot because the big guys like [large FMCG company] would just walk into my factory one fine day (…) so, we follow a lot of regulations and there's a certain sense of discipline inside the unit which otherwise wouldn't have existed if not for the big clients". Besides dependency another respondent spoke about the competition too: "They were ordering in a big volume – although they were very much in delay with the payments, we needed to maintain this relationship, so that another supplier doesn`t take them." Here, the comparison level of alternatives is considered not only as alternative customers for the focal company but also as the assumed comparison level of alternatives for the partner.

Organisational similarities seemed to play an interesting role in the beginning of the business relationship: "we were a family business, they were a family business, and this company culture was attractive in the beginning". Besides unambiguous cases of attractiveness and non-attractiveness: "It is a love-and-hate relationship, they have delays in payment and there is a kind of emotional blackmailing that they might quit. They are not even our most profitable customer; very strange relationship indeed."

Overall, the rich data was analysed to examine whether our theoretical propositions are supported. Accordingly, some changes were made in the questionnaire prior to the quantitative data collection.

7.2 Empirical configuration analysis

7.2.1. Data collection and sample size

Based on the two focus groups and individual managerial interviews, the questionnaire was developed to empirically test our theoretical framework. Data for the empirical study were collected from a sample of 617 managers of the MBA alumni database of the business school in both service and industrial companies. A personalised e-mail with a link to an online survey was sent out in January 2013.

Each respondent received a cover letter asking them to choose a particular customer and answer a series of questions related to this specific customer. Thus, the respondents were free to choose any customer (an attractive or an unattractive). Respondents were also frequently reminded to consider this customer as the unit of analysis. As an incentive for completing the survey all recipients were offered an executive summary of the study (e.g. Melton and Hardline 2010). Two reminders were sent out, one week and two weeks after the initial distribution of the survey. Of the 126 received surveys, 19 cases were dropped due to incompleteness, leaving a usable sample of 107 completed questionnaires, which in turns represent an overall response rate of 17.3%.

Surveys were received from all regions of the world, with the largest groups coming from India (17.8%), United Kingdom (15.0%) and Mexico (7.5%). The remaining surveys came, for example, from the United States, Brazil, Germany, France and Poland. The average of the reported customer`s share estimate from the supplier`s revenues was about 23.8%. With regard to the relationship lengths the sample includes both new and established business relationships with customers. That is, 24.6% of the firms conduct business for less than three years, 54.5% between three and ten years, while 20.9% are in business for more than 10 years with the selected customer. Regarding firm characteristics, 24% of the firms are small (< 100 employees), 25% are medium sized (between 101 and 500 employees), and 51% are classified as large enterprises (> 500 employees). Of the 82.2% respondents who reported revenues, 19.5% recorded annual revenues of less than $5 million, 25.2% had revenues between $5 and $50 million, and 36.9% of revenues of $50 million or more. Overall, a wide range of industrial (e.g. mining automotive, medical equipment) and service firms (e.g. telecommunication, insurance, and banking) are included in the sample. In total, 65% of the sampled firms are industrial companies and 35% are service companies.

To test for non-response bias the answers of early and late respondents were compared following Armstrong and Overton (1977). This procedure is based on the assumption that the answers of late respondents are representative of the answers of non-respondents (Rogelberg and Stanton, 2007). Thus, respondents to the initial mailing are classified as “early” (n=53) and those to the reminders as “late” (n=54). The independent t-test reveals no statistically significant differences between both groups in terms of revenues ($t= -1.512$, $p>0.05$), company size ($t= -1.709$, $p>0.05$) or relationship lengths ($t= -1.02$, $p>0.05$), indicating that non-response bias was not a problem.

As this study relies on self-reported, retro-perspective data gathered from a single key respondent within each organization, there is a potential for common method bias (Podsaskoff et al. 2003). First, the study was designed to reduce common method bias (e.g. questions had no particular order, using different scales, varying lengths of scales). Second,

post hoc tests for common method bias are employed. The Haman single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003) including all of the 27 items revealed that the items loaded on multiple distinct factors with the first factor accounting for 26.9% of variance, suggesting that common method bias is not a serious problem. In addition, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess a single factor model in which all of the items load on the same factor. However, the model indicates very poor fit statistics ($\chi^2_{(df=325)}$ = 1445.3; CFI = .32; TLI = .26; RMSEA= .180). Altogether, the results of the two tests suggest that common method bias does not significantly affect the parameter estimates.

7.3. Research method

To analyse the database a set-theoretic approach was chosen, specifically fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA). Rather than estimating the relative contribution of each driver of customer attractiveness, fsQCA allows analysing how causal conditions jointly are linked to an outcome of interest (Fiss, 2011; Ragin, 2000). By doing so, each individual observation, consisting of a complex set of causal conditions, is regarded as a whole.

FsQCA starts from the premise that outcomes rarely have any single causes (Greckhamer et al., 2008) – thus the idea that each condition has its own isolated net effect on the outcome is abandoned and replaced by the assumption that the interplay of different causal conditions constitutes an outcome (Rihoux and Ragin 2009). In other words, instead of treating variables as competing in explaining the outcome, fsQCA follows the idea how variables combine to generate an outcome (Ordanini and Maglio, 2009). As fsQCA stresses the concept of equifinality this also means that different equally effective constellations of conditions may lead to the same outcome (Fiss, 2007). Depending on the way the different conditions are combined, they act in favour of or against an outcome (Berg-Schlosser et al., 2009). Consequently, the relationship between multiple conditions can be best understood in terms of set memberships (Fiss, 2007). Each observation or case belongs more or less to a certain configuration, and has varying degrees of memberships in other possible configurations (Ordanini and Maglio, 2009). Thus, all variables are calibrated into set membership values ranging from 0 (case is fully out of a set) to 1 (case is fully in the set) (Ragin, 2000; Fiss, 2011). Beyond this, partial membership scores also exist as fsQCA permits continuous set calibration (Ragin, 2008). Based on the membership values, fsQCA uses Boolean algebra to determine which combinations of conditions result in the outcome (Fiss, 2007).

7.3.1. Measurement

All items related to the outcome and the conditions were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). As the outcome of interest, that is customer attractiveness, is neither well defined nor conceptualized in the literature (Ellegaard and Ritter, 2007; Mortensen, 2012), this study employs a two-phase approach. In the first stage the relevant aspects of the construct were identified based on the existing literature (e.g. La Rocca et al., 2012). Building on this, in-depth interviews were conducted providing a more fine-grained view of the phenomenon of interest. It appears that RAC consists of three sub-dimensions: first, future performance refers to the expected profit margins and financial

returns of a particular customer (three items). Second, customer intimacy measures the future intends to invest more time and deepen the relationship with a customer (three items). Finally, relationship intensity refers to the future development of the interpersonal relationship with a customer, such as joint problem solving activities (four items).

The five causal conditions examined are related to inter-firm characteristics (dependency, trust) and value creation opportunities (financial-, non-financial benefits and costs). *Trust* was measured with five items based upon prior research from Zaheer and colleagues (1998). As inter-personal as well as inter-organizational trust are part of the construct, both the trust placed between individuals of collaborating firms and the mutual trust between firms are considered – such as the trustworthiness of the customer or negotiation fairness. To capture *dependency* this study adapted three items from previous empirical studies (Jap and Ganesan, 2000; Ganesan, 1994). More specifically, dependency measures the degree to which a firm's relies on its customer for example in terms of the difficulty to replace a particular customer.

Prior studies identified financial and economic factors as major drivers of attractiveness (Mortensen, 2012). Therefore, *financial benefits* was measured with three items adapted from the studies of O'Sullivan and Abela (2007) as well as Avlontis and colleagues (2001). The original scales were modified to consider the present financial performance (e.g. sales objectives, profits) of an individual customer. To assess the presence of *non-financial benefits* three items were used related to knowledge, strategic and reputation benefits of the customer – adapted from previous empirical work (Naudé et al., 2000; Zhou et al., 2007). *Costs* were operationalized referring to the direct costs of the business relationship with a customer as well as the investments made, as a three item scale based upon the work of Selnes and Sallis (2003) and Songailiene, Winklhofer, and McKechnie (2011).

The validity of the constructs was assessed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Due to the limited sample size (n=107) and the suggested ratio of sample size to the number of estimated parameters of at least 5:1 (Shook et al., 2004), two separate CFAs were ran (e.g. Ordanini and Parasuraman, 2011): one with the five conditions trust, dependency, financial benefits, non-financial benefits, and costs and the other with the three sub-dimensions of the outcome variable (customer intimacy, relationship intensity and performance). The results, summarized in Table 2, show satisfactory overall model fit statistics for both models: (1) $\chi^2_{(df=106)} = 169.71$, $p < .01$; CFI= .93; TLI= .91; RMSEA= .075 and (2) $\chi^2_{(df=25)} = 37.93$, $p < .05$; CFI= .97; TLI= .95; RMSEA= .070. Also for each latent construct average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) indicate good convergent validity. Finally, the directions of Fornell and Larcker (1981) were followed to assess discriminant validity of the constructs. In support of discriminant validity, it was found that the AVE exceeds the squared correlation between all pairs of constructs.

Insert **Table 2** about here

7.3.2. Calibration

Analysing survey data in fsQCA requires a transformation of the raw data into fuzzy set values (Ragin 2000, 2007). That is, to transform the data into set membership scores ranging between zero (full non-membership) and one (full-membership) researchers needs to define three different anchors for calibration procedure: two anchors to define full non-membership

and full-membership as well as a cross-over point. While the continuum between these two extremes reflects varying degrees of membership, the crossover point represents cases that are neither in nor out of the set – the point of maximum ambiguity (Schneider et al., 2010). In essence, then, by taking the thresholds of full membership (1.00) and non-membership (0.00) as upper and lower boundary anchors into account, the new set fuzzy set values are calculated as deviations from the cross-over point (0.50). As fsQCA allows continuous set membership calibration, the loss of information is minimized (Ragin 2000). After defining the set membership anchors fs/QCA 2.5 was used and the log-odds method was applied for the automatic calibration procedure (Ragin 2008).

As the outcome of interest in this study is RAC, a fuzzy set variable of above-average attractiveness was generated. That is, based on the average scores of the construct which consists of 10 items, 53.1 was chosen as the cross-over point. Consequently, customers with lower average values are more out than in of the set and vice versa. With regard to the lower and upper boundaries firms are coded 0 if they show attractiveness scores below 45.5 (about the 25^{th} percentile) and were coded 1 if the attractiveness exceeds 58.5 (about the 75^{th} percentile).

For each of the five conditions consistent calibration rules were applied. That is, the average construct scores are defined as the cross-over point. In line with previous research (e.g. Fiss 2011) the calibration of the upper (full membership) and lower boundary (full non-membership) is less rigorous compared to the outcome of interest. Anchors near to the 10^{th} percentile and the 90^{th} percentile were chosen as thresholds for non-membership (coded as 0) and full membership (coded as 1). For example, the cross-over point of the trust construct is 24.1 and the full membership (TRU≤31.5) as well as the non-membership (TRU≥15.5) boundary is calibrated accordingly. Table 3 summarizes the fuzzy set calibration rules and results.

Insert **Table 3** about here

7.4. Analysis of necessary conditions

In a first step it was analysed if any of the five conditions can be regarded as necessary for causing the outcome. Thus, it was examined whether a single condition is always present or absent in all cases where the outcome is present (or absent) (Ragin, 2006; Fiss, 2007). A condition is regarded as necessary if the consistency score exceeds the threshold of 0.9 (e.g. Schneider et al., 2010). The consistency measures the degree to which the cases align to the particular rule – the more cases fail to meet this rule for a necessary conditions; the lower will be the consistency score (Ragin, 2006). With regard to RAC the consistency scores range between 0.36 and 0.78. Furthermore, for the non-occurrence, or absence, of RAC consistency scores of 0.43 to 0.71 were observed. As none of the conditions examined exceed the required threshold, the five conditions – their presence as well as their absence – are neither necessary for causing RAC nor the absence of the outcome.

Insert **Table 4** about here

7.5. Analysis of sufficient conditions

The analysis of sufficient conditions involves three steps (Fiss, 2011; Ragin, 2000, 2006, 2008): construction, preparation and analysis of the truth table. In a first step, a truth table, listing all logically possible causal combinations of the five conditions is constructed (e.g. Wagemann and Schneider, 2010). Based on the set membership scores calibrated before, each observation is assigned to a particular configuration in the truth table. Thus, each row of the truth table displays a specific combination of conditions. The truth table consists of 32 different causal combinations (2^k; k = number of conditions) ranging from some instances with many, some only a few, and two configurations that are not empirically observed.

In a second step, the truth table is reduced to meaningful configurations – based on their frequency some will be classified as relevant and others as irrelevant. This is accomplished by selecting a frequency threshold referring to the number of cases in each row. In our study a frequency threshold of three (e.g. Ragin, 2007) was chosen. Thus, configurations with two or less observations are treated as remainders. In addition, a minimum acceptable level of consistency was defined for the remaining rows. By doing so, configurations are classified as either sufficient or not sufficient for achieving the outcome. In our model, the consistency scores range between 0.34 and 0.90. The lowest acceptable consistency score was set at 0.75 (Ragin 2006; Ragin 2008). Causal conditions exceeding this predefined consistency cut-off value of 0.75 are regarded as sufficient for the outcome and configurations below are considered as not sufficient.

In the third step, fsQCA software strives to achieve a reduced set of logic statements, some sort of shorter form, that describe the underlying causal patterns (Ragin, 2007). As the algorithm is based on counterfactual analysis, researches can detect core and peripheral conditions. That is, to overcome the problem of limited diversity, configurations with few or no observations, fsQCA differentiates between easy and difficult counterfactuals (see Fiss, 2011 for detailed discussion). By taking these two types of counterfactuals into account fsQCA provides three solutions: complex (not relevant, counterfactuals are not considered), intermediate (simplifying assumptions based on easy counterfactuals) and parsimonious (simplifying assumptions regardless of the type of counterfactuals). Core conditions are part of both intermediate and parsimonious solutions, while peripheral conditions only appear in the intermediate solution (Fiss, 2011). Thus, researchers can also draw conclusions regarding the causal essentially of specific combinations of causal conditions.

The results are reported in Table 5. The solution table shows that not only one but multiple configurations exist leading to RAC. The *solution coverage* refers to the explanatory power of the three solutions, that is, how much of the outcome is covered by all configurations (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). In our model, the three identified configurations account for about 61% of the membership in the outcome.

Insert **Table 5** about here

Beyond this, two measures are available to determine the fit of each configuration. First, the consistency measures the extent to which a configuration corresponds to the outcome (Fiss, 2011). All of the three identified configurations exceed the cut-off value (≥0.75) and thus can be considered as sufficient for achieving the outcome. Second, the *coverage* assesses the proportion of cases that follow a particular path and captures the empirical importance of an identified configuration (Fiss, 2007). The *raw coverage* quantifies the proportion of memberships in the outcome explained by each term of the configuration, while the *unique*

coverage measures the proportion explained solely by one solution excluding memberships that are covered by other solutions (Ragin, 2006). As the unique coverage of each configuration exceeds the value of 0 each solution contributes to the explanation of the outcome (otherwise it should be eliminated).

The solution table indicates for each configuration a different pattern of core, peripheral as well as neutral conditions exist. In solution 1a trust, financial benefits and the absence of costs are identified as core conditions for RAC, while the absence of non-financial benefits represents the single peripheral condition in this configuration – regardless whether dependency is present or absent as indicated by the blank field. In addition, solution 1b reveals besides trust and financial benefits also non-financial benefits becomes a core condition, if the absence of dependency is the single peripheral condition. Interestingly, the presence or absence of costs related to the customer is irrelevant for RAC in this configuration. Finally, in solution 1c benefits play a pivotal role for RAC as both financial and non-financial benefits are identified as core conditions. With regard to peripheral conditions dependency and costs are crucial. Most notably, for all of the identified solutions dependency is not a core condition. However, both the presence and absence of dependency were found to be able to promote RAC as a peripheral condition.

7.6. Absence of RAC

Configurations leading to RAC might be quite different (causal asymmetry) from those leading to the absence, that is, the non-occurrence of the outcome. Thus, in a second step, fsQCA was conducted with absence of RAC as the outcome variable – coded 1 if firms show below-average attractiveness and coded 0 in all other cases. Applying identical cut-off values (consistency: 0.75; frequency threshold: 3) a different pattern of solutions was found for non-occurrence of RAC. As can be seen in Table 5, four paths of causal conditions for the absence of the outcome exist. For solution 2a and 2b the absence of financial benefits plus dependency and costs are core conditions. Further, comparing both solutions indicates that the single peripheral conditions trust (2b) and non-financial benefits (2a) can be treated as substitutes. The third solution 2c shows negations for all conditions – a lack of the two benefit types as well as trust being core conditions, while the absence of both costs and dependency are peripheral conditions. Finally, in solution 2d the presence of financial benefits is the single peripheral condition. In addition, four core conditions exist: lack of trust as well as non-financial benefits plus costs and dependency. Comparing with the results above, our results provide clear evidence of asymmetric causality – different sets of core and peripheral conditions are observable that are not merely constituting the effects in an opposite direction.

8. Discussion of Different Configurations leading to RAC

The configurations explored can be also described following the rules of Boolean algebra: TRU*FINB*~NONFB*~COS + TRU*~DEP*FINB*NONFB + DEP*FINB*NONFB*COS → RAC, where `*` means the logical `and` and `+` represents the logical `or`. The sign `~` stands for the absence of a particular condition and TRU is trust, DEP is dependency, FINB is financial benefits, NONFB is non-financial benefits, COS is costs and RAC is the relational attractiveness of the customer.

The formula can be read as follows: (1) trust, financial benefits, the absence of non-financial benefits and the absence of costs or (2) trust, the absence of dependency, presence of financial as well as non-financial benefits or (3) dependency, financial and non-financial benefits as well as costs can lead to high level of RAC. (1), (2) and (3) provide three different recipes to achieve RAC.

The same formula can be simplified as follows: FINB*(~NONFB*(TRU*~COS) + NONFB*(TRU*~DEP + DEP*COS)) → RAC. This simplified formula allows seeing firstly that financial benefits were present in all the three configurations leading to RAC. There were no configurations leading to RAC without the presence of financial benefits. Secondly, depending on whether non-financial benefits are present or not, different combinations of trust, dependency and costs were explored.

If non-financial benefits were present (besides financial benefits) either the presence of trust and the absence of dependency or the presence of dependency and costs lead to RAC. If non-financial benefits were not present (but financial benefits were present), trust and the lack of dependency lead to RAC.

Practically speaking, the relationship with the customer was evaluated as attractive by the supplier if it seemed to bring financial benefits, but financial benefits were far not enough. If non-financial benefits, for example a strong reputational aspect, were present, there were two ways for achieving RAC. Firstly, when dependency was absent with trust; secondly, when dependency was present, event with the presence of costs RAC could have been achieved. When non-financial benefits were absent, trust and the absence of costs lead to RAC.

Relational non-attractiveness of the customer was achieved through four different configurations, out of which three financial benefits were absent. In three cases dependency and costs were present at the same time. To achieve relational non-attractiveness to not to offer financial benefits for the supplier or to have high level of dependency and costs (besides some other conditions) seemed to be a `successful` way. The full formula for the absence of RAC is as follows: DEP*~FINB*NONFB*COS + TRU*DEP*~FINB*COS + ~TRU*~DEP*~FINB*~NONFINB*~COS + ~TRU*DEP*FINB*~NONFINB*COS → ~RAC. The four configurations to achieve relational non-attractiveness of the customer were (1) dependency, lack of financial benefits, presence of non-financial benefits and costs or (2) trust, dependency, but absence of financial benefits and presence of costs or (3) lack of trust, lack of dependency, lack of financial benefits and lack of costs and (4) lack of trust, presence of dependency and financial benefits, lack of non-financial benefits and presence of costs.

The same formula can be also described in a simplified version: ~FINB*COS*DEP*(NONFB + DEP) + ~NONFB*~TRUS, according to which a customer can achieve relational non-attractiveness either with the absence of non-financial benefits and absence of trust of with the absence of financial benefits, presence of costs, dependency and either the presence of non-financial benefits of dependency. Interestingly in both cases leading to the absence of RAC, when non-financial benefits were absent, trust was also absent. This means that if a customer is perceived to be lack of non-financial benefits and at the same the supplier doesn`t trust them, no matter whether financial benefits, costs or dependency are there or not, it will lead to relational non-attractiveness.

Only the absence of financial benefits, the presence of costs or presence of dependency in themselves were not enough to achieve the relational non-attractiveness of the customer – it could be reached only through different configurations.

9. Managerial Implications and Further Research Directions

There is a wide range of potential managerial implications of RAC. For example, with a better understanding of RAC, the customer can help to create beneficial resource allocation from the supplier, gain relation-specific investments, and decrease (or increase) the level of exit intentions of the supplier, and foster voluntarism to maintain/improve the relationship.

Johnsen et al. (2009) claim that the term `supplier management` is not completely correct, as it implies a certain degree of control in the relationship. The authors suggest that while considering the influence of attractiveness, the question of *`How can the customer company make the supplier follow its lead?`*, should be reformulated as *`How can the customer company make the supplier want to follow its lead?`*. Consequently, customers can manage their relational attractiveness accordingly.

This paper explored different configurations which lead to the relational attractiveness of the customer (RAC) as well as to the absence of RAC. For future research further empirical investigation of these `recipes` and the conditions is suggested.

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Table1: Antecedents and consequences of (customer) attractiveness in the literature

Source	Antecedents	Source	Consequences
Cordón & Vollmann (2002)	Better prices, attractive technology, process management, learning, trust, commitment	Cordón & Vollmann (2002)	To attract the best suppliers; greater proportion of the supplier`s brainpower
Hald et al. (2009)	Three components: perceived expected value; perceived value; perceived dependence	Ellegaard & Ritter (2006)	Future motivation in the business relationship
McDonald et al. (1997)	Volume; growth potential; market leadership; technology	Mortensen (2008, 2012)	Voluntarism in the relationship; voluntary commitment which can mobilize resources
Mortensen & Freytag (2009)	Antecedents could be identified based on SET	Ping (1994)	Decrease of exit intention
Ping (1994)	Satisfaction; alternative attractiveness; investment; switching costs; loyalty; opportunism; neglect	Salo, Tähtinen & Ulkuniemi (2008)	Future motivation in the business relationship
Ramsay (1994)	The potential purchasing power of the customer24	Schiele et al. (2010)	Satisfaction and preferred customer status

Table2: Measurement items & CFAs for the set of constructs

Model 1 (χ2(df=106) = 169.71, p < .01; CFI= .93; TLI= .91; RMSEA= .075)	**Mean (SD)**	**Std. items**	**CR**	**AVE**
Trust				
This customer has always been fair in its negotiation with us.		0.85		
Based on the past experience, we can rely on this customer with confidence.		0.78		
This customer is trustworthy.	23.98 (6.07)	0.85	0.91	0.68
The contact persons of this customer have always been fair in negotiations with us.		0.80		
The contact persons of this customer are trustworthy.		0.84		
Dependency				
If our relationship was discontinued, we would have difficulties in making up the sales volume.		0.80		
It would be difficult for us to replace this customer.	14.15 (4.78)	0.92	0.89	0.72
We feel dependent on this customer.		0.83		
Financial benefits				
The financial returns related to this customer are high.		0.84		
The margins related to this customer are high.	14.80 (3.40)	0.82	0.81	0.58
We reached or even exceeded our sales objectives with this customer.		0.61		
Non-financial benefits				
The strategic benefits related to working with this customer are high.		0.73		
The knowledge/information benefits related to working with this customer are high.	16.22 (3.36)	0.79	0.80	0.58
The reputation benefits related to this customer are high.		0.75		
Costs				
Incurred costs to this customer are high (e.g. managing the relationship).		0.67		
We have made significant investments dedicated to these relationships.	14.49 (3.66)	0.78	0.79	0.56
We have made several adjustments to adapt to these customers norms and standards.		0.78		

Model 2 (χ2(df=25) = 37.93, p < .05; CFI= .97; TLI= .95; RMSEA= .070)	**Mean (SD)**	**Std.items**	**CR**	**AVE**
Future Relationship Intensity				
In the future we will deepen our interpersonal relationship with this customer.	15.16 (3.50)	0.88	0.80	0.58
Our company will jointly care about consumer interests in the future.		0.72		
We expect to have joint problem solving activities in the future with this customer.		0.75		
Future Customer Intimacy				
We intend to respond quickly to this customer's request for help in the future.	22.23 (3.66)	0.74	0.85	0.59
We intend to devote more time to this customer when it needs more help in the future.		0.88		
We would be prepared to provide special aid to this customer in the future when needed.		0.72		
We would like to deepen the relationship with this customer in the future.		0.72		
Future Profitability/Performance				
We expect high margins from this customer in the future.	14.72 (3.96)	0.85	0.87	0.69
We expect high financial returns from this customer in the future.		0.82		
We expect high levels of profit from this customer in the future.		0.82		

Note: All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

Table3: Overview of the calibration rules

Construct	Calibration rule	
Relational Attractiveness of the Customer (RAC)	If CA < 45.5	0 (full non-membership)
	If CA > 58.5	1 (full membership)
	If CA = 53.1	0.5 (cross-over point)
Trust (TRU)	If TRU < 15.5	0 (full non-membership)
	If TRU > 31.5	1 (full membership)
	If TRU = 24.1	0.5 (cross-over point)
Dependency (DEP)	If DEP < 7.5	0 (full non-membership)
	If DEP > 20.5	1 (full membership)
	If DEP = 14.1	0.5 (cross-over point)
Financial benefits (FB)	If FB < 10.5	0 (full non-membership)
	If FB > 18.5	1 (full membership)
	If FB = 14.8	0.5 (cross-over point)
Non-financial benefits (NFB)	If NFB < 11.5	0 (full non-membership)
	If NFB > 20.5	1 (full membership)
	If NFB = 16.2	0.5 (cross-over point)
Costs (COS)	If COS < 9.5	0 (full non-membership)
	If COS > 18.5	1 (full membership)
	If COS = 14.5	0.5 (cross-over point)

Table4: Overview of the necessary conditions

Condition	The Relational Attractiveness of the Customer			
	Presence		Absence	
	cons.	cov.	cons.	cov.
Trust	0.73	0.69	0.48	0.45
~Trust	0.42	0.45	0.67	0.71
Dependency	0.65	0.62	0.55	0.52
~Dependency	0.50	0.52	0.61	0.64
Financial benefits	0.78	0.73	0.43	0.41
~Financial benefits	0.36	0.39	0.71	0.76
Non-financial benefits	0.69	0.65	0.51	0.48
~Non-financial benefits	0.46	0.48	0.63	0.67
Costs	0.68	0.63	0.54	0.50
~Costs	0.46	0.50	0.60	0.65

Note: ~indicates the absence of a condition; cons. = consistency; cov. = coverage

Table5: Overview of the sufficient conditions

	The Relational Attractiveness of the Customer						
	Presence			Absence			
	1a	1b	1c	2a	2b	2c	2d
Trust	●	●			•	⊗	⊗
Dependency		⊗	•	●	●	⊗	●
Financial benefits	●	●	●	⊗	⊗	⊗	•
Non-financial benefits	⊗	●	●	•		⊗	⊗
Costs	⊗		•	●	●	⊗	●
Consistency	0.75	0.84	0.83	0.80	0.79	0.89	0.75
Raw coverage	0.25	0.28	0.43	0.28	0.22	0.30	0.19
Unique coverage	0.08	0.05	0.23	0.07	0.02	0.17	0.05
Solution coverage		0.61			0.54		
Solution consistency		0.79			0.80		

Note: Black circles indicate the presence of a condition; circles with "x" indicate the absence; large circles indicate core conditions; small ones, peripheral conditions.